

RE-ENVISIONING *IMAGO DEI*: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF HUMAN BEINGS AS
CHANNELS OF DEMONSTRATING CHRIST'S SUFFICIENCY

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ABSTRACT

When existential needs that enhance Africans' total well-being are unmet, they can instigate some Africans to rely on diabolical powers and thus betray the thought that Christ is sufficient for them. More often than not, some African Christians, due to a mind-set that spiritualises everything, seek to meet such existential needs through spiritual approaches: prayers, deliverance, fasting, and giving. This study, by exploring the biblical teaching about *imago Dei*, a truth that distinguishes human beings from the rest of the creation, argues that human beings are God's channels for meeting their own existential needs so they need not insist on seeking spiritual solutions to problems they can solve through their God-given skills and abilities. This entails a theological-practical engagement of existing relevant literature to establish how humans, as creatures in *imago Dei*, can demonstrate Christ as sufficient for Africans who think otherwise. This study engages the biblical teachings on *imago Dei* as it relates to Christ's sufficiency and humans' responsibility, as God's vicegerents, in meeting one another's existential needs. This study applies its findings to three major aspects of human life, namely: vocation, dignity and rights, and disability. This study is expected to inspire African Christians to understand that they have a role to play, alongside other non-Christians, and to portray Christ's sufficiency to meet Africans' existential needs.

Keywords: *Imago Dei, Christ's Sufficiency, Africans, Human(s)*

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

According to the biblical account of creation (Gen 1:26–27), the first statement God made about the creation of human beings, which doubles as the first description of human beings is that, human beings are created in the image of God. It is only human beings that are said to be created in God’s image and this places them in a unique relationship with other creatures. The creation account goes further to report how God puts human beings, who are created in his image, in charge of the earth and everything on earth (Gen 1:28). He placed the first man he created (Adam) in the garden he created (Eden) and mandated him to till and keep the garden (Gen 2:15). This mandate, given to only humans, indicates the unique responsibility that human beings have, as God’s vicegerents, to care for the earth and utilize its resources. The uniqueness of the reality of human beings as created in *imago Dei* and the uniqueness of what it means to function as creatures in *imago Dei*, have certain implications for Africans who think that Christ is not sufficient for them because he seems not to meet some of their existential needs.

The desire for total well-being, which seems elusive for many Africans, sometimes instigates the thought among some Africans that Christ is not sufficient for them, especially when prayers done in faith seem not to bring about the desired well-being. This study seeks to explore the implications of the biblical teaching about the creation of human beings in the image of God for demonstrating Christ as sufficient for Africans who think otherwise. It will first clarify what it means by *imago Dei* and the sufficiency of Christ for Africans for the benefit of readers. It will point out why it is necessary to demonstrate the sufficiency of Christ for Africans, how Christ as *imago Dei* proves to be sufficient for Africans, and how the understanding of humans as *imago Dei* can help to demonstrate the sufficiency of Christ for Africans. This study seeks to motivate African Christians to see themselves and fellow human beings as channels through which the sufficiency of Christ for Africans can be demonstrated.

2.0 CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

2.1 Imago Dei

Imago Dei is a Latin phrase that means “image of God” (Grudem, 1994, Chapter 21 n. 6) and it speaks of humans’ relationship with their creator, God. תְּצַלְמֶנּוּ (*tselem*) and דְּמוּתָא (*d^emût*), words used in Genesis 1:26 for “image” and “likeness” respectively, are synonymously and interchangeably used in other texts (Gen 1:27; 5:1; 1 Cor 11:7; Jas 3:9; Berkhof, 1996; Grudem, 1994; Hoekema, 1986; see also Matthews, 1996; Reymond, 1998) According to Waldron (2013, Chapter 4), תְּצַלְמֶנּוּ (“image”) means “a replica (Num. 33:52; 1 Sam. 6:5, 11; Ezek. 7:20),” and דְּמוּתָא (“likeness”) speaks of “something that looks like something else (2 Kings 16:10; 2 Chron. 4:3; Isa. 13:14; Ezek. 10:1).” Both words, apart from Genesis 1:26, only recur together in Ezekiel 23:14–15 and they seem to have the same meaning as in Genesis 1:26. They imply that human beings are like God and they represent him (Grudem, 1994; Hoekema, 1986).

