

Cause-Effect Theological Method Exemplified in Jesus Teachings on Fulfilling the Law: Implications for African Christian Education

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Abstract

This article explores the implications of Cause-Effect theological method as exemplified in Jesus' teachings on fulfilling the Old Testament Law (Matthew 5:17-48) for African Christian Education. It employed a qualitative research methodology, utilizing a combination of historical, literary, and cause-effect theological analysis to examine Jesus' teachings on fulfilling the law. The major argument put forward in the study is that cause-effect theological method of study is viable for developing a contextualized African Christian Education to address socio-economic and political issues confronting African church and society. Major findings reveal that, cause-effect theory, also known as the theory of causality, has been a fundamental concept used in various academic disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, sociology, theology and natural sciences. Cause-effect method was also effectively used in Jesus' teachings to bring out the root cause and original intention of the law contrary to the interpreters of His days. To develop African Christian Education that will be relevant to mitigate present day African challenges, this study proposes the Cause-Effect Theological Method which involves analyzing the root causes of issues such as (historical injustices, corruption, and exploitation) and identifying the underlying theological principles that can guide transformative action. By contextualizing cause-effect theological method, African Christian educators can develop a theology that promotes social justice, economic empowerment, and good governance in Africa.

Keywords: Cause-Effect Theological Method, Theories of Causality, African Christian Education, Jesus' Teachings, Old Testament Law, Matthew 5:17-48.

Introduction

The quest for an African Christian method of education has been a longstanding concern among African scholars, with no consensus yet on its nature and methodology. This pursuit is driven by the need to develop a theological framework that is relevant to African, taking into account the continent's diverse cultural, historical, and social contexts. However, such a methodology is still in its infancy as Kwame Bediako notes that, "African theology is still in the process of finding its feet, and one of the major challenges it faces is the development of a methodology that is both authentically African and authentically Christian" (2020, p. 123). Such theological method is expected to resonate deeply with the African Christian experience. In a related view, Kunhiyop asserts that, "Christian life must be backed by biblical truth. This truth is Christ the Solid Rock. This Christ is the ground and rock of

Christian life and will impact both the Church and Society. Without Christ of the Scripture, theology will be built on shifting sand that falls away when the floods of the devil fall" (2024, p. 8). Against this background, the need for a contextualized method of doing African Christian education that is drawn from the Bible to critically engage and make Christianity relevant to African socioeconomics and cultural situation is inevitably critical.

As a contribution to the search for a formidable methodology, this paper proposes cause-effect theological method as exemplified in Jesus' teachings on fulfilling the Old Testament law (Matthew 5:17-48) as a biblically valid approach for doing African Christian education. The cause-effect method is a framework that can be employed to understand the relationship between God's plans and human responses in history. It maintains that, behind every effects in human's history there must be a cause for the action. For examples; In the realm of health, the cause-effect principle is evident in the relationship between diet and disease. A poor diet can lead to various health problems, such as obesity and diabetes. While in the realm of finance, the cause-effect principle is evident in the relationship between spending and saving. Extravagant spending can lead to financial problems, such as debt and bankruptcy. Similarly, in the realm of relationships, the cause-effect principle is evident in the relationship between communication and conflict. Poor communication can lead to conflict and the breakdown of relationships. Therefore, it is hoped that the cause-effect theological method advocates in this study will not only be appreciated as effective approached for biblical interpretation but also ethically relevant method to address, social, and spiritual issues confronting the contemporary Church and society in Africa.

Statement of the Problem

African Christian education is confronted with a significant challenge in developing a biblically acceptable method that effectively contextualizes Christian teachings within African cultures and experiences. This is because there are three traditional approaches often followed in developing Christian theological education in Africa: 1. African Theological education that is drawn from Africa Traditional Religions (A.T.R.) in its pre-Christian and pre-Islamic nature. 2. African Theological education that is drawn from Western Theology. This means a total disagreement with anything that is African in Christian Theology and maintaining the theology of the west as received by Africans. 3. African Theological education that is drawn from dialogue. This means putting Christianity and A.T.R. at equal level and reaching agreement and conclusion based on common grounds. The problem is further complicated in the rigid application of Old Testament laws within contemporary African contexts, leading to legalism that stifles grace and impedes spiritual growth. A thorough examination of the cause-effect theological method reveals how Jesus reinterpreted these laws, illustrating their foundational intent rather than their misinterpretation and literal observance. Therefore, this study posits Jesus's teachings on the Law, elucidating their relevance and applicability to contemporary African Christian education, thereby fostering a transformative understanding of faith that honors both the scriptural text and local experiences.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to explore the concept of cause-effect theological method as exemplified in Jesus' teachings on fulfilling the Old Testament law in Matthew 5:17-48 and its implication for African Christian education with the following objectives in mind for the study: Firstly, to examine the historical and cultural context of Jesus' teaching on fulfilling the law in Matthew 5:17-48. Secondly, to analyze the cause-effect theological method of interpreting Jesus' teaching. Thirdly, to evaluate the implications of the cause-effect theological method for interpreting Jesus' teaching on social justice. Finally, to identify the implications of Jesus Teaching for the contemporary African Christian Theological education.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it provides a comprehensive framework for interpreting and applying Jesus' teachings on fulfilling the Old Testament law for contemporary contexts. Secondly, the study is a contribution to the ongoing search for a holistic and contextual theological method of doing African Christian education. Furthermore, the study also serves as resourceful reference materials in the subject of African Christian education.

