

**CHURCH OF NIGERIA
(Anglican Communion)**

**DIOCESE OF ABA NGWA NORTH
SECONDING OF THE MOTION OF THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTH SYNOD**

By

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SYNOD MOTION

Man as a creature has continued to prove that he is not just the ultimate of all creation but that he rules and controls the affairs of all the other creatures. Man's progressive physical, psychological and technological advancement continues to prove this fact confirming that man is truly 'fearfully and wonderfully made.' However, the inevitable presence of pain and eventual end of man reveals the very truth about man's existence on earth—"That all men are nothing but dust".

Therefore the Second Session of the Fifth Synod of the Diocese of Aba Ngwa North rises with the declaration and assertion that man on earth, with all his power, greatness and advancement in life is nothing but mere dust which vanishes into the air taking nothing with him. And so the Synod enjoins all men and women, young and old, to use every opportunity, privilege, and position they may have in life for the well-being of others and service of Christ Jesus, and so secure eternal life for themselves in the Kingdom of God.

1. GREETING:

I want to thank The Bishop, Rt. Reverend Nathan C. O. Kanu, PhD, JP; the Diocesan Board and Synod Planning Committee; and this revered synod body for the opportunity given to our chancellor, Professor Gregory Ibe to second the motion of this synod with the theme "We Are Dust" (Gen. 3:19; I Cor. 15:4). He has asked me to represent him, so I am here in his place and person. My sincerest honour and respect to the proposer of the motion.

2. SITUATING THE CONTEXT IN SCRIPTURE:

The synod motion is well-drafted and clear. The context is the fall of man with four protagonists or dramatis personae: God, Adam, Eve, and the Serpent. God is the creator, Adam the omega point of creation, Eve was taken from the ribs of Adam, Serpent although the most subtle is the fallen angel whose downfall preceded that of man. The Hebrew text of Genesis proclaims that the offspring of the serpent is henceforth at enmity with woman's descendants, thus opposing the human race to the Devil and his seed, his posterity.

But there is a hint at man's ultimate victory. This is foretold as the proto-evangelium - the first gospel in Gen 3:15. "Because you have done this" (14) "I will put enmity between you and the

woman, your offspring and her offspring. It will crush your head, and you will strike its heel” (15). It is the first glimmer of salvation. Here we see that the punishment is appropriate to the specific functions of each: the woman suffers as mother and wife, the man as bread-earner. Then to this fall from the original condition is added death (19), and the loss of intimacy with God (23).

3. MAN’S PLACE IN EVOLUTION:

The French Roman Catholic Priest of the Jesuit Order, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), a philosopher and palaeontologist was known for his theory that man is evolving, mentally and socially, toward a final spiritual unity. He blended science and Christianity. However, various theories of his brought reservations and objections from within the Roman Catholic Church and from the Jesuit order. In 1962 the Holy Office issued a monitum, or simple warning, against uncritical acceptance of his ideas. His spiritual dedication, however, was not questioned. (Encyclopedia Britannica).

Albeit, there were earlier evolutionists notably Lamarck, Darwin, Spencer, Nietzsche, and Bergson. While incorporating and synthesizing these, the evolutionary philosophy of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin represents a personal attempt at synthesizing the special sciences and religion into a comprehensive and coherent interpretation of humankind's true place, meaning, and purpose within a process universe. Nevertheless, Teilhard's deep concern for the future survival of humanity and his multidisciplinary approach, as well as commitment to the evolutionary framework, are commendable. He is one of the major thinkers of this century who has contributed to the growing holistic awareness of humankind's place in the flux of nature.

Theologically, evolution, according to Teilhard de Chardin, is a continuum from the simple to the perfection. Humans will continue to evolve toward perfection, i.e. Point Omega. The Omega point is God. God is the Alpha and Omega. Perfection will be achieved through personalization with love. Being the first scientist from the Catholic Church who dealt explicitly on the theory of evolution. Chardin put man on a central position in the theory of evolution. He looked at the man not only from the side of the flesh, but in the mind and soul. He appeared markedly as bridging between the extremes of materialism and spiritualism.

4. “PULVIS ET UMBRA SUMUS.

The Roman poet, Quintus Horatius Flaccus (65-8 BC), known in the English-speaking world as Horace used this line, “Pulvis et umbra sumus,” meaning, “We are dust and shadows.” This can be likened to the vanity of vanities of Qohelet in Ecclesiastes 1:2. Qohelet in Hebrew is one who holds an assembly or a preacher. In this passage of vanity of vanities, people liken him to a grumpy old man. Vanity in English means disordered self-love or an obsession with one’s appearance – call it narcissism. But that is not what Qohelet meant here, for he spoke in Hebrew. What he spoke was habel habelim, meaning breath of breath. What he meant was, take a moment and breathe in your palm, what happens is that it disappears immediately and forever. So, imagine that breath had breath; it is insubstantial, inconsequential because it is intangible. Hence our life is equated to the breath of breath.

This is coming from the Bible, although I know it is not among the Protestant canon of scripture. When people read the Bible, in their mind, they expect good news (gospel). But this passage indicates bad news for many. If life is an absurdity, why go on living it in the first place? This is what we think of the passage in *prima facie*. But going deeper, it is a strong statement of what human life is without God.

5. HUMAN LIFE WITHOUT GOD:

We have an example in the gospel (Luke 12: 13-21); the story of the rich fool. The rich fool lived his life without reference to God, which is an absurdity. The question for all of us at this synod is where does God fit into in our money-making undertakings? We should not be influenced by the philosophies of hedonism (let us eat today and make merry for tomorrow we shall die) and utilitarianism (what gives me pleasure should be pursued as against what gives me pain). The Bible has a word for putting God below everything – idolatry. Idolatry is the habitus of an atheist or agnostic, but not a theist like all of us. Since our life is both vanities and disappears in thin air as this synod motion suggests, we can therefore seek for heaven or paradise where we shall enjoy the beatific vision by seeing God face to face, and not ending up in Sheol or Hades- the abode of the unrighteous dead.

Having stated as above I stand to second the motion that the Second Session of the Fifth Synod of the Diocese of Aba Ngwa North rises with the declaration and assertion that man on earth, with all his power, greatness and advancement in life is nothing but mere dust which vanishes into the air taking nothing with him. And so enjoins all men and women, young and old, to use every opportunity, privilege, and position they may have in life for the well-being of others and service of Christ Jesus, and so secure eternal life for themselves in the Kingdom of God

I so second.

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