2.2 Christ’s sufficiency

This phrase speaks of the belief that Jesus Christ is able to adequately meet the needs of human beings in every aspect of their lives. It is the assurance that Christ’s person and work are sufficient for practical living as Christians so there is no need to resort to traditional religious alternatives or unchristian practices. To acknowledge Christ’s sufficiency means to avoid all forms of syncretistic activities and actions that betray the thought that Christ is sufficient. It means that Jesus Christ provides a holistic salvation that ensures humans’ total well-being in every aspect of life.

2.3 Africans

It is important to clarify what this study means by Africans because there are different understandings of who an African is, and the nuances underlying these different understandings require such clarification. Africans, in this study, are the indigenous people who live in the African region south of the Sahara Desert (otherwise known as sub-Saharan Africa). This study focuses on Africans who are influenced by the prevalent social, philosophical and religious conceptions of life, and who have the

traditional worldview that tries to offer a spiritual rationale for every life's circumstance (Galgalo, 2012; cf. Gyekye, 1995; Metz, 2022).

3.0 THE NEED TO DEMONSTRATE CHRIST'S SUFFICIENCY FOR AFRICANS

One primary reason to demonstrate the sufficiency of Christ for Africans is the fact that Jesus Christ is the centrepiece and distinguishing feature of the Christian faith (Banda, 2005; Dada, 2003; cf. Mackay, 1953; Ogunkunle, 2003; Ukpong, 1990). It is Christ that makes the Christian faith meaningful and germane for human beings and this is why some humans readily discard the Christian faith and its teachings, if they think that Christ is unable and/or unwilling to meet their needs or solve their problems. Therefore, it is imperative to demonstrate the sufficiency of Christ for Africans so they can absolutely rely on Christ alone, without recourse to unchristian alternatives, and resolutely abide by Christian teachings in all situations. This is because Africans will only consider Christ as sufficient for them when he is able to address all aspects of their lives (Banda, 2005; Imasogie, 1985).

Another important reason is the prevalence of syncretism in the African Christian landscape which makes some theologians to describe African Christianity as thousands of miles wide but few inches deep (see Abogunrin, 2003; Gehman, 1987; Kailing, 1994). In the context of this discussion, syncretism connotes the incorporation of traditional religious practices into Christianity (Coody, 2018), which happens to be a common reality found in some churches in Africa (Adeyanju & Kaduna, 2019; Ogunmefun, 2019). Some African Christians, both clergy and laity, are alleged to even seek traditional religious helps and solutions when life's crises happen to them (Daniel, 2012; Imasogie, 1983). Such Christians visit diviners and witchdoctors for guidance, protection, healthcare, and other such existential needs. They rely on charms, magic, and fetish practices that seem to ensure their total well-being. Syncretism has thus proved to be a long-standing challenge against biblical Christianity in Africa (Amolo & Oladimeji, 2003; Kato, 1985) and the main perversion of Christianity in the continent (Adeyanju & Kaduna, 2019). The rife nature of syncretism in Africa reveals that many Africans do not think of Christ as sufficient for them, so it is necessary to prove that Christ is sufficient for such Africans so they can commit themselves to Christ wholeheartedly.

Many Africans engage in money rituals for financial and economic reasons but these means have not actually solved the problem of poverty in the continent. Similarly, health problems continue to ravage the continent despite many people's belief in and resort to mystical solutions. These two situations, poverty and health, suffice as examples to demonstrate why many Africans indulge in practices that deny Christ's sufficiency and how diabolical means are insufficient to ensure the holistic well-being of Africans. Many Africans, including even herbalists, make use of "western" medicines for their health challenges, are victims of abuse of human rights and live with disabilities, indicating that diabolical means are insufficient to ensure humans' total well-being. This study, therefore, explores how the truth of humans as *imago Dei*, helps to demonstrate Jesus's sufficiency in these aspects and more.

