

## Emericist Episteme of Thomas Didymus in the African Socio-cultural Context

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### Abstract

The appellation, The Doubting Thomas, is a derogatory nomenclature designating stigma on one of the disciples of Jesus, Thomas Didymus. His singular act of demanding evidence before believing the resurrection of Jesus has plagued him with the stigma over many generations. However, it is asserted that the iconic disciple does not deserve such scathing stigmatisation. This perspective could be attributed to a number of factors. These include the philosophy of empiricism extent in the worldviews of many societies around the world, such as seeing is believing, *gan ni a fiji* among the Hausa, and *iroyin ko to a f'ojuba* among the Yoruba. The other is the utilitarian values of the empirical culture to the African social development efforts. The study employed the Formalist Theory with emphasis on its evidential tendencies to interrogate the insistence of Thomas Didymus on proof before acquiescing to the appearance of Jesus at His resurrection. The empirical culture in the model of Thomas Didymus could, indeed, be simulated by the African peoples in their conception of inter-personal deeds and dealings. Such will assure them caution about and checks on the other person in social dealings. In line with this, the electorate, the laity, the aborigines, children, and patients would scrutinize the actions of the political office holders, clergymen, the royal figures, parents and physicians, in respective orders. Such an orientation would end docility and levity on the continent.

**Key words:** Thomas Didymus, Doubt, Empiricism, Africa, Culture

### Introduction

The sub-field of bible as literature is a viable aspect of literary studies. The viability of this sub-field in African literature (and within the African episteme) is hinged on the possibility of evaluating the bible with emphasis on its literary features including its characterisation.

The consequential interrogation of the personalities of the bible, its historical developments, the diction of the Books of the bible, and the progression of events in each Book attest to the qualities of the spiritual book. Furthermore, a comparison of the biblical literary features to those of the typical secular literary texts establishes transference of religious knowledge to the social system such that the former remodels the latter. This, hence, institutes a balance between the two sources of knowledge. The balance is heralded by the connectivity of the spiritual to the mundane, with the spiritual being the basis and foundation of the mundane. This is such that the latter being a reflection of the former. In the context of this expatiation, therefore, Thomas Didymus as a Biblical personality, a character of the biblical literature, is modelled as the archetype of the empirical episteme and this attitude should desperately be a desired social philosophy for Africa.

### Empirical Episteme of Thomas Didymus

Thomas Didymus is a Biblical personality who for the purpose of this study is a character of the narration of John in his account of the gospel. Matthew narrates in the Book of Matthew Chapter 27 the crucifixion of Jesus as marked by Mathew's revelation thus: 'Jesus when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost' (v 50). And this Superior Death was marked and sealed by

corresponding incidents. According to Matthew, 'And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent' (v 51). This is an affirmation of the Death of Jesus, and further validity of it is noted in the prophecies in the Old Testament of the bible. For instance, in the Book of Psalms, chapter 22: 18, it is prognosticated that 'They part my garment among them, and cast lots upon my vesture', which manifests in the New Testament Book of John, chapter 19: 24 thus:

They said therefore  
among themselves,  
let us not rend it.  
But cast lots for it,  
whose it shall be;  
that the scripture  
might be fulfilled,  
which saith, they  
parted my railment  
among them, and  
for my vesture they  
did cast lots. These  
things therefore the  
soldiers did.

From the above, it is incontrovertible that Jesus died in crucifixion which has since been a landmark event in the history of contemporary humanity. However, Jesus was predestined to resurrect after three days. This he informs his disciples in Matthew 16 when he declares to them he would rise again. According to Mathew:

From that time forth  
began Jesus to shew  
unto his disciples,  
how that he must go  
unto Jerusalem, and  
suffer many things  
of the elders and  
chief priests and  
scribes, and be  
killed, and be raised  
again the third day.

The claim of Jesus as above manifests subsequently when the Bible reveals that Jesus did rise. According to Matthew:

And, behold, there  
was a great  
earthquake for the  
angel of the Lord  
descended from  
heaven and came  
and rolled back the  
stone from the door,  
and sat upon it....  
And the angel  
answered and said  
unto the, fear not ye:  
for I know that ye  
seek Jesus, which  
was crucified. He is  
not here; for he is  
risen, as he said.  
Come, see the place  
where the Lord lay  
(2, 5 and 6).