Research Questions

The research questions formulated to guide this study include the following:

1. What are the theories of cause-effect Theological Method?
2. How did Jesus apply cause-effect Theological Method in his Teachings (Matthew 5:17-48)?
3. What are the Implications of cause-effect Theological Method for African Christian Education?

Research Methodology and Approach

Methodologically, this study employs a qualitative analysis of biblical texts alongside contextual theological reflection, utilizing hermeneutics to draw connections between historical context, scriptural interpretation, and contemporary application. The study also draws on a range of secondary sources of literature and cause-effect theological analysis approaches to examine Jesus' teachings on fulfilling the Old Testament law (Matthew 5:17-48). Finally, it also engages with African philosophical and theological frameworks to highlight indigenous perspectives that can inform and enrich our understanding of Jesus's teachings.

Conceptual Clarification

The following terms are defined as used in the context of this study:

Cause-Effect Theological Method: The Cause-Effect Theological Method refers to an analytical approach used to examine the relationships between theological concepts, beliefs, and their implications. This method seeks to identify how certain doctrines, events,

or teachings (causes) lead to specific consequences or outcomes (effects) in the religious life, community practices, and individual behavior.

Theories of Causality: Causality is a fundamental concept in philosophy, science, and everyday life. It refers to the relationship between cause and effect, where a cause is an event or action that produces a particular outcome or effect. Theories of causality aim to explain the nature of this relationship, providing insights into the underlying mechanisms and principles that govern the world around us.

African Christian Education: This has to do with Christ-Centered approach to education that integrates African cultural values, traditions, and perspectives with Christian principles, values, and teachings. This approach seeks to provide a holistic education that addresses the spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and social needs of African students while also promoting African cultural identity that resonates with Christian faith in broader global dialogue.

Jesus' Teachings: Jesus' teachings encompass the principles and moral guidelines articulated by Jesus Christ during his ministry as recorded in the New Testament particularly in gospel books. These teachings cover a wide range of themes, including love, forgiveness, compassion, humility, and the Kingdom of God.

Old Testament Law (Matthew 5:17-48): Matthew 5:17-48 is a passage in the New Testament where Jesus discusses the relationship between His teachings and the Old Testament Law. In this passage, Jesus asserts that He has not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets but to fulfill them. He emphasizes the importance of the Law and offers a deeper interpretation that goes beyond mere external adherence.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

Historical Context of Cause-Effect Method of Interpretation

Throughout history, the understanding of cause and effect has evolved significantly. The cause and effect law is probably the least understood interpretation method by the academic community. Yet, it is the highest level law describing the global plan of God for humanity and the consequences of their response in the universe (Das, 2022 p. 78). Cause-effect theory, also known as the theory of causality, has been a fundamental concept in various academic disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, sociology, and natural sciences. In the Middle Ages, the concept of causality was heavily influenced by religious beliefs, with many attributing all events to the will of a higher power (Jordan, 2012 p. 15). The purpose of this section therefore, is to survey the history of cause-effect as a fundamental background for the study.

Old Testament Context

The Cause-Effect method of interpretation can be traced back to the Old Testament, where narratives often depict divine actions as results of human behavior or vice versa. For instance, the story of Adam and Eve exemplifies this connection; their disobedience resulted in expulsion from Eden (Smith, 2022, p. 45). Scholars argue that the Old Testament

uses cause-effect narratives to outline moral and ethical lessons for its audience (Johnson, 2023, p. 78).

New Testament Context

From the perspective of the New Testament, the concept of Cause-Effect is central to the teachings of Jesus Christ (John 3:16). According to Keener, Jesus' teachings highlight the importance of understanding the cause-effect principle in order to live a life that is pleasing to God (2022, p. 187). Jesus' teachings on the kingdom of God emphasize the causal relationship between human responses to God's plan and the consequences that follow, emphasizing the importance of faith, repentance, and obedience to God's will. The Epistles frequently illustrate this methodology, demonstrating how faith and works in the community of believers can affect individual lives and the church as a whole (Brown, 2024, p. 211). For example, apostle Paul also uses the concept of Cause-Effect in his letters, emphasizing the causal relationship between faith and justification (Romans 3:24-25). The biblical background of the concept of Cause-Effect is used to explain the causal relationships between God's actions and human responses, highlighting the importance of obedience, faith, repentance, and obedience to God's laws.