4.0 IMAGO DEI: THE BASIS OF CHRIST'S SUFFICIENCY

The Bible describes Jesus Christ, who is truly God and truly human, as *imago Dei* [the image of God] (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15). This study argues that Jesus Christ's being the image of God speaks of his sufficiency for human beings. As the image of God, Jesus Christ not only represents God but also reveals God in his person, words, and actions. The author of Hebrews elaborates this in the epistle's prologue by describing Jesus Christ in Old Testament categories that identify him as *imago Dei*. He calls Jesus the brightness of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's essence (Heb 1:2b). Seeing that God's glory is the revelation of his nature (Lev. 9:23; Num. 14:21-22; Isa. 40:5; Heen & Krey, 2005; Theodore of Mopsuestia, 1933), this means that Jesus Christ is the expression of God's nature and person (Mohler Jr., 2017; Morris, 2017; Stedman, 1992). In the same vein, as the exact imprint of God's essence, Jesus Christ embodies the attributes that make God to be God (Col 1:19; 2:9; Cockerill, 2012; Koester, 1964; Schreiner, 2015). Not only that, Hebrews' prologue affirms Jesus Christ as the

most reliable communicator of God's truth, as the sustainer of the universe, as the perfect priest who offered a perfect sacrifice, and as sovereign over all.

The foregoing description of Jesus Christ as God's image underscores his self-sufficiency and his ability to meet the various needs of human beings. As the embodiment of God's nature and attributes, Jesus Christ possesses everything which human beings look up to God for; therefore, humans have no need for any other person or power in addition to Christ. The truth that humans do not need any other power in addition to Christ because he is truly God who can meet all their needs is what it means for him to be sufficient. The sufficiency of Christ as *imago Dei* thus becomes the basis, in this discussion, for discussing the biblical depiction of human beings as *imago Dei* and what this means for entrenching the thought of Christ's sufficiency in the minds of Africans. This is because Christ as "the *imago Dei* par excellence" ought to form and inform "our understanding of what it means to be human" (Kandiah, 2017). Therefore, if Christ is sufficient as *imago Dei*, then humans as *imago Dei* can also serve as channels through which Christ's sufficiency is demonstrated. In other words, the sufficiency of Christ, by virtue of being God's image, points to the possibility of humans, as the only creatures in God's image, to help demonstrate this sufficiency.

5.0 EXPLORING THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF HUMANS AS *IMAGO DEI*

Both before and after the Fall, the Bible describes human beings as created in the image of God [*imago Dei*] (Gen 1:26-27; 9:6; 1 Cor 11:7; Jas 3:9). As creatures in *imago Dei*, humans are like God and this has to do with every aspect in which this "likeness" manifests, such as their moral, spiritual, mental, and relational traits (Grudem, 1994). This is highlighted by Hamilton (1980, p. 192) when he says that,

The word "likeness" rather than diminishing the word "image" actually amplifies it and specifies its meaning. Man is not just an image but a likeness-image. He is not simply representative but representational. Man is the visible, corporeal representative of the invisible, bodiless God. *dēmūt* guarantees that man is an adequate and faithful representative of God on earth.