The above is an affirmation of the resurrection of Jesus. However, it is important to draw attention to a critical issue. This is for emphasis and clarity. That is, there was a great earthquake, which was ordinarily a notable and rare incident that marked the rising of Jesus from the dead. Also, the it was a supreme being, not humans that rolled the huge stone blocking the sepulcher.

Finally, as Matthew records in chapter 28, the countenance of the angel of the Lord that rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulcher, 'was like lightening and his railment white as snow'; (3) these descriptions confirm the uniqueness of the figure that rolled back the stone. All these events confirm the supernatural nature of the rise of Jesus from the dead such that it could only be the one with peculiar power and place with the Almighty that such could be about. The rarity of the development of the Resurrection is of an emphatic basis for

the core argument in this discourse.

Thomas Didymus is a prominent character in the John's narrative and record about the Rise and Appearance of Jesus. In the world today, perhaps from the Biblical days, Thomas is given the appellation "The Doubting Thomas". This appellation is used to exhibit a derogatory intention, thereby casting aspersion on this Biblical individual. He has since been 'wearing' the stigma emanating from perception of the people which the nomenclature represents. Is this perception, however, not a misplacement of view by human generations about a significant figure? Is humanity not losing out by denigrating the power of the mind and the cerebral prowess of the personality of Thomas Didymus? The pendulum of reasoning swings in the direction of the affirmation of the above prognostications. Thomas Didymus's scorecard in the pre-Rise and in the post-Rise eras signifies that he was an outstanding personality, undeserving the decimating stigma which the post-Rise generations have bequeathed him, premeditatedly or unreflectively.

John tells of Thomas as a devout disciple who believes in the causes that Jesus promoted. In the eleventh chapter, John narrates that Jesus regards Lazarus as a friend of Jesus and his disciples even in death. Therefore, when Jesus tells his disciples '...nevertheless, let us go unto him? (11:15), Thomas champions this cause by motivating other disciples. As John narrates: Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples let us also go, that we may die with him' (16). This devout disposition of Thomas is complemented by the disciple's ultimate demise in India in the cause of evangelism as contained in the disclosure:

When at last he reached the Parangi Malai (Present St. Thomas Mount), perhaps he found that this place was

better suited his life of solitude and prayer. But that very spot and that very moment of prayer were sealed and sanctified when he became a libation for the Gospel in the year 72 A.D. (Thundiyil, 2016).

So far, it has been established that Thomas Didymus is not insignificant in the ministry of Jesus. He has a creditable history in the Ministry. He is loyal, dedicated and spiritually inclined. The appellation Doubting Thomas is therefore, derogatory and counterproductive. The incident that has brought about the debasing coinage needs to be re-interrogated.

John records in the twentieth chapter of his narrative on the Resurrection that Jesus appears to the disciples 'But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came' (v 24). However, when other disciples relayed the rise of Jesus and his appearance to them, Thomas said 'Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger in the print of the nails, and thrust my hands into his side, I will not believe'. (v25). This empirical approach to the news of the Rise and Appearance was the root cause of the derogatory nomenclature Doubting Thomas signifying that the post-Rise generations have considered the empirical signification of the approach as sacrilege and blasphemy. Such consideration holds only in the intangible sphere, the spiritual space, not in the mundane physical realities. Such an empirical mind and attitude corresponds to the scientific principle of the modern world and the manifestation of the empirical principle of the Formalist literary theory.

The gelling interface between Thomas Didymus's empiricist tendencies

finds basis in the core creed of the literary theory. According to the formalists, the empirical substances in a literary work are a confirmation of appropriateness in literary inquiry. That is, observable tendencies in a literary text are conditional in order to draw a relevant conclusion on a literary text. This is because empiricism and observability make opinions on a circumstance verifiable. In effect the formalists “aimed to device a general science of literature by looking at structures and literary systematics of literary forms” (Fokkema, 2014). The connection between Russian formalism and science is sustained on the empirical method, as science explores nature through the experimental method (Parrish-Woody 2001: 4). Parrish-Woody avers that a scientific experiment is “a systematic, organized way to gain access to information...” therefore, Fokkema’s declaration, as above, that the formalists devised a science for literature is emphatic observation that the core creed of formalism is empiricism.