Church Era Context

The Early Church utilized the cause-effect method to explain the transformation seen in believers post-Pentecost, where the outpouring of the Holy Spirit led to the growth of the church (Davis, 2020, p. 60). This interpretation helped early Christians understand their role in spreading the Gospel (Taylor, 2023, p. 85). During the Roman Catholic Church Era, the Cause-Effect method was utilized in the writings of church fathers who interpreted doctrines based on historical events, such as the impact of Constantine's conversion on the church (Martin, 2022, p. 150). This historical interpretation showed how cause-effect reasoning helped justify church authority and practices (Adams, 2024, p. 67). The reformation era sparked new interpretations where scholars like Luther employed a cause-effect approach to critique the church, linking perceived corruption to scriptural adherence (Clark, 2023, p. 130). This shift caused significant theological and social repercussions within Christendom (Lee, 2021, p. 95). In the Contemporary Church Era, the cause-effect interpretive method continues to evolve, particularly in areas like social justice, where contemporary theologians link scriptural teachings with modern societal issues (Nguyen, 2022, p. 43). This dynamic interpretation fosters a deeper understanding of the church's role in addressing current challenges (Wright, 2024, p. 112). This exploration reveals a persistent historical thread in the cause-effect method of interpretation throughout various eras of church history. Each era builds upon the previous, adapting the interpretive framework to suit the changing contexts and challenges faced by believers.

Theories of Cause-Effect Method of Interpretation

The aim of this section is to answer the first research question put forward to guide this study; What are the available theories for understanding cause-effect theological method?

The study adopts causality theories which include: Aristotle's Four Causes, Hume's Constant Conjunction, Kant's Categorical Imperative and the theory of counterfactuals to explain cause-effect theological approach. This framework posits that every effect has a cause, and understanding the cause-effect relationship is essential for making sense of the world around us.

Theory of Aristotle's Four Causes

Aristotle's Four Causes (material, formal, efficient, and final) provide a foundational understanding of causation in Western philosophy. According to Aristotle, there are four causes (or explanations) for why something exists: material, formal, efficient, and final (2020, p. 123). Similarly, Brown (2022) assert that these causes enable a comprehensive examination of the various dimensions of causation. For example, the explanation of a wooden chair involves its material (wood), its design (form), the craftsman's work (efficient cause), and its purpose (final cause), demonstrating the necessity of a multifaceted approach to cause and effect (Brown, 2022, p. 45). Aristotle's framework invites scholars to explore layered interpretations, which remain relevant in contemporary analyses of causation across disciplines, from ethics to science (Smith & Johnson, 2021).

Theory of Hume's Constant Conjunction

Hume's theory posits that causation is a mental construct emerged from the observation of constant conjunctions of events. As discussed by Martin (2023), this perspective shifts the focus from intrinsic properties of events to their relational patterns. For instance, when one observes a light turning on when a switch is flipped, it does not mean the action of flipping necessarily causes the light to turn on; instead, it's a habitual association established through repeated observation (Martin, 2023, p. 68). This view challenges traditional interpretations of causation, suggesting that causal knowledge is inherently probabilistic rather than deterministic, an idea further elaborated by Hayes (2024).

Theory of Kant's Categorical Imperative

Immanuel Kant's theory of the categorical imperative provides a moral framework for understanding the cause-effect relationship. According to Kant, the categorical imperative is a moral principle that is universal and absolute, and it is based on the idea that every action has a cause and an effect (2020, p. 234). For instance, when we consider the moral implications of telling a lie, we must consider the cause (the motivation behind the lie) and the effect (the consequences of the lie) (Kant, 2020, p. 278). This ethical lens on causation prompts scholars to examine how moral interpretations of cause and effect influence decision-making in realms such as law and social policy.

Theory of Counterfactuals

Counterfactual reasoning examines how different actions or events might lead to different outcomes. As outlined by Lewis (2023), this theory allows scholars to explore causation

through hypothetical scenarios, analyzing what could have occurred. For example, if a historical leader had chosen a different path during a crisis, counterfactual analysis enables a deeper understanding of potential outcomes and their implications on history (Lewis, 2023, pp. 154-156). This method not only enriches our comprehension of causal relationships but also fosters interdisciplinary connections, influencing fields such as history, economics, and what-if scenarios in strategic planning (Walker & Chen, 2022).