This means that *imago Dei* does not exclude humans' corporeal features though God is non-corporeal. Consequently, modern anthropological discourses tend more to perceive human beings from "a more unified, metaphysical perspective" instead of "a mind-body dualist perspective" (Bookless, 2008; Brueggemann, 2002; Kandiah et al., 2017; Smith, 2009; Spencer et al., 2009; Wright, 2012), so the description of humans as *imago Dei* now includes their corporeal attributes (Barth, 1958; Hoekema, 1986; Kohler, 1957; Peppiatt, 2022; von Rad, 1962; Wenham, 1987; Westermann, 1984; Wright, 2017). Therefore, the total person, including both the bodily and spiritual features, is what God created in his image (Barth, 1958; Clines, 1968; Kilner, 2017; von Rad, 1962; Wenham, 1987; Westermann, 1984). This means that humans are like God in every aspect of their being and personality and that they are to represent him with all these aspects of their being and personality. This explains why being created in *imago Dei* is a core feature of human identity (Gooder, 2017). In fact, human identity derives from its being *imago Dei* (Gunton, 1991; Kelsey, 2006; Lints, 2006). Therefore, as Wright (2017) affirms, being created in *imago Dei* is not an adjectival description of an attribute attached to human beings but an adverbial definition of who they are. In other words, being made in God's image is not an extrinsic quality of humans but rather an intrinsic nature of humans. This is evident in the fact that humans are in God's image despite the Fall and they are to be treated as such (Gen 9:6; Jas 3:9).

Historically, there are three main categories in which the biblical teaching that humans are created in *imago Dei* has been discussed (Erickson, 2013; Kandiah, 2017; Peppiatt, 2022) and all three categories have their place in defining what it means to affirm that humans are created in God's image. The first category includes the "substantive" approaches, taken by the early church fathers (Berkhof, 1996) and most dominant view in the history of Christian theology (Erickson, 1998, 2013), which define *imago Dei* as possessing some of God's substantial characteristics, emphasizing particularly rationality, creativity, morality, generosity, among others (Erickson, 1998; Grenz, 1994; Kandiah, 2017; Moreland & Rae, 2000; Theos, 2010). According to this view, and as posited by reputable

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theologians like St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and John Calvin (van Vliet, 2009), the human soul is the locus of *imago Dei* (Boyd & Eddy, 2002). Others who held this view are Justin Martyr (1969) Clement of Alexandria (Quasten, 1960), Tertullian (1969), Athanasius (1961a, 1961b), Gregory of Nyssa (Quasten, 1960), and Augustine (1956), Anselm (Hopkins, 1972), Peter Lombard (Rosemann, 2004), Bernard of Clairvaux (Sullivan, 1963), and William of Ockham (Leff, 1975).

The second category known as the “functional” approach, also currently the most popular view (Curtis, 1992; Matthews, 1996; Merrill, 2003; Middleton, 2005; Ross & Oswalt, 2008; von Rad, 1964, 1972), emphasizes “the particular job or role that human beings play due to their status as image bearers” (Curtis, 1992; Erickson, 2013; Kandiah, 2017). It interprets the close link between the creation of humans in *imago Dei* and their dominion over God’s created world in Genesis 1 to mean that humans are to interact with and care for God’s creation as his representative, carrying out these responsibilities as though God himself is doing them (Clines, 1968; Gooder, 2017; Lohfink, 1994; Rogerson, 2010). This view posits that humans, as *imago Dei*, function in God’s place, representing him, as they subdue and have dominion over his creation and as they cultivate and protect the garden where they inhabit (Gen 1:28–30; 2:15). It perceives humans as possessing a God-given role, which comes alongside with a delegated authority and a stewardship responsibility, to mediate God’s presence and reign on the earth as God’s vicegerents. This makes humans to be kings, priests, stewards, and co-creators under God’s supreme rule and authority.

The third category involves the various expressions of the “relational approach,” espoused by the reformation and neo-orthodox theologians (Grenz, 1994; Lemke, 2008), whereby being in God’s image refers to man’s original righteousness that Adam lost and which Jesus Christ restores (Barth, 1958, pp. 197–198; Brunner, 1937; Erickson, 1998; Grenz, 1994; Kandiah, 2017). The relational approach defines the image of God in humans in terms of their relationship with God and one another (Berkouwer, 1962; Boyd & Eddy, 2002; Curtis, 1992; Dempster, 2003). This means that human beings reflect *imago Dei* “to the degree that they are in a right relationship with God, themselves, or others” (Thorsen, 2020, p. 70). Therefore, *imago Dei* in humans is derivative and evident of their relationship with Christ, whether or not they are saved and sanctified, whether or not they have the Holy Spirit and live under his influence.