This accounts for why the proponents of the theory prominent among whom was Roman Jakobson pay critical attention to ‘internal evidence alone’ (Symour 2010: 129). Such a disposition to experimental analysis, empiricism and palpable evidence which the formalists adopted to conduct inquiries in literary compositions made them jettison non-empiricist approaches such as psychological or psycho-analytical, cultural, political or religious that may be inherent in the given text.

Having pinpointed empiricism through evidential confirmation as the core creed of the formalist tradition, it is hence posited that Thomas Didymus’s insistence on signs of evoking personal conviction before believing that Jesus had risen from the dead is significantly the exhibition of the Formalist creed, empiricism or convincing evidence. The act may be described as mortal exuberance, hence innocuous. In fact, such could be seen as

exemplary for the contemporary mortal life. Therefore, this personality of the Gospel identity is undeserving of the pejorative stigma emanating from the derogatory nomenclature that has attended his singular act at empirical conviction.

It is pertinent to crystallise the circumstance of the beings of the personalities of the biblical event in review, as well as the circumstances of the Rise of Jesus. Two spheres necessarily need to be identified and instituted ---- the spiritual sphere and the mortal sphere. We see the latter hosting and manifesting the dictates and orchestrations of the former. That is, the former influences the latter. The spiritual sphere is controlled by the Supreme Being and His Begotten Son – Jesus. As a result of this the spiritual realm is supersensible and superior to the moral space domiciled by humans (in this context, the disciples). The spiritual is phenomenal in its nature; what occurs there minimizes the elasticity of human knowledge. Humans find the circumstances in the spiritual realm incomprehensible. As a result of this manifestation, explicitness in the spiritual space is self-defining and intrinsic, hidden to mortals.

Situating all these enunciations in the context of the Resurrection and the disciples (singling out Thomas Didymus), the Resurrection is a phenomenon which is supersensible which manifested among humans. This was seminal to the Crucifixion which was perpetrated by humans. In that case, there is a situation of an interstice between death (Crucifixion) caused by mortals and life (the Resurrection) as permitted by the Supreme Being. The swaying of mortals between the circumstance they perpetrated and the phenomenon of the supersensible space is an aperture and responsible for human confusion as the task of reconciling crucifixion and the Resurrection is unaccomplishable to mortals. The situation tends to be more complex, hence, complicated when we consider that the

Supreme Sacrifice of Jesus was in the spiritual realm, Nativity was physical, crucifixion was physical while the Resurrection was spiritual. A negotiation between all these circumstances is a task too delicate for mortalities to comprehend.

Having asserted that crucifixion was perpetrated by mortals in this physical world, it is underscored that conclusion claims and prognostications in this piece are executed within the elasticity of the mortal space. Admissibility of mortal knowledge is employed as standard for argument. To this end, Thomas could be exonerated from any sacrilege by requesting certain signs to believe the Resurrection. He was operating in the mortal space.

The interstice between crucifixion (a mundane act) and the resurrection (a spiritual phenomenon) was too antipodal for Thomas. A number of factors are responsible for the fate of Thomas Didymus. The first of the factors is the transference of the knowledge of the Rise, (a comprehensively spiritual phenomenon) to Thomas through the worldly means – the mortals. It is the disciples, according to John in the 25<sup>th</sup> verse of the 20<sup>th</sup> chapter that informed Thomas of the Rise of Jesus and His appearance to them as Thomas was not with other disciples when Jesus appeared to them. As mortals the disciples are bound by the vagaries of human frailty. Foul deeds such as betrayal of Jesus have ever been perpetrated in the rank of the disciples. Therefore, the disciples, too, as mortals, were liable to frivolities and moral disrepute.

Apart from the mortal vagaries which the disciples were susceptible to, the brutality of the Crucifixion of Jesus was extreme. Such extreme magnitude was considered irreparable by Thomas as any other mundane being. This justifies why Mary Magdalene believed that Jesus had been taken away when she discovered that the sepulcher was open and the stone was rolled away. She did not tell Simon Peter and the other disciple whom Peter loved

that Jesus had risen (John 20: 2). In fact, Mary Magdalene did not believe it when Jesus appeared to her and asked ‘Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?’ (John 20:15). John records that Magdalene thought Jesus to be the gardener. One can thus deduce that Mary Magdalene, too, found the possibility of the Resurrection larger than life. By mortal standard, nailing a being of flesh and blood at a place of skull (Golgotha) having drunk vinegar resists rejuvenation after all death is the end of life (Smoker, 38). As a result of the magnitude of the impossibility of the Rise of Jesus after crucifixion which occurred in the mortal sphere Thomas requests the print of the nails before he would believe the news of the Rise of Jesus (John, 20:25).