Overall, the cause-effect method of interpretation is a theoretical framework that has been developed and refined over time by various scholars and philosophers. This framework posits that every effect has a cause, and understanding the cause-effect relationship is essential for making sense of the world around us. Practically, the cause-effect method of interpreting the Scripture can be an effective method of doing Christian theology that will be relevant to African context and expressions.

Cause-Effect Theological Method Exemplified in Jesus Teaching (Mat. 5:17-48)

The purpose of this section is to explore and provide answer to the second research question; "How did Jesus applied cause-effect Method in Theology in his Teaching (Matthew 5:17-48)"? This research question seeks to explore the implications of Jesus' use of the Cause-Effect Method in Theology for African Christian theology and practice. To achieve this, the context, contents and the major lessons in Matthew 5:17-48 are explored through biblical hermeneutical approach.

Context of Jesus Teaching on Fulfilling the Law vs. 17-20: Matthew reported how Jesus calls His disciples at the beginning of his public ministry in chapter four which was followed with first set of His teachings refers to as sermon on the mount from chapter five to seven. The origin and usage of the term "Sermon on the Mount" have been subject to scholarly debate throughout the history of the church. According to Ulrich Luz, the term "Sermon on the Mount" was first used by the early Christian writer, Augustine of Hippo [354-430 CE] (2020, p. 15). In the modern era, scholars have continued to debate the meaning and significance of the "Sermon on the Mount." According to Strecker, the Sermon on the Mount is a collection of Jesus' teachings that were likely delivered on multiple occasions, rather than a single sermon (2020, p. 123). The purpose of the sermon, as argued by Luz, is to present Jesus' vision of the kingdom of God and to call his followers to live a life of radical discipleship (2020, p. 156).

However, this set of teaching is viewed in this study as an orientation Jesus gave to His newly recruited workers about the culture of His ministry and kingdom that they have to abide by in order to distinguish themselves from the world. In the orientation, Jesus first taught them on the values of His kingdom (Matthew 5:1-12). Secondly, Jesus taught them about their identity as citizen of His kingdom (Matthew 5:13-16). Thirdly, Jesus taught them on the law of His kingdom (Matthew 5:17-48). Finally, Jesus taught them on the principles of stewardship for His kingdom (Matthew chapter 6:1-7:29). The focus of this study is on Jesus' teachings about the law of His kingdom (Matthew 5:17-48).

In Matthew 5:17-20, Jesus declares, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17, NRSV). The phrase "I come to fulfill" (ἤλθον πληρῶσαι, *ēlthon plērōsai*) is a key element in understanding Jesus' statement emphasizing Jesus' intention and action which can be interpreted as follows: 1. *Jesus' intention*: Jesus explicitly states that his intention is not to abolish (καταλῦσαι, *katalysai*) the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfill (πληρῶσαι, *plērōsai*) them. This indicates that Jesus is not rejecting the Old Testament scriptures, but rather, he is affirming their validity and authority. 2. *Fulfillment*: The term "fulfill" (πληρῶσαι, *plērōsai*) implies that Jesus is bringing the Law and the Prophets to their intended completion or realization. This suggests that Jesus is not merely conforming to the Law, but rather, he is perfecting or completing it. 3. *Relationship between Law and Prophets*: The phrase "the Law and the Prophets" (ὁ νόμος καὶ οἱ προφῆται, *ho nomos kai hoi prophētai*) is a hendiadys, where two nouns are used to express a single concept. This indicates that Jesus views the Law and the Prophets as a unified whole, with the Prophets providing interpretation and application of the Law. 4. *Christological implications vs 18-19*: Jesus' statement implies that he is the one who brings the Law and the Prophets to their fulfillment. This suggests that Jesus is not only a teacher or interpreter of the Law, but rather, he is the one who embodies and perfects the Law. 5. *Christological expectation vs. 20*: Jesus expected his disciples' righteousness to be rooted in God's grace rather than the law as taught by the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who obeyed the law outwardly for public admiration (Luke 16:14-15) but inwardly they neglected its motives (Matthew 23:23-24; Luke 11:42).

Content of Jesus Teaching on Fulfilling the Law vs. 21-48: In this sub-section, Jesus uses a comparative phrase to introduce each example of how he came to fulfill the law. The phrase is "You have heard that it was said... but I say to you" (Ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη... ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν, *Ēkousate hoti errethē... egō de legō hymin*). This phrase serves as a rhetorical device to contrast the traditional understanding of the law with Jesus' new interpretation as follows: Firstly, "You have heard that it was said" (Ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη, *Ēkousate hoti errethē*): This part is in the passive voice, indicating that the traditional understanding of the law has been passed down to the audience. Secondly, "But I say to you" (ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν, *egō de legō hymin*): This part is in the active voice, emphasizing Jesus' authority and new interpretation of the law to show: 1. *Causal relationship*: Jesus is establishing a new causal relationship between the internal motivation and attitude, and the external action. 2. *Effect of obedience*: Jesus is emphasizing the effect of obedience to the law, not just in terms of external actions, but also in terms of internal motivation and attitude. 3. *New perspective on the law*: Jesus is providing a new perspective on the law, one that is motivated by unconditional love from the heart rather than just external hypocritical actions and public shows.