In harmonizing these three categories, Kandiah (2017, p. 72) argues that *imago Dei* means that human beings “were created to reveal the character of God as they represent God’s reign over creation as his vice regents, and they do this in relationship with God and each other.” In other words, humans as *imago Dei* belong to God, who created them in his image, signposted His presence on earth, and showed their being under his authority and care (Clines, 1976). This implies that being in God’s image makes human beings to be God’s representatives (Gooder, 2017), especially as they exercise their “delegated dominion (rule) over the rest of creation” in a kingly manner (Gen 1:28; Ps. 8:5–6; Murray, 1992; Wright, 2017). As *imago Dei*, humans act on God’s behalf, doing what God would have done but which he empowers them to do on his behalf. It is this biblical truth about humans that form the bedrock of the next section in which the researcher explicates the implications of humans’ being *imago Dei* for the thought among Africans that Christ is insufficient.

6.0 IMITATIO DEI: IMPLICATIONS OF HUMANS AS IMAGO DEI FOR DEMONSTRATING CHRIST’S SUFFICIENCY FOR AFRICANS

The phrase “*imitatio Dei*” (literally: imitating God) as used in this study, is derived from the title of William Power’s (1997) article and it speaks of how humans, as *imago Dei*, are to pattern their lives after God whom they image, especially in the light of how God relates with his creatures. This study argues that Jesus Christ is sufficient because he is the quintessential *imago Dei*, so human beings created in *imago Dei*, particularly Christians in Africa, can help to demonstrate Christ as sufficient when they function indeed as those created in *imago Dei*. This previous section affirms that *imago Dei* has to do with who humans are and not just certain qualities they possess but also acknowledges that it has to do with the divinely delegated responsibilities they bear. Nonetheless, as Clines (1968) notes,

humans as *imago Dei* are expressed more in what they do than in who they are. This aligns with the ancient world's conception of God's image as a being that embodies God's qualities and did his work on earth (Clines, 1968; Schwarz, 2013; Walton, 2018). Along the lines of Peterson's (2016) argument that the truth of human beings as *imago Dei* is the theological foundation for imitating God, this study discusses in subsequent subsections how humans as *imago Dei*, especially Christians, can be channels of demonstrating Christ's sufficiency in Africa.

6.1 Human Vocation and Human Flourishing

Africans want a saviour who ensures their total well-being flourishing and the researcher argues that human flourishing sometimes depends on human vocation work. This study appropriates Fikkert's (2017, p. 63) definition of human flourishing as its understanding of the phrase, which is to experience "relationships with God, self, others, and the rest of creation... as God designed them to be experienced." All four relationships are connected to entrenching the thought that Christ is sufficient and they influence how human vocation (work) can help demonstrate Christ's sufficiency for humans. As *imago Dei*, human flourishing means that human beings in their relationship with God consider him as their ultimate source of happiness and they derive this happiness when they commune with him intimately. In the researcher's view, this happens because they consider God as sufficient for them and, subsequently, they will consider Christ, the quintessential *imago Dei*, as sufficient for them. This means that they derive their happiness and satisfaction from Christ, so they do not engage in actions that come from the thought that Christ is not sufficient for them.