This exhibition of substantiation and empiricist tendency by Thomas Didymus is an exemplary act which ought to be emulated by the people of the contemporary African society. The emulation here advanced hinges on the validity and good judgment that substantiation evinces in any circumstance of its manifestation. Its deployment by Thomas Didymus through the insistence on proof before believing the resurrection portends Thomas as cerebral and of sound reasoning. His request for the indelible mark of crucifixion brutality attests to the psychic brilliance of Thomas. There is the propensity that Thomas met the pristine state of things in a situation that is phenomenal in nature. Thomas knows that the sensible thing to do in the circumstance of believing the Appearance is proof of conviction. This assures certainty and veracity. And the huge substantiation of this is the correspondence between the 20<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> verses of the 20<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the Book of John as it echoes the sound reasoning and good judgment of Thomas Didymus. John records in verse 20 thus: “And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord”. It could be deduced from the above that the

other disciples believed the Resurrection using the empirical resource that Jesus gave them. It Jesus showed his hands and his side to the disciples (except Thomas) why then have several generations including the current generation repudiated Thomas Didymus's request for empirical evidence before believing the claim of the disciples that Jesus had risen. This disciple does not deserve the stigma when his substantiation instinct finds basis and antecedence in Jesus initial gesture. Thomas's mind, therefore, could be said to be the ideal mortal mind.

A number of cultural norms, assumptions and practices in human reasoning do support Thomas Didymus's act of empirical demand. The first of such is the adage 'seeing is believing'. It is obvious in this statement that substantiation is key to veracity. Analysis of the three words in the declarative statement with emphasis on their natures and relations and positions in the statement is important in underscoring the crucial place of substantiation to acquiescing. The gerund 'seeing' connects to the eye. The eye is important to creatures because what the eye sees, stores in the memory and psyche. It institutes and guarantees a typical person evidence and sense of conviction. Believing is an instance of accepting as true or real. Syntactically, we see a situation whereby a linking verb whose primary role is to trace complement to its subject making the two one in the process. If the two are one, it means that there is no believing without seeing, just as believing hinges on sight, and makes seeing productive. To this end, the characteristic properties of each are metaphorically transferred to the other. If people of this generation believe this philosophy, why then do they place stigma on Thomas Didymus for insistence on evidence before believing the news that mortals have relayed to him?

In jurisprudence, evidence is crucial to avoid misplaced justice. It hinges on sound testimonies which

concretise in oral accounts and affidavit, or in exhibits as in physical objects. The importance of evidence in the determination of cases in civil legal proceedings pointed out in the declaration that:

Evidence is fundamental to the outcome of any civil litigation case because, ordinarily, the fact in issue in a case must be proved by evidence, and the judge advised by the parties (McMullen, 2017).

Prominent in the foregoing is the need for proving a claim to establish its veracity, hence, its acceptability. If this is practiced by all the nations of the world through their legal system; that means that the culture of evidential argument is not awkward to the people of the contemporary world. Why then is Thomas Didymus stigmatised? This could be seen as duplicity. A misdirection of good judgment!

Corroborating the view that evidence is crucial in mortal dealings is the biblical narrative of the healing at Cana of Galilee of the nobleman's son at Capernaum. The nobleman of Capernaum has approached Jesus for a miraculous healing of his sick son, and Jesus declares to him 'Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe' (John 4: 48). There is huge emphasis on the significance of evidence as bedrock of belief and acquiescence. This justifies the reason why Jesus first showed His hands and side to the other disciples (apart from Thomas Didymus) when He first appeared to them. There is a progression in the concern of Jesus about evidence in inter-personal dealings as it has to do with faith and belief. We see Jesus theorising and confessing evidence as in the immediate

above, in chapter 4 of the Book of John, while he puts this to practice in Chapter 20 when He shows His hands and his side to the disciples as proof of the genuineness of His Rise. Therefore, Thomas Didymus's insistence on evidence could be seen as an emulation of the act of Jesus. If Thomas unreflectively emulated Jesus exemplary propensity towards empiricism, it would be in order if our generation replicates the empirical culture in our social deeds and engagements, rather than sustain the current unwarranted stigmatisation.