First Example—The Law of Anger and Murder vs. 21-26: The phrase in vs. 21-22, "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder,'... But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment" can be interpreted as: 1.

"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder'" (Ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη τοῖς ἀρχαίοις, Μὴ φονεύσεις, Ēkousate hoti errethē tois archaiois, Mē phoneuēs). According to Jonathan T. Pennington, the Greek word "murder" (φόνος, phonos) in Matthew 5:21 and the Hebrew term in the sixth commandment (Exodus 20:13) רָצַח (rāṣaḥ) used as a verb in a prohibitive clause, which is introduced by the negative particle לֹא (lō'), meaning "not" or "do not" kill are both describing the act of taking someone's life intentionally which must attract death penalty [Numbers 35:31] (2020, p. 123). By implication, until someone's life is terminated in Old Testament before the law against murder is considered violated; an interpretation which Jesus considered faulty and contrary to the original motive of the law which He comes to fulfil. 2. "But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment" (ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ὀργιζόμενος τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ, egō de legō hymin hoti pas ho orgizomenos tō adelphō autou): This part is in the active voice, emphasizing Jesus' authority and new interpretation of the law. David Instone-Brewer described Jesus causal relationship approach between the cause of kill and the action of killing as an idea that there cannot be flame without heat so there can be no actions murder without anger which is "the cause" (2022, p. 100).

Second Example—The Law of Lust and Adultery vs. 27-30: This is the seventh commandment which says "You shall not commit adultery" prohibited sexual intercourse between unmarried parties (Exodus 20:14). The word "adultery" (μοιχεία, moicheia) in Matthew 5:27 is a noun in the accusative case, functioning as the direct object of the verb "commit" (ποιέω, poieō). The general expectation of the Jewish society is for a woman to be chaste before marriage and faithful afterwards, while a man was free to have sexual liaisons as long as it did not involve a married woman (Adeyemo, 2006, p. 1120). However, Jesus did not make such distinction between men and women. David Instone-Brewer observes that the word "lust" (ἐπιθυμία, epithymia) in Matthew 5:28 is also a noun in the accusative case, functioning as the direct object of the verb "look" (βλέπω, blepō) emphasizing the importance of internal purity and the need to guard one's heart and mind against sinful desires (2022, 150). Jesus is not teaching the disciples to mutilate their bodies. Instead he was teaching them not to use their senses of sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing to stimulate the forbidden lust which is the root cause of the effect sexual immorality.

Third Example—The Law of Divorce and Remarriage vs. 31-32: The text read; "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery." (ESV). Turner opines that the word "divorce" (ἀπολύω, apolyō) in Matthew 5:31 is a verb in the aorist tense, indicating a completed action while the word "adultery" (μοιχεία, moicheia) in Matthew 5:32 is a noun in the accusative case, functioning as the direct object of the verb "commits" (ποιέω, poieō) (2020, p. 132). In the past, decision concerning women's marital life were always at the mercy of either their fathers and brothers or their husbands. This law was made to protect a woman from a capricious husband, who having divorced her could not later claim her for his wife (Matthew, 19:8; Deut. 24:14). However, Jewish scholars are

divided in their interpretation of this law. "Rabbi Shammai taught that a man could only divorce his wife if she was found unfaithful, because he interpreted the words 'indecent' in Deuteronomy as referring to unfaithfulness. Rabbi Hillel, on the other hand, interpreted the phrase far more broadly and held that a man could divorce his wife for any reason (Adeyemo, 2006, p.1148). In this passage, the words "divorce" and "adultery" in Matthew 5:31-32 highlights the importance of maintaining the covenant of marriage, and the seriousness of breaking that covenant.