As noted earlier, human flourishing includes having the God-intended relationship with one's self. In relating with one's self, African Christians, as *imago Dei*, think of themselves as creatures "designed to glorify God by faithfully fulfilling a variety of God-ordained callings" (Fikkert, 2017, p. 63). These callings, otherwise known as vocations, relate to the work that each person does. This study thus posits that human vocation is connected to human flourishing, which is an evidence of Christ's sufficiency for humans. In fact, one of human beings' vocations is to seek the flourishing of all creation, be it human, animal, or inanimate creatures, in how they live (Gooder, 2017). Therefore, human flourishing is dependent on human vocations, especially on matters of poverty eradication, healthcare, and environmental care, among others. In other words, the absence of poverty, ill-health, and unconducive environment, often indicates and ensures human flourishing, so when African Christians work to ensure such absence, they contribute to human flourishing and this can help eradicate the thought that Christ is not sufficient for them. The prevalence of poverty, ill-health, and environmental degradation on the streets of Africa is a reality that craves for attention. The effects of these challenges in Africa are so obvious that several efforts are made by different governments, civil societies, non-governmental organisations, and religious bodies, to curtail them. All these efforts are simply part of human vocation.

In addition to the foregoing, human flourishing involves an experience of the right kind of relationships with other human beings, just as Fikkert's definition above indicates. In a bid to faithfully fulfil their divine callings and thus glorify God, African Christians who want to bring about human flourishing see other human beings as fellow bearers of *imago Dei* with whom they synergize so that every human being can fulfil his/her respective vocation(s) (Fikkert, 2017). This involves a social dimension whereby human beings collaborate and synergize by playing different roles that positively influence every kind of social relationships and interactions (Wright, 2006, 2017). This implies that African Christians should not hesitate to consult and/or collaborate with unbelievers who can actually meet their existential needs or those of others through their vocations. Knowing that non-Christian professionals and experts are working in their various vocations as God's representatives, being bearers of God's image, African Christians should see the efforts of such non-Christians to meet people's existential needs as though God is the one meeting such needs. This will make African Christians to seek the assistance of fellow humans, Christian and non-Christian, who are skilled to meet whatever existential needs that determines, for them, the sufficiency of Christ. Knowing that it is Christ who

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works through such professionals to ensure their total well-being, they will consider Christ as sufficient for them.

The final relationship that has to do with human flourishing, as Fikkert observes, is humans' relationship with the creation according to God's intention. In this case, human beings consider creation as something to be stewarded on God's behalf and they conceive "work as a gift from God" (Fikkert, 2017, p. 63). The understanding of work as a divine gift makes work to be human vocation, thus establishing the link between human vocation and human flourishing. This understanding coheres with the earlier discourse on vocation as a means to ensure human flourishing and entrench the thought that Christ is sufficient for human beings. Humans' relationship with the creation as intended by God is seen in Genesis 1:28 where God tells humans, as bearers of *imago Dei*, to subdue and have dominion over the earth. The mandate to subdue means that, human beings are to nurture and develop the earth so it becomes a conducive home for them as they spread to inhabit it (Middleton, 2005). Beale (1999) interprets this divine mandate to subdue and have dominion (Gen 1:28) to mean that the earth, in its "shalom" state, should be cultivated until this shalom saturates every part of the earth. He argues that this extensive shalom-ness is accomplished through the obedience of human beings as they procreate and produce more bearers of *imago Dei* who outspread God's reign over the earth (Beale, 2011). In other words, human beings as *imago Dei* are intended to bring the cosmos under God's kingdom and protect it from evil (Dempster, 2003). This makes the various vocations through which humans reflect God's dominion over the earth and subsequently transform the earth into God's intended goal to be a sacred duty (Middleton, 2014). Therefore, human vocations are not to be thought of as mere means of survival but rather as divine assignments to represent God on earth.