### **Didymus's Empirical Culture in the Contemporary African Worldview**

The emphatic inclination towards culture of proof, which characterises Thomas Didymus, is of immeasurable gains for the current generation in Africa. The empirical culture bears unimpeded relevance and use to the people of the present world. Defects and deficiencies have been observed in all walks of the contemporary African social life. Levity, dereliction and frivolity which characterise the attitude of the people could be blamed for the stagnation of the continent. This is in sharp contrast with the progress of the West and Far East in the area of science.

If science owes the acceptability of its theories to experimental testing, and the facts so arrived at in the process support the theory (Herrick: 43), then it could be asserted that science blossoms on evidence. When the relevance of science in today's world is considered, then it is posited that if the culture of evidence is accorded the pride of place and intensified in African daily engagements, the advancement of the continent will be attained earlier than anticipated. However, this will come at a cost – extermination of the emotion of communal life and the shield of community which religion teaches. All transactions aligning with sentiment will be jettisoned; dealings will essentially be carried out solely on neutrality and merit. Through this alone

will everyone have the basis, justification and leverage to insist on evidence of claim from the other person.

The culture of doubt which fosters empirical proof of conviction, if inculcated in African's social system will enhance progress. This is because the natural law would prompt everyone to check and query the other rather than the current attitude and practice whereby the lower unit of the social binary reposes absolute faith and confidence in the higher binary in one instance, and vice versa in another instance. Such binary social constructs include the political elite and the electorate, the clergy and the laity, the royalty and the aborigines, parents and children, as well as physician/apothecary and the sick. The second element of each binary pair is considered inferior to the first element of the pair. As a result of this erroneous assumption, the inferior elements do accept the instructions or the decisions taken by the assumed superior elements of the pairs.

The inferior units do not have the consciousness of demanding from the superior units of the pairs a justification and basis for their actions and decisions. This is responsible for the stagnation the African society has been bedeviled with. The only clue is that the assumed inferior units of the pairs should begin to doubt and query the assumed superior partner. For instance, the electorates in Africa are quite subservient to the political oligarchy. This might be as a result of the fact that the electorates are mainly the middle class and the poor in society. It is also due to the situation that Nigeria's "electoral process has been monetised..." ( Okeke, 211). As a result of the power of money, and the debilitating effect of poverty, the electorates are cowed. Consequently, they see the elite political officeholders as gods.

The power of money makes the electorates have unfretted confidence in those holding public offices. The former hardly ever question government policies to assert their merits or repudiate their

demerits. If the culture of doubt and question is already instituted and practised, such is a further attestation to the appropriateness of Thomas Didymus's instance of doubt. If not, however, recourse to it will put political leaders on their toes. In the same vein, a culture of doubt will make the president scrutinise all proposal/policy files brought to him by his appointees who head agencies, parastatals or ministries. In the course of this, conviviality brought about by party friendship will cave in for the triumph of discipline and merit.

The culture of doubt which fosters scrutiny, will put an end to the phenomenon whereby the president will claim not being aware of certain happenings in government parastatals, or the phenomenon in Nigeria, whereby the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) will not present a contract to the Acting President as budget. The progress that the rest of the world has made in Europe, America and the Far East could be due to an extent of commitment to thoroughness and sense of responsibility which a check on the other through doubt engenders. Taking a leave from what other countries are doing right will be of a great positive impact on our society, after all:

...there is the need to foster greater understanding of public administration across national boundaries. Such understanding goes beyond mere academic study as there may be some practical benefits that can be learnt by one country from other. A time there may be some models or institutions or even

norms that may be adopted or adapted by other country. (SIC) (Agagu, 137-138).

In this instance, the model or norm that Nigeria can and should adopt or intensify is the culture of empirical proof in public administration.

The religious terrain in Nigeria as in the rest of Africa today could be seen as chaotic. This is because there are so many instances whereby the clergy have betrayed the trust which the laity have constantly reposed in the clergymen who head churches in private capacity. In Nigeria, one of the categories of people that an individual takes as a confidant is a pastor. A number of factors are responsible for this state of affairs. The first is the theosophical nature of the African worldview. Most Africans believe in the existence of God and religion; such that religion backed with faith is considered as the vehicle through which Africans (other nationalities) reach God.