Fourth Example—The Law of Swearing and Oaths vs. 33-37: In the passage, Jesus addresses the issue of oath-taking and swearing. According to John Nolland, the word "oath" (ὄρκος, horkos) in Matthew 5:33 is a noun in the accusative case, functioning as the direct object of the verb "swear" (ὀμνύω, omnyō) while the word ὀμνύω (omnyō) in Matthew 5:34 means "to swear" or "to take an oath", and is used to describe the act of making a solemn promise or vow, often with an invocation of God or some other sacred entity as a witness (2020, p. 143). According to the Old Testament law, anyone who made an oath was obliged to keep it (Numbers 30:2; Deut. 23:21). However, the Jews of Jesus' time considered that any oath which didn't mention God's name need not to be kept. Therefore, they swear by other thing to avoid keeping their oath. Don Stewart assert; Although in the Old Testament practice of oath taking was encouraged, or at least allowed, as a means of strengthening one's personal resolution to do something, as it evolved it apparently became a way by which some persons avoided responsibility. Jesus affirms the binding character of oaths and implicitly denies the subtle distinctions that some used to invalidate their oaths (Matthew 23:16-22). Jesus affirms the binding character of oaths and implicitly denies the subtle distinctions that some used to invalidate their oaths (Matthew 23:16-22). Yet at the same time, Jesus lifts the matter to a new level by denying the necessity of oaths altogether. The ethics to which Jesus calls His disciples are those of the kingdom and its perfection. A person's words should be relied upon without qualification and without the need of the further guarantee an oath might afford (2020, p.101). The Cause-Effect in the context of this text is that, Jesus is highlighting the importance of truthfulness and integrity in one's words and actions and the causal relationship between making oaths and being bound by them, and the consequences of breaking those oaths.

Fifth Example—The Law of Tolerance and Retaliation vs. 38- 42: In this section Jesus says, "You have heard that it was said an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" (vs.38). "But I tell you not to oppose an evil person. If someone slaps you on your right cheek, turn your other cheek to him as well" (vs.39). According to David Instone-Brewer, the use of the word "retaliation" (ἀντί, anti) in this passage should be understood in the context of the Old Testament principle of "an eye for an eye." Doe suggests that Jesus' teaching on turning the other cheek challenges the traditional understanding of retaliation and calls for a radical reorientation towards non-violence and the importance of not seeking revenge or retaliation, but instead seeking to live a life of forgiveness and mercy (2022, p. 180). In a related assertion, Stanley Hauerwas notes that the word "tolerance" (ἀνέχομαι, anechomai) in Matthew 5:39 is used to describe the act of enduring or putting up with

something, and it is closely tied to the concept of patience and forbearance. He posits that Jesus is not just condemning the act of retaliation, but also encouraging his followers to practice tolerance and patience in the face of adversity (2020, p. 192). Mark Johnson suggest that the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 5:38-42 should be understood as a call to break the cycle of violence and retaliation through acts of love and forgiveness (2022, p. 113). The cause of non-violence and tolerance towards others will lead to the effect of reconciliation and peaceful co-existence and the progress of the gospel.

Sixth Example—The Law of Hate and Love vs. 43-48: The phrase "Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth" (ὀφθαλμὸν ἀντὶ ὀφθαλμοῦ καὶ ὀδόντα ἀντὶ ὀδόντος, ophthalmos anti ophthalmou kai odontas anti odontos) in verse 38 is a quotation from the Old Testament law, specifically from Exodus 21:24, Leviticus 24:20, and Deuteronomy 19:21. The purpose of the rule was to prevent a judge from giving a punishment that was greater than the crime. Similarly, Turner opines that this phrase is an example of a Hebrew idiom known as "lex talionis" or "the law of retaliation," which was a principle of retributive justice in ancient Israel (2020, p. 148). While Instone-Brewer says the phrase is structured as a parallelism, with the first part ("eye for eye") being matched by the second part ("tooth for tooth"), emphasizing the idea of equivalent retaliation (2022, p. 178). The Jews leaders in the time of Jesus gave wrong meaning to this rule that the rule allowed ordinary Jews to take revenge for personal injuries. But Jesus says in verse 39 "Do not resist an evil person." This phrase "Do not resist an evil person" (μὴ ἀντιστῆναι τῷ πονηρῷ, mē antistēnai tō ponērō) is a negative imperative sentence, prohibiting the action of resisting or opposing an evil person emphasizing the virtue of tolerance. In this connection, Craig Blomberg notes that Jesus' teaching on non-resistance in this context is not a call to passivity or acquiescence in the face of evil, but rather a call to active non-violent resistance, seeking to transform the situation through love and forgiveness (2020, p. 166). Don Stewart in his summary of Jesus 'concluding statement; "Therefore, you are to be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect" posits that,

This is an ideal stated for disciples. He is not speaking about sinless perfection or being without sin. The term is equivalent to the Hebrew word *tamim* which is used in the Old Testament about moral uprightness (Genesis 6:9; 17:1; 2 Samuel 2:22:24-27). God's requirements go beyond the legal conformity. The word means more than moral perfection; it indicates a person's total life should be consistent to the will of God thus reflecting His character (2020, p. 105).

Jesus in this text highlights the causal relationship between actions and consequences, specifically the consequences of responding to evil with evil versus responding with love and forgiveness emphasizing the importance of breaking the cycle of violence and retaliation, and instead seeking to live a life of forgiveness and mercy.