The implication of the foregoing is that, human vocations are channels through which God meets the needs of his creatures and that Christ's sufficiency to meet humans' existential needs is demonstrated as human beings work to meet one another's needs and ensure one another's total well-being. Underlying human vocation is the intelligent and creative mind that human beings possess and which they use to fulfil their various vocations. As noted earlier, the human rational mind with which they think and create or invent is part of what makes them *imago Dei* according to the substantive approach to defining human beings as *imago Dei*. This means that God calls every human being to be a sub-creator under him, the sovereign Creator, so that his creation flourishes and reaches his intended utopia (Peskett & Ramachandra, 2003). Therefore, the divine mandate to "work" the earth given to humans as *imago Dei* requires them to use their rational abilities to get the "work" done. Every human vocation engages both the intelligence and innovativeness of the individual who is involved therein. This means that African Christians are to deploy their mental prowess and innovate solutions to problems that they and other humans suffer.

The foregoing also implies that human beings are to work in a way that meets the needs of fellow humans and ensure their total well-being as well as that of the cosmos. When they do this, it is as though God is working through them to meet these needs. The phrase "have dominion," which comes along with "subdue" in Genesis 1:28, confirms this as it implies that human beings are to rule over the earth with the thought that God rules through them so they seek to reflect God's authority in their dominion (Dempster, 2003; McCartney, 1994). Therefore, Africans should see their various vocations as serving God and men as God's representatives. This means that Christian healthcare providers can help to demonstrate Christ's sufficiency over sicknesses when they augment their knowledge, hone their skills, and pray to God in faith, to heal the sick. This makes sick Africans to find Christ as sufficient for them. It also means that Christians should seek to alleviate unemployment, poverty, subjugation, marginalisation, and other societal problems that plague Africa through their vocations and voluntary services. By doing this, they can help to entrench the thought in some Africans that Christ is sufficient to meet their existential needs for which they hitherto relied on magical powers, thereby denying his sufficiency for them. This also means that human beings are to care for their environment in a way that ensures their flourishing.

6.2 Human Dignity and Rights

Many Africans are beleaguered by the abuse of their dignity and deprivation of their fundamental rights. Human rights are claims that every human being “has to be treated in a certain way by others and *not* to be treated in certain other ways” as well as claims to “some good to which one is legitimately entitled” (Ramachandra, 2017, p. 47). These rights are derived from and symptomatic of the dignity accorded each person. However, many Africans are denied these rights in one way or the other. The prevalent abuse of human dignity and rights in Africa manifests in slavery, child labour, sexual violation, ethnoreligious conflicts, kidnapping, xenophobic attacks, banditry, and abuse of vulnerable people, especially children and women (see Bagu, 2020). It also manifests in the overworking and underpaying of workers, non-payment or delay of workers’ wages, unjust arrest and incarceration of suspects, weak justice systems, among other actions that constitute gross abuse of human dignity and rights. These problems instigate some Africans to assume that Christ has no power and/or intention to end such abuses, so they seek diabolical powers and partake in activities that deny Christ’s sufficiency to protect themselves from abusers and violators.

Genesis (9:5–6) affirms that being created in *imago Dei* gives every human being right to life and to not being killed for no just cause. *Imago Dei* is why every human being has dignity and equal rights (Ramachandra, 2017; Wolterstoff, 2008) as it bestows on everyone “an irreducible, objective worth” (Keller, 2010, p. 82). It bequeaths equal dignity and a non-negotiable worth on every human being notwithstanding their identity, status, and skilfulness, or lack of it. Christianity in the past espoused this truth so much that Friedrich Nietzsche (1968), an avowed critic of the Christian faith, confesses that Christianity is responsible for inventing and promoting equal rights for all human beings. This should motivate African Christians to speak up and act against activities that undermine humans’ dignity, such as oppression, injustice, discrimination, marginalisation, and exploitation, irrespective of who the victim or perpetrator is. This means that they will regularly and unhesitatingly advocate and preserve the dignity and rights of others as well as seek to free the oppressed from their shackles and reintegrate them into the society with a full dose of esteem as God’s image bearers. This will help victims of the abuse of human dignity and rights to see that Christ, as represented by Christians, is concerned about their total well-being and see him as sufficient for them.