The question of reaching God could be explained as making heaven, eternally. This phenomenon drives many Africans to repose much absolute confidence in the clergy. The second reason necessitating the total faith of Africans in the pastors is the social ills or vices that people of African descent encounter constantly. Such include poverty and afflictions. The desire for the instant solutions to these social menace and many more, tempt the people to seek miracles from the religious circle. This situation is understood by social mountebanks who establish religious houses for personal enrichment. To this end, since the desire to make heaven eternally is a common desire and poverty is common too, everyone at one point or the other has contact with men of God who are likely to be 'men' of God, there is the need for all to exercise restraint in dealing with individuals who claim to be men of God. It is important to take 'a



cautious path through the brambles' of life (Osundare, 2003).

Doubting, querying, investigating, scrutinising or conducting a background check on a self-professed man of God will save many from falling prey to religious *hyenas*, hence, receding into the abyss of hypocrisy. Unbridled faith in mortals will be a damning human frailty. If such scrutiny as a result of premeditated doubt has a lot of benefits, why then should Thomas Didymus be stigmatised? He should not. His enigmatic orientation should rather be emulated because the Church has since the apostolic times faced many storms'. (Kattey 2015:xv). Such storms include religious hypocrisy which needs be exterminated or at least mitigated in the contemporary Africa.

The royal ramifications in the African worldview necessarily needs to be subjected to doubt and questioning. Royal figures in Africa enjoy huge reverence by the indigenous people. Onyerionwu (2017:186) refers to the Benin royal figure, the Oba, as 'the revered King' and, also, subsequently describes the kings as "the respected king". These two characterisations of the African royal figure tilt towards ascribing tremendous reverence to kings in Africa. This is in order. However, the reverence the African peoples do accord their royal figures is to the excess, and so, blinding. This has engendered a situation whereby the monarchs feel superior to the people such that the monarchs act in ways that suggest they are above the law of the land. The accompanying subservience of the people has made them unfit to doubt hence question the decisions of the kings which affect the people either directly or vicariously. This has affected the people of Africa negatively.

Tales have been told of royal fathers negotiating the political future of the people of Nigeria with the government. Such negotiations, however, have been to the aggrandizement of the royal fathers. The people have shown a layback attitude,

and the consequence is that the kings have taken decisions with the government on behalf of the people to the benefits of the royal collaborators, but to the detriment of the wellbeing of the people. Therefore, the indigenous people of Africa should revisit their unbridled subservience to the royal figure, and minimize such. This will grant them the fortification or effrontery to query the whole essence of the monarchs taking political decisions for them and doubt the attending the essence of their representation. Such a situation will result in a new royal mindset and attitude to the people.

In the new regime, the people are not taken for granted because the royal elite are compelled to be aware of the sound minds of the people – a person of low intellect cannot reason to doubt. Doubting, therefore, is a manifestation of an individual's capability to reason deeply. The excessive subservience of the people towards African monarch does tremendous harm in the social engagements of the people on the continent.

The situation in the African family particularly as it affects the relationship between the parents and the children is a critical social factor, and since the family is a social construction (Karraker & Grochowki, 2012), the family situation is a major concern at this juncture in this study. The influence of parents on their children in Africa's filial construct is revisited, therefore. In Africa, children are trained to obey their parents and the African culture sees children as precious heritage of their parents. However, it has been observed that African parents have arrogated to themselves tremendous influence in the lives of their children. This may not be a foul state of affairs if it were not that its consequences have jeopardized the development of the mind of the African child. There is a stereotypical parental assumption that parents in Africa are always right – knowing more than the children do, and holding the perfect view of issues all the time, etcetera. This makes

the decisions of the parents about the family the 'perfect' and the final. This situation has made the African child repose unimaginable faith, through subservience, in the parents.

The circumstance in which the African child finds himself has resulted in the regimentation of and retardation in his cerebral potency. However, the defoliation and puncturing of this filial superstructure by the African child will eventuate in the African social growth. This is achievable through the instrumentality of doubt. When a child doubts the authenticity or correctness of a father's decision or view, the child is motivated to ask questions for clarity and illumination, and Africa's social system is the better for it. This is because the possible errors of the parents (since they are humans and no human being is infallible) are corrected in the process. To this extent, the child's doubt is no insolence rather it is a tool to crosschecking. Also, when an uneducated parent educates an educated child using obsolete episteme, there certainly would be generational conflict. To this end, if the child accepts what the parent tells him or her without scrutiny, the consequence is woe. Why then should an African child put absolute trust in the contents of his or her parent's instruction?

Children's retraction of absolute submission to the unilateralism of parents in Africa has become necessary and urgent. It would be noted that the parents of the African millennial children belong to two worldviews – the pre-virtual era and the virtual age. Most part of the pre-virtual era in Africa was marked by gagged life experience as a result of military rules on the African continent. Access to information was limited. The minimal doctored information the local press was able to glean from the media flagships such as British Broadcasting Corporation and Cable News Network was inadequate. Again, totalitarian military regimes cowed the people into submission. And these were people who were coming from such

experiences as the wickedness of slavery, the brutality of the military, the high handedness of local monarchs and their comprehensive overriding clout. All of these produced a generation whose psyche was filled with fear. Today, however, the reverse is the case on the positive side.

Children of today have fluid access to unrestricted information. It is the virtual age, especially the smart phones. It is the age of social media, Google Search and other marvelous applications. This makes the millennial children intelligent. As a result, the children should reassess, reinterpret and interrogate the standpoint of the parents. Such reexamination is intended to contextualise the social knowledge of the parents in the present global culture. And this is sustained on empiricism and proof. If the past experiences of the parents were endearing, there would not have necessarily been the need for the children to put the consciousness of the parents to scrutiny. It is noted, "the millennial consciousness governs both the past and present worldviews with a reordering of the past in conformity with the present. Therefore, if a people have evolved a culture in the attempts to meet the challenges of living in their environment..." (Oke: 96), then it is high time the African culture modified its tenets. Such a modification will allow children to interrogate their parents' orientations, and the family and society will be the better for it.

Health practitioners in Africa (whether the orthodox ones or the apothecaries) are professionals who characteristically feel superior to their patients. They do not want their prescriptions or diagnosis interrogated by the patients even though the patient understand their bodies better and may even have information that would help the physician in achieving an accurate treatment of the patient. Many lives have been lost to the arrogance of health practitioners in Africa. The health practitioners want to be obeyed without

questioning. Any question about the doctor's prescription by the patient even to get clarity on dosage application is seen as confrontation. The clout the doctor mounts along with their attitude of superiority silences most patients. It is however expedient that patients doubt a doctor's prescription in treating his/her health condition.

Patients need to crosscheck a doctor's prescription with another to establish veracity. This however may be a temporary measure of guard in the first instance. It should be sustained long enough for the patient to ascertain the competence of a doctor. In essence, a doctor should be seen as a human being who is not absorbed of mortal fallibility. This is particularly so as the health profession has been infiltrated and so populated by quacks. If doubting a doctor who is likely to be one of the quacks because of the doctor's possible manifestation of his mortal frailty saves lives, definitely, Thomas Didymus's iconic act of doubt should not be seen as an act of sacrilege.

### Conclusion

The stigma that has plagued the personality of the iconic disciple of Jesus is a misplaced mortal judgment. The stereotypical nomenclature Doubting Thomas is counterproductive. There is a mounting justification for this perspective and assertion. In the first instance, the action of Thomas finds antecedent in the act of Jesus who first showed his hand and side to the other disciples when he appeared to them. This was influential (in no limited measure) in convincing the other disciples to believe the Appearance Image as Jesus. In addition to this, the cultural episteme of this generation accommodates the philosophy of empiricism as seen in its proverbs such as seeing is believing, among the English, or *gan ni a fiiji* among the Hausa in the Northern part of Nigeria, or the *iroyin o to*

*af'ojuba* among the Yoruba in the West of Nigeria. A global worldview that believes in the perceptive culturalism of empirical tendencies is hypocritical. Africa in particular needs the culture of doubt in order to instill discipline and the propriety in its socio-political and cultural practices.

The development of the continent rests essentially on the social culture that motivates a positive doubt culture such that the error or defects of the other person are corrected or checked. In the consequence, no one suffers the shortcomings, vices or atrocities of the other. The electorate would pay more attention to the political office holders, the laity would cease to fall prey to the predatory self-appointed clergymen, the aborigines would keep tap on the decisions the royal figures make on behalf of the people in the government, children of the fast-moving world would not be drifted backward by the possible obsolete worldview of their parents, and patients would ask questions from the physician for accurate diagnosis and prescription. The outcome of this consciousness is a smart citizenry that propel the fast development of Africa. Thomas Didymus with his disposition towards doubt and proof is a model for the social reengineering of the continent of Africa.

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