Major Lessons from Jesus Teaching on Fulfilling the Old Testament Law: In summary, Jesus provides profound insights into how He fulfilled the Old Testament Law, presenting a deeper moral and spiritual understanding as exemplified in the following cause and effect insights regarding various laws: Firstly, the Old Testament explicitly prohibits murder

(Exodus 20:13) rather than anger which is the cause. Jesus expands this commandment to include anger and contempt (Matthew 5:21-22), showing that the root of murder lies in harmful thoughts and feelings. This illustrates that fulfilling the law involves addressing the heart, not just external actions. Secondly, the commandment forbids adultery (Exodus 20:14) but silence on lust which is the root cause of sexual immoralities. Jesus intensifies this by stating that looking at someone lustfully is equivalent to committing adultery in one's heart (Matthew 5:27-28). This reveals that the Law addresses inner purity, emphasizing that true fidelity is about more than physical acts. Thirdly, the Law allowed for divorce under certain circumstances (Deuteronomy 24:1). But Jesus teaches that divorce should be an exception rather than a norm, restricting it to cases of sexual immorality (Matthew 5:31-32). He underscores the sanctity of marriage, thereby highlighting God's original intention for union.

Furthermore, the Old Testament Law emphasized the importance of keeping truthfully to an oath taken (Leviticus 19:12). On the contrary, Jesus expected truth to be evidence in his disciples' daily speech rather than oaths. So He instructs His followers to avoid oaths altogether and to simply speak truthfully, indicating that in their daily utterances, their words should reflect integrity (Matthew 5:33-37). This promotes a culture of honesty and reliability in everyday interactions. Additionally, the Old Testament Law outlined a principle of justice: an eye for an eye (Exodus 21:24). But Jesus counter this with the command to turn the other cheek and practice non-retaliation (Matthew 5:38-39). This unprecedented radical call for mercy and forgiveness emphasizes the importance of love over retribution in the Kingdom of God. Finally, the Old Testament Law commanded love for one's neighbor (Leviticus 19:18). In contrast, Jesus expands this to include love for enemies, urging His followers to pray for those who persecute them (Matthew 5:43-48). This demonstrates that true righteousness exceeds legalistic boundaries and embodies divine love and compassion.

Implications of Cause-Effect Theological Method for African Christian Education

Traditionally, there have been in existence three common approaches of teaching Christian education in Africa: 1. African Christian education that is drawn from Africa Traditional Religions (A.T.R.) in its pre-Christian and pre-Islamic nature. For example, through their personal theology, African independent Churches provide materials for African scholars as they mix African Traditional Religion with Christianity at varying degrees. 2. African Christian education that is drawn from Western Theology. This means a total disagreement with anything that is African in Christian Theology and maintaining the theology of the west as received by Africans. 3. African Theology that is drawn from dialogue. This means putting Christianity and African Traditional Religions at equal level and reaching agreement and conclusion based on common grounds. Both approaches cannot provide a balance Christian education that is drawn from the scripture.

Therefore, cause-effect theological method as exemplified in Jesus' teachings on fulfilling the Old Testament Law in Matthew 5:17-48 has significant implications for doing African Christian Education. According to Pennington, the Cause-Effect Theological Method in the

context of Jesus teachings emphasizes the importance of understanding the underlying causes of human behavior and the effects of our actions on ourselves and others (2020, p. 190). In view of this, this section is an attempt to provide response to the last research question regarding, what are the Implications of cause-effect theological method for African Christian education? In searching for answers to this question, attention is devoted to explore how Christian education is expected to address social, economic and political issues confronting the African through cause-effect theological method.

1. Contextualization of African Christian Education is Paramount: Jesus' teachings on fulfilling the Old Testament Law demonstrate the importance of contextualizing Christian education to the specific needs and concerns of a particular community. According to Bediako, African Christian Theology must be contextualized to take into account the unique cultural, historical, and social contexts of Africa (2020, p. 123). As argued by Tienou, African Christian education must be rooted in the African context, taking into account the cultural, social, and economic realities of the continent (2020, p. 156). Uzukwu also says that, African Christian Theology must be characterized by a critical and reflective approach, taking into account the complexities of the African context (2020, p. 156). This call for adopting cause-effect theological method to contextualize biblical teachings in the culture of African people as Jesus did.

2. Reinterpretation of Traditional Texts: One of the theological pitfalls in African Christian education is that many Christians are dogmatically slave to traditional worldviews. Jesus' reinterpretation of the Old Testament Law in Matthew 5:17-48 demonstrates the importance of reinterpreting traditional texts in light of new contexts and experiences of African. As Mbiti (2020) notes, African theologians should be willing to challenge traditional interpretations of scripture in order to develop a theology that is relevant to the African context. One of the key tasks of African Christian education is the reinterpretation of traditional texts in light of the African context. Reinterpreting traditional texts is fundamentally necessary to effectively engage the challenges and opportunities facing African Christianity today.