6.3 Human Disability

The reality of disabilities in humans can instigate the thought that Christ is not sufficient, especially when every effort to get rid of such disabilities fail. There are prayer programs organized by Christians in Africa with the intention to heal others of their disabilities and make them think of Christ as sufficient to meet their existential need for holistic well-being. However, not everyone gets healed of their disabilities, so some think that Christ is not sufficient for them because if he is, he would have healed them. Consequently, such people either resort to diabolical aids or abandon the Christian faith. However, the understanding that every human being is created in God’s image can actually change such mentality and expel from people’s minds the thought that Christ is not sufficient for them simply because he does not heal them or their loved ones of their disabilities in the here-and-now. The truth that *imago Dei* defines human identity (Peterson, 2016) implies that, humans are “completely” humans irrespective of their disabilities so all human beings should see themselves as true bearers of God’s image even when they have one or more forms of disability in their bodies. This means that human beings with any form of disabilities should not think Christ is insufficient for them because they have one of more marks of disability which seems to remain despite prayers for him.

The fact that disabled people are created in God’s image and represent God, indicates that God shares in their disabilities (Melcher et al., 2017). Eiesland (1994) demonstrates this view in her reference to the resurrected Jesus who chose to retain marks of disability, in terms of the scars on his body (John 20). So, while the resurrected body is indeed transformed, it is not completely discontinued and different from the present body such that all marks of disability are permanently obliterated (Yong,

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2011). This implies that wholeness, which many Africans seek and for which they seek Christ and think of him as sufficient or not, is not about a perfect body but “the affirmation of God’s presence with us in our painstaking quest for survival” (Deland, 1999, p. 61). Therefore, Africans should not define Christ’s sufficiency for them in terms of the presence or absence of physical disabilities in their bodies. Rather, they should think of his sufficiency in terms of their being created in his image in that, they are fully and truly humans just like everyone else, so they will not engage in activities that deny Christ’s sufficiency in a bid to eradicate their disabilities or deny Christ as sufficient for them because their disabilities remain despite their prayers.

Thomas Aquinas (1981) affirms that God has a purpose for which he created each body in the light of whatever vocation(s) a person may be called to engage in during the course of his/her life. This means that *imago Dei* allows every human being, including the disabled, to have “infinite variety and space to grow” (Deland, 1999, p. 54). Deland’s (1999, p. 58) observation about the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets is pertinent to this discourse. She says that: “Unlike the bodily perfection of the Greek and Roman gods and heroes, the patriarchs and prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures had numerous disabilities. These in no way excluded them from being agents of God’s redemption.” This means that disabled people can also represent God in Africa, serving in different capacities, as enabled by God through his Spirit, to meet the needs of the people, thereby demonstrating Christ’s sufficiency for them. This also means that they are entitled to care and honour (Deland, 1999). In that case, Africans need to care for the disabled in such a way that their existential needs are met through vocations and upholding of the dignity and rights of the disabled. All this will prevent many disabled people from resorting to activities that betray the thought that Christ is sufficient for them.

7.0 CONCLUSION

This study argues that alongside prayers for supernatural interventions to prove that Christ is sufficient, Africans (Christians and non-Christians) are divinely equipped and empowered as creatures in God’s image to meet many of their existential needs as well as those of others so that they will not deny Christ’s sufficiency because they lack one or more necessities that ensure their total well-being. Therefore, Africans need to deploy all they have, synergize with others, and put in all efforts to meet their existential needs so they will not think Christ is not sufficient for them because such needs remain unmet after prayers. This is because there are some existential needs that make some Africans think that, Christ is not sufficient for them that can be met through human efforts and contributions. Several problems plague the African continent and God has deposited in Africa and Africans the wherewithal to solve these problems. The burden now lies on Africans to maximise these God-given provisions to solve the problems that beleaguer the continent and its people. The use of human mental and physical abilities and innovations to solve problems and meet needs is acting as God’s representatives and it means that God is working through his human creatures to demonstrate that Jesus Christ is sufficient to meet existential needs.

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