

THE FAMILY AND THE ONTOGENESIS OF HUMAN LIFE: AN APPRAISAL

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Abstract

The problem of auto-transcendence still baffles philosophers and scholars of philosophical Anthropology. Many are agreed that man goes out of himself to perfect himself, perfect the society and eventually to find himself in God. This article examines critically the role of the family, in a man's journey on earth beginning from his origins through his developmental stages, and earlier states of his history to ageing, dying and death which is the greatest limit situation that terminates man's life here on this planet earth and brings him face to face with His creator in the life after life. Using philosophical analysis, the author concludes that of all the available means open to man, through his earthly journey, his family plays an unparalleled role. His birth is announced in the family, there also he ages, prepared to die and is given a befitting burial at death. Whether or not he transcends into God or into nothingness depends on his family background and on faith which men live by. In the family so to say he is prepared to battle with the fundamental features of man, namely: Facticity, existentiality and fallenness. More importantly, it is in his family that man is prepared to handle properly the three stages of his gradual development of his existential condition which include: aesthetic, ethical and religious stages.

Introduction

The preparation of human life from his origins, developmental stages, earlier states, and the last events: ageing, dying and death are not only of primary importance, more fundamental but are the central points around which other parts revolve. They occupy an enviable status in the sequence of events involved in the development of any individual human being from its birth to its death which is what is meant by ontogenesis of human life; and they should be considered as the nucleus and proximate events leading to eternal life in contradistinction to those of this earthly life which one can easily adapt to as the end of life approaches. Moreso, when we are sure that events leading to life eternal determine proximately where the human soul will go in the “life after life” and any mistake at these points renders all the efforts of this earthly life useless and meaningless. The author in this article is of the view that of all the events involved in the development of the individual human being the family scores the highest points. Okeke (2008: 18, 19) discusses extensively on these events as follows:

It should be recalled that in God's plan the vocation of the