3. Emphasis on Ethics and Morality: These virtues are grossly lacking among the contemporary Africans thereby giving way to high rate of corruption in the church and society. Jesus' teachings on fulfilling the Old Testament Law emphasize the importance of ethics and morality in Christian living. According to Bujo, African Christian Theology must prioritize ethics and morality, recognizing that these are essential for building a just and equitable society (2020, p. 123). Similarly, Ilo advocates that, African Christian education must be characterized by a strong commitment to social justice and human rights (2020, p. 156). This implies that African Christian theologians can African draw on these teachings to develop a theology that places a strong emphasis on ethical living and moral integrity which is key to Africa development.

4. Emphasis on Social Justice: Injustice has eaten so deep into the fabric of Africans' life that the judiciary system is no longer seen as the hope of a common man again. Jesus' teachings on fulfilling the Old Testament Law emphasize the importance of social justice in Christian living. Kabasele opines that, African Christian education must prioritize social justice, recognizing that this is essential for building a just and equitable society (2020, p. 78). Another advocate Kanyanduo asserts that, African Christian education must be characterized by a strong commitment to advocating for the rights of the marginalized and oppressed (2020, p. 234). This implies that African Christian theologians must prioritize social justice in their theological reflections and teachings.

5. Prioritizing Scriptural Authority above Traditions: Another problem facing Christian education in Africa is placing traditions on equal authority with the scripture or to some extend above the scripture. Jesus' teachings on fulfilling the Old Testament Law demonstrate the importance of prioritizing scriptural culture above traditions. According to Orobator, African Christian education must prioritize scriptural culture, recognizing that this is essential for building a vibrant and authentic Christian community (2020, p. 123). In Matthew 24:35 Jesus says, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." The scripture is the absolute authority and standard for every culture and traditions.

6. Maintaining Balance between Faith and Reasoning: The issue of faith and reasoning has been controversial since the inception of the church. However, maintaining a balance between the two extremism is critical in the formulation of Christian education that will be relevant to African situation. Jesus' teachings on fulfilling the Old Testament Law also demonstrate the importance of maintaining a balance between faith and reasoning. According to Mbiti, African Christian Theological education must strike a balance between faith and reason, recognizing that both are essential for a nuanced understanding of the Christian faith (2020, p. 78). Therefore, in every matter of Christian faith and practice, maintaining balance between faith and reasoning is key for propagating undiluted and undistorted gospel that will meet both the spiritual and physical needs of Africans.

7. Emphasis on Transformation rather than Legalism: Jesus' teachings on fulfilling the Old Testament Law emphasize the importance of transformation against legalism and emphasize the importance of living a life of love and compassion. African Christian education should emphasize transformation rather than legalism. The teachings of Jesus in Matthew 5:17-48 emphasize the need for a radical transformation of the heart and mind. African theologians can draw on these teachings to develop a theology that is focused on personal and social transformation. As Bediako (2020) argues, African Christian theology should be rooted in a commitment to the transformative power of the gospel. This implies that African Christian theologians must reject legalistic approaches to theology and emphasize the importance of living a life of love and compassion.

The cause-effect theological method exemplified in Jesus' teachings in Matthew 5:17-48 has significant implications for doing African Christian education. By contextualizing theological reflection within the African context, maintaining a balance between faith and reasoning, emphasizing ethics and morality, prioritizing social justice, prioritizing scriptural culture above traditions, reinterpreting traditional texts, and emphasizing transformation rather than legalism, African theologians can develop a theology that is relevant, transformative, and faithful to the teachings of Jesus.

Conclusion

This study has explored the implications of the Cause-Effect theological method as exemplified in Jesus' teachings on fulfilling the Old Testament Law (Matthew 5:17-48), for African Christian education. The study posits that, cause-effect theological method is viable for developing a contextualized African Christian education to address social, economic and political issues confronting African church and society. Major findings reveal that, cause-effect theory, also known as the theory of causality, has been a fundamental concept in various academic disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, sociology, theology and natural sciences. Cause-effect method was also effectively utilized in Jesus teachings to expose the root cause and original intention of the Old Testament law which Jesus brought to fulfilment contrary to its misinterpretation by the Pharisees and the teachers of law. Based on these findings, this study recommends the utilization of cause-effect method in theology base on thorough understanding of African situation and the context of primary text – the Bible to develop an African Christian theology that will effectively address issues threatening the development of Africa. By adopting the Cause-Effect Method in Theology, African Christian Education can provide a prophetic voice for social justice, equality, and transformation in Africa.

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