KIDNAPPING AND MORAL SOCIETY: AN ETHICO-RELIGIOUS EVALUATION OF THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

   Kidnapping has become a lucrative venture in Nigeria in recent times. Kidnapping first attracted national attention on 26 February 2006 when Niger Delta militants kidnapped foreign oil workers to press home their demands. Kidnapping has since become ubiquitous, politicised, and commercialised. It has spread from the Niger Delta to virtually all nooks and crannies of the country. This study therefore, examines the good and evil of kidnapping in Nigeria from ethical and religious perspectives and identifies the factors encouraging the venture. The study uses available news reports as well as personal and neighborhood witnesses, in addition to the consultation of some related literature. Possible causes of kidnapping were identified in relation to economic and political motivations as well as conceiving kidnapping as an instrument of liberation struggle including failure of the government to provide basic amenities, unemployment, inefficiency and corrupt security system. The paper posits and recommends the need for inclusive governance whereby all segments of stakeholders have the benefit of empowerment and capacity building as opposed to the current practice of elitist governance including good parental upbringing of children, a re-ordering of our societal values, and provision of functional education among others.

Keywords: Kidnapping, Morality, Society, Nigeria, Ethical, Religious

Introduction

   The 'business' of kidnapping in Nigeria can be traced to what Townsend (2008) referred to as "natural resource nationalism" which is the tendency to seek bigger shares of the returns from nation's natural resources. It is also compounded by what Omeje (2010) termed as "accumulation

politics" which is the tendency for the ruling class to be involved in endless accumulation of natural resource rents accruing from the owner's region through deliberate act of marginalisation and deprivation. Since the mid-1990s, incidents of terrorism in the form of kidnapping and hostage-taking in Nigeria have grown enormously causing significant safety and security concerns for many Nigerians and alien residents in the country. In Nigeria, many hostage-taking and kidnapping operations have been targeted at foreigners, especially those working in the high-risk Niger Delta region of the country. Kidnapping has grown over the years as an industry involving every level of the society and motivated by many reasons. However, studies on it have been relatively a recent phenomenon, with more of the literature coming from Asian, American and European continents. One country where kidnapping has become a daily event of recent is Nigeria and particularly the Niger Delta which Edo State is a part. Nigeria's Niger Delta is rich in petroleum oil and has been explored by multinational corporations and the Federal Government of Nigeria amid high incidence of poverty, absence of infrastructures and deprivations of the locals and oil communities.

The current situation in Nigeria could be likened to an inferno which starts unnoticed in a particular spot and gradually spreads uncontrollably over time drawing both the old and the young; the rich and the poor; and the local and the international community's to itself. Hardly a day passes in Nigeria without kidnapping incidents making the headlines. Kidnapping is now a lucrative venture with some jobless youths and good number of matured adults manning the business. Every day, tens of Nigerians are kidnapped for various reasons ranging from economic, political and personal/co-operate grievances. Some are killed before they were rescued while others are rescued by their relatives after paying ransoms.

Conceptual Meaning of Kidnapping

Defining kidnapping is problematic. The word poses a number of definitional problems in relations to a country's legal and moral viewpoints as well as the availability of other variances such as hostage-taking, hijacking, etc. Mohamed (2008) on his part attempted some clarifications of the definitional position of the term with respect to the legal point of view of some countries. However, the concept of kidnapping seems to have originated around 1682 among those who perpetrate this crime (Mohamed, 2008).

According to the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English language*, the two words 'kid' and 'napper' were slangs the criminals used. Kid which still has an informal air was considered little slang when kidnapper was formed, and 'napper' is obsolete slang for a thief, coming from the verb nap, to steal. In 1678, the year in which the word is first

recorded, kidnappers plied their trade to secure labourers for plantations in colonies such as the ones in North America.

In criminal law, kidnapping is the wholesale taking away or transportation of a person against the person's will usually to confine the person in false imprisonment without legal authority. This act may be done principally to extract ransom or in furthermore of another crime, or in connection with a child custody as a fall out of marital dispute. Kidnapping or abduction of a child is often labelled child stealing and parental kidnapping, particularly when the act was done not to collect a ransom but rather with the intention of keeping the child permanently.

The English common law website defines kidnapping as offence requiring that one person takes another person away; by force or fraud without the consent of the person taken and without lawful excuse. This definition attests that the act invariable includes confining false imprisonment, on an individual or groups. On the other hand, Turner's (1998) broad working definition of kidnapping has been adopted in which kidnapping applies to all situations where persons are forcibly seized and transported to a destination where they are held against their will in unlawful confinement. It also describes incidents when persons are lured away and then held illegally by force.

Historical Evolution of Kidnapping

Looking at it globally, Turner (1998) has attempted a documentation of how kidnapping originated. According to him, the term "kidnapping" originated in 17th Century England where children were "kidnapped" and often sold as slaves or agricultural workers to colonial farmers. It is interesting to know that centuries before, in ancient Rome, Emperor Constantine (AD 315) became so alarmed by the incidence of kidnapping that he ordered the death penalty as punishment for the crime (Schiller, 1985). Robber-barons were kidnapping merchants and holding them for ransom in the Middle Ages in Europe. King Richard I of England was held hostage for years by the Archduke of Austria in the 12th Century (Gallagher, 1985). In 1800, in the Sulu Archipelago, now part of the Philippines, there was already a standard scale of ransom fees ranging from 2000 pesos for a European friar to 30-50 Pesos for a male Filipino. An upsurge in kidnapping in the USA by organised criminal gangs led, in 1931, to the introduction of federal legislation on kidnapping in both the Senate and House of Representatives (Warren, 1985).

In Nigeria, the current wave of kidnapping began with the abduction of expatriate oil workers by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-Delta (MEND) in late 2005 as a means of alerting the world of the many years of injustice, exploitation, marginalization and underdevelopment

of Niger-Delta region (Onduku, 2001). The apparent negligence and the underdevelopment of the region have always been explained with limp reasons. The oil companies claim not to be responsible for the development of the region by virtue of the fact that they work for Nigerian government and pay royalty to the government. Federal government on its own blames the ministries constituted by it to tackle the problems of the region and the ministries blame the youths for disrupting projects.

Typology of Kidnapping

The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2003) has classified kidnapping as follows: kidnapping for extortion (for ransom, to influence business decisions or to obtain commercial advantage); kidnapping between or within criminal groups (for debt recovery or to secure advantage in a criminal market); kidnapping for sexual exploitation; kidnapping linked to domestic or family disputes (spouse or child abduction); revenge kidnapping; and kidnapping for political or ideological purposes. These typologies have been further broadly categorized into three by Pharaoh (2005) as follows: criminal kidnapping (hostage taking for ransom); political kidnapping (to settle political scores or further some political objectives) and pathological kidnapping (parental kidnapping and kidnapping for sexual purposes). To further simplify the classification, Turner (1998) listed out four key rationales for kidnapping as follows: kidnapping for money but no politics; kidnapping without any political or monetary motive; kidnapping for money and politics and kidnapping for politics but no money. From these classifications, it is seen that kidnapping has criminal, political and economic reasons.

However, Yang et al. (2007) has added the cultural dimension of kidnapping, whereby some communities use it as a cultural practice (e.g. bride capture or kidnapping). This is the type of kidnapping that is often applied loosely to include any bride abducted against the will of her parents; even she is willing to marry the abductor. In some cases where this happens, lovers' makes up their mind to marry each other, where the bride's family refuses to marry out her daughter to the groom. When this is the case, the bride conspires with the groom to effect the act and the bride family looses the bride prize until reconciliation takes place. This type of kidnapping is still common is traditional nomadic societies of central Asia and Africa where women's right to marriage is still questionable.

Other typology includes: Express kidnapping which is a method of abduction used in some countries, mainly from Latin America where a small ransom that a company or a family can easily pay as demanded without institution (Mohamed, 2008). This is usually executed by amateur kidnappers who engage in the act out of sheer poverty. An example of this is

reported in *Business Day* newspaper of Monday 13th June 2011 where a lady travelling to Port Harcourt was kidnapped at Uppear Iweaka Onitsha and was released on the payment of hundreds of naira by a fiancée student of River State University of Science and Technology. Tiger kidnapping is another kidnapping method that amounts to taking a hostage of a person to make a love or close associate of the kidnapped victim do something e.g. a bank manager is taken hostage to elicit an instruction for the bank vault to be opened. The action is similar to what a tiger does to a prowl.

Motivating Factors for Kidnapping in Nigeria

It has always been argued that the marginalization of the peoples in the Niger Delta, the despoliation of their environments and the resultant conflicts have their roots in the discovery of oil as well as its exploration and production activities by the oil multinationals in the late 1950s (Akpan and Akpabio 2003; Onduku 2001). The government of Nigeria has been compounding these problems through deliberate acts of oppressive policies (e.g., the controversial land use Act of 1978) and persistent instances of marginalization in development. Statutorily, ownership of oil and all mineral resources in Nigeria is vested in the federal government. All land is also, by law, state property, but this controversial law is only activated when the vested economic or political interests of the country are at stake (Omeje, 2005). Government attitudes toward the region is also reflected in the general absence of developmental attention as the people continue to live in pristine conditions and in most cases without electricity, pipe borne water, hospitals, housing and schools in spite of the enormous wealth the government derives from the region.

The crux of the matter is that not only are the Niger-Delta people (Edo people inclusive) marginalized and excluded from the benefits of oil wealth, they are treated as inferior or less humans. For instance, what happened in Louisiana in April few years back is a tip of the iceberg of what the people of Niger-Delta have been subjected to for over 5 decades of oil exploration. While it was easier for British Petroleum (BP) to explain to the whole world the causes of the oil spillage in the Gulf of Mexico and came out with a responsive plan to clean up the affected areas, the same BP, along with the Dutch-owned Shell Petroleum Company and other American and European owned oil explorers who own oil blocs in the Niger Delta have been silent for years over their activities in the Niger-Delta region which have resulted in constant oil spills, environmental degradation, and gas flaring (Akpan and Akpabio, 2003).

Nigeria is known to be one of the largest oil producing countries in the world. The home to these oil deposits is the Niger-Delta region, made up of Bayelsa, Rivers, Delta, Cross Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Imo, Edo, Ondo and

Abia states, all in the Southern part of Nigeria. Niger-Delta ranks the sixth world's largest exporter of crude oil and ranks third as world's largest producer of palm oil after Malaysia and Indonesia (Akpan and Akpabio, 2003). The region is also rich in other agricultural produce such as cassava, rubber, timber, pineapple, cocoa, cashew, rice, yam and oranges. In spite of the enormous resources that abound in the region, the region still has majority of its people living and dying in poverty. The people have watched for many decades how politicians, foreign nationals and government officials enriched themselves from the proceeds accrued from oil exploration, while leaving them impoverished and their environment degraded and polluted. There is high mortality rate as a result of poor health facilities (in most cases one doctor for every 150,000 inhabitants), inadequate or lack of transportation facilities, lack of schools, epileptic electricity supply (in some regions, the only light that shines at night comes from gas flare from the oil wells), lack of portable drinking water, environmental degradation yielding poor and unhealthy agricultural produce (in some cases fishes smell of crude oil). Coupled with these is the hostility of the oil companies towards their host communities and the reprisal attacks on the side of the federal government when it comes to handling any dispute between the oil companies and the host communities (Ogwu, 2010).

Several attempts made by the Niger-Deltans and other well-meaning Nigerians in the past to draw the attention of the federal government and oil companies to their plights were repressed and silenced. Eminent personalities such as Isaac Adaka Boro, Ken Saro Wiwa and other Ogoni elites have lost their lives in their bid to fight for the development of the region. Although the struggles to ameliorate the deplorable conditions of the Niger- Deltans have been since 1966, not much success has been recorded (Akpan, 2010).

It is sad to note that perhaps for years, what has interested the Nigerian government and the oil companies is how much wealth could be accrued from oil exploration and exportation without agenda for human and infrastructural development in this region, which is paramount for human existence. Every year thousands of youths graduate from higher institutions with no hope of gaining employment. Those who work in the oil companies are left with menial jobs. Many are not even educated, not because they wished to be uneducated but because there is no means of education. Yet in the same society, the wealth of the nation is left in the hands of a very few. The little money mapped out for the development of the region is misappropriated by corrupt leaders and politicians who manage these offices and pretend to be working for the interest of the Niger-Deltans thereby widening the gap between the rich and the poor. Unfortunately, Niger-Deltan youths and community's representatives who benefited from the federal

government and oil companies did not equally do justice with the money or whatever benefits they got.

This apathy to human and infrastructural development in this region has created a culture of violence as the people have resorted to various means to make ends meet. It is only expected that in a country where politicians are more interested in amassing the nation's wealth for themselves against the welfare of the citizens of the state; where the citizens have no confidence in government; where the future looks hopeless and where a greater majority are treated like "a nobody or simply a thing without any value", there is bound to be disorder, chaos and brutality (cf. Imaekhai, 2010). This of course, is the genesis of and motivating factors for kidnapping in Nigeria and Edo State is not left behind in the 'venture'.

Socio-economic Implications of Kidnapping: The Edo State Experience

Kidnapping itself is a crime. As a tool for social action it has become a new habit of crime in Edo State. The political importance of kidnapping activity has had a spill-over influence on the jobless youths and criminals who take it as a new substitute or complement to robbery and pocket-picking. Such a group of kidnappers target not only prominent and well-off individuals but also ordinary citizens who possess little wealth. The common target includes every perceived person with prospects of high and lucrative ransom including teenagers, children and adults alike. For instance, in mid-2008, a teenage daughter of a popular Pastor was kidnapped and a ransom sought from the parents before her release (Akpan, 2010). Robbers and other criminal groups have taken advantage of this as a new way of making a living or sustaining their living standard.

Today, armed banditry, urban terrorism, 419, internet fraud and kidnapping are among the vices that are currently plaguing Edo State. Some of the identified possible causes why youths engage themselves in this vice are not farfetched. First, the problem of idleness is a contributory factor. People are often driven by circumstances to do what they otherwise would not do, but because most of the youths in the state are just roaming the streets from dawn to dust they are caught in this web. Some people commit criminal acts in an effort to bring about what they perceive as solution to hardship and injustices in the society. Second, greed for money is another factor. Most people are willing to violate the rules of decency and morality when enough money is involved. Some who appear amiable and kind under normal circumstance seem to undergo a personality change when money is at stake, transforming into obnoxious and hostile characters (Onimhawo and Ehiemua, 2010). Besides, so money can be obtained without much stress compared to bank or high way robberies and other crimes.

Third, the nature of kidnapping network contributes to the youth's involvement. Kidnappers seem to operate in a very complex network such that they are not easily detected. This is because they are suspected to work with unsuspected individuals like call girls, relations, bankers, business partners; close associates, disabled and/or disguised beggars, etc. Forth, wrong moral choices aid youth's involvements. It is a natural truth that every human is susceptible to wrong thinking and choices. Every day humans are bombarded with countless suggestions and temptations to do wrong. The outcome depends on the choice one makes – to dismiss the bad thought quickly or to entertain it and allow it to grow is solely dependent on individual choices. Lastly, peer-group pressure is another forceful factor. There is no minimizing the influence-for good or for bad – that our associates can have on us. So often, people do what they have no intention of doing - all because of peer pressure or, as many say, because they fell into bad company with unpleasant results. Other possible causes include: lack of proper orientation in the home front by parents and guardians, unnecessary public display of wealth, wrong societal values, lack of integrity/corrupt practices of government officers and others (Ogwu, 2010).

The kidnapping activities in Edo State have in many ways affected her socio-economic life in great measures. First, many lives have been lost. Most victims who tried to resist abduction or who could not pay the ransom as demanded by the kidnappers or pay on time have been killed. Some were known to have been killed because the victim(s) would identify them if released. Several innocent people and passers-by have been killed by kidnappers' bullets, sometimes in a cross fire with the police or in an attempt to scare people away to pave way for their escape. The only offence these victims committed was that they unknowingly found themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time. Many Police men have also lost their lives trying to defend innocent citizens.

There is mass exodus of prospective and successful business men and women from Edo State. In fact, Edo sons and daughters in Diaspora no longer come during Christmas, New Year or festival celebrations. Even during the burial ceremonies of parents or relatives the well –to- do ones would rather prefer to send down money than coming in person for fear of being kidnapped. Relocation of businesses from Edo State especially Benin City to other states in the country in recent times has been very regular.

Most Edo people no longer come home to contribute their quota to the development of their communities for fear of being kidnapped. Interestingly, most hotels in Edo State now run at a huge loss as a result of lack of visitors to the town or because the recent decision of the state government to cease or demolish any hotel found to be used by kidnappers. Owners of residential houses in Edo State are not left out of such fears.

Launching and fund raising programmes have gradually disappeared from Edo State for fear of being targeted for kidnap. Social events such as wedding now record low turn-out and most people in attendance avoid the 'High Tables' for fear of being counted rich. Good numbers Edo State rich indigenes or who reside in Edo State because of one commitments or the other now resort to buying low profile cars or even bicycles as a disguise for fear of being kidnapped. Most national associations will never accept meeting in Edo State because the name Edo State now evokes fear and cold shivers in the minds and spines of people, especially those outside Edo State.

Most kidnapped victims suffer severe emotional trauma and shock that sometimes lead to stroke. Some eye witnesses have suffered same. Although most people living in Edo State have developed tough skin and now see kidnapping as a normal every day thing, majority still live in fear and trembling. Perhaps, it is important at this point to drop a few lines of what may appear to be benefits of kidnapping in Edo State.

Kidnapping in Nigeria: An Ethico-religious Evaluation

Philosophically, "necessary evil" is the evil contemplated in order to prevent a greater evil (Ottuh, 2008). Therefore, from a philosopher of religion view point, kidnapping is a social enterprise as such, it is a 'tool' for social justice hence it is a necessary evil. Sartre Kierkegaard (cited in Yakubu, 2001) is regarded as the father of modern existentialism. Sartre's existentialism is equated with humanism. Sartre so centered his philosophy on the human being that he was unable to discover the full meaning of the being in that being himself. This led him to the ontology of atheistic and negative existentialism (Yakubu, 2001). For the existentialists generally, man's freedom is reflected in his creative endeavours, in his spontaneous actions, and most of all, in his decision making. It is the responsibility of the individual alone to commit himself at every moment to one of a limitless range of possibilities. Existentialism asserts that neither reason or, social convention, or God's will can relieve a person of the problem and responsibility of hairy making choices. It is also not possible for those factors to point to the superiority of one choice over another. In existentialism, human condition is said to be agonizing and admits no amelioration or palliative measures yet kidnapping is a social amelioration or palliative measures invented in human society.

First, Kidnapping is a tool for general liberation struggle. This is a case of man exercising his freedom or will. In this sense, early versions of kidnapping were believed to be part of a wider liberation call by the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) for the development of the State. It was then an activity with no monetary attachment as the key motivation factor and in most cases part of the

outcome of a confrontation between MEND and oil interests or the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) (Akpan and Akpabio, 2003). The key grievances oftentimes advanced by MEND for such confrontations involved three closely interrelated but analytically distinct issues namely: that all laws relating to oil exploration and land ownership be abrogated to give the locals more empowerment to have control of their resources; that the issue of natural resource control and self determination be recognized and operationalized as cardinal principles for the protection of their minority status; and that appropriate institutional and financial arrangements be put in place for the development as well as addressing the numerous environmental problems associated with oil exploration and exploitation in oil producing communities in the Niger Delta. The refusal or inability of the FGN to respond to these demands has been at the core of MEND's liberation struggle.

The premise of the criticism of this ethics is its advocacy of individualistic morality. The idea of allowing man to act and do anything in the name of freedom may leave much power at man's disposal. This will in turn lead to the absolute abuse of power. In doing so, the existentialist has substituted the part for the whole and in doing so, have destroyed the other equally essential aspect of morality. This means that the moral choice of kidnapping as a "net good" cannot be substituted with moral freedom. Again, man can never understand himself fully except in reference to God who is the giver of free-will.

Functionalism is another ethical model that can be used to evaluate the humanity and inhumanity of kidnapping in Nigeria. Functionalism is also called pragmatism or experimentalism. This worldview agrees to the fact that this physical world is real. Unlike realism, this worldview accepts that whatever is real is subject to change; therefore, nature can change (Yakubu, 2001). For them, this change must affect every aspect of humankind and the society entirely. Functionalism identifies itself with radical social reforms in human society which cut across basically conservative and traditional reasoning's. This worldview emphasizes insistence on practical use of pragmatic ideas and techniques to effect changes in human society. According to functionalists, change is constant and dynamic, and belongs to essence of reality. In this sense, kidnapping is a tool for economic revivalism and dynamism in Nigeria. Tzanelli (2006) has raised the idea that kidnapping is regulated by the laws of demand and supply and is a type of social action that involves the calculation of the most efficient means to the desired ends. Kidnapping is a social enterprise and according to *The Nation* (10 May, 2002), "kidnappers are businessmen, they just happen to be on the illegal side of it... if you deprive them of the demand then there is not going to be any supply. Why would I kidnap somebody who will not pay?" It should be

noted that kidnapping was first used as a weapon to fight for economic and environmental justice in the Niger Delta, the economic motivation was intermittently used as a means to fund and sustain the fight.

Consequentialism or situational ethical theory is a teleological ethical theory that measures the worth of actions by their ends, and consequences. Hence, it can be referred to as a consequentialism or situational ethical theory. This ethical stance judges the rightness or wrongness of an action by the results produced by such action for the general well-being of those connected by the action or act (Beanchamp, 1997). In this type of ethics, the needs of the human person are always calculated in terms of positive gains and lose. At times, the greatest good for the greatest number of people may not turn out to be the best or right course of action. Here, mere "act" does not matter, but the total good or evil produced by that act (Ottuh, 2008). In this sense, the moral rightness or wrongness of an action or act is not to be determined by some inherent quality as in Kantian ethics, but in relationship to some ends or goals that are considered to be good.

Utilitarians hold the view that actions are right in proportion, as they tend to promote happiness, or wrong, as they tend to produce the opposite side of happiness. Hence, the slogan "the greatest happiness of the greatest number." Beauchamp gives the worldview of utilitarianism when he says that utilitarianism is rooted in two connected paradigms that:

(a) an action or practice is right when compared with any alternative action or practice; and if, it leads to the greatest possible balance of good consequences or to the least possible balance of bad consequences in the world as a whole; and

(b) the concept of duty and right are subordinated to or determined by that which maximizes the good (i.e. which promises the best outcome) determines what is right to do (Beamchamp, 1932).

Two questions immediately emanate from this theory of morality. One question is whether the person involved must consider only his good or the good of others or both. The other question is how to know the good consequences. The answer to the former is that the good of all must be put into consideration when counting good and bad results. In this sense, the person directly involved, every person including friends and family members and even enemies, and those he ever meet may receive equal considerations. The above fact, however, leads to the ambiguity of the theory. On the latter question, the consequences that are said to be good are those which have pleasure that is not mixed with pain. On this view, what is good for its own sake is the conscious experience of what one would wish such as pleasure without pains.

Whether an individual or persons should be judged by the standard of the good consequences of an action or by moral norms, leads a utilitarian to

posit two views. The first view holds that rules themselves have a central position in morality and cannot be compromised by the demands of a particular context or situation (Beamchamp, 1932). This division of utilitarianism is called, "rule utilitarianism." To the rule utilitarian, an action is morally wrong, if the consequences of doing it are generally undesirable. In this sense, "moral rules" play the "actor" in guiding morality. Kidnapping as a social action is a political tool. Turner (1998) describes this social action as "money and politics" where there are political motivations for kidnapping but where ransoms are also demanded. Such ransoms are often used to further the political objectives of the kidnapping organization or simply to facilitate the survival of the organization hence, kidnapping leads to the greatest possible balance of good consequences or to the least possible balance of bad consequences. Recently, it is learnt that most top kidnapping operations are masterminded by government officials, opposition groups, unrewarded or uncompensated members of election rigging militant groups, among others. Kidnapping is then seen as instrument for political vendetta and settling of political scores (Akpan and Akpabio, 2003). The operation is organized and targeted mainly at key serving politicians or foreign workers or contractors working directly for government. Once the victim is kidnapped, a high level negotiation is expected to ultimately lead to a very heavy ransom. Such a ransom is used to further political goals, self -settling of aggrieved groups or a way of financially crippling a serving politician.

Prudential Personalism is a religio-ethical model whose proponent is B.M. Ashley. This ethics is "prudential" because it is practical, goal-seeking in character, situational, and contextual. On the other hand, it is "personalism" in that it evaluates human goals and the means to achieve these goals in terms of the actualization or fulfillment of the human person in his community (Ashley & O' Rourke, 1989). This ethical worldview is teleological in principle. It thinks in terms of any action's effects for the good of the persons and the community involved. Accordingly, these effects are, however, evaluated according to needs and purposes that have been established not by subjective preference nor merely by abstract laws, but by the constitution of the human person in its individual and communal goal (Ashley & O' Rourke, 1989:162). In this sense, prudential personalist ethics, proposes that the rightness or wrongness of human actions can best be judged by considering the indefinite yet teleological goal or end we know as "life" by asking, "How does this action in its context contribute to the growth of persons in the community." This question can be best answered with help from what Karl Rahner calls "informed conscience" which the great 20th century theologian saw as our direct contact with the voice of God. According to him, people are obligated to inform themselves about ethical

norms, incorporate that knowledge into their daily lives, and take responsibility for their actions (Lederer, 1994).

Conclusion and Suggestions

According to Ashley and O' Rourke (1989) the basic fundamental principles of prudential personalism assert that:

(a) we need to understand that the Creator (God) has set the goal of human life for all human beings, and that to achieve this self-understanding we must use all kinds of information of our conscience;

(b) this effort towards self-understanding does not result in a single principle, but in an indefinite number of principles reflecting the complexities and multi-dimensional composition of the human person. In this way, out of this reflection convey our system of values, which we need to formulate in the moral values that aid us to make prudent choices; and

(c) that in terms of this value system expressed in moral rules, we strive to inform our consciences covering particular moral choices in a prudent manner, by keeping in mind both our goals with their priorities and the concrete circumstances, risks, and for-seen special consequences of a particular act. And that such a moral logic it is, "prudential" in its practical, intelligent effort to reach our goals and it is "personalist" in that it works not for superficial goals but for the total realization of inherent needs of the human person in community.

It is on the basis of the above logical forms of the prudential personalist ethical model that this study will conclude that kidnapping is a moral evil because it is an act of wickedness perpetrated against mankind by fellow human beings because it lacks communal good. Therefore, it is morally unacceptable. It is wrong because it does not promote peace, harmony, good neighborliness and societal growth. The prevailing circumstances in Nigeria today where everyone is suspected as a potential kidnapper is unhealthy and do not promote sustainable growth and development. The solution to this malice is in the practice of African brotherhood of humanity where everyone else sees every other as brothers and sisters this is the spirit of prudential personalism. The position of this paper is that there should be inclusive governance whereby all segments of stakeholders have the benefit of empowerment and capacity building as opposed to the current practice of elitist governance. The study further recommends good parental upbringing of children, a re-ordering of our societal values, and provision of functional education by all stakeholders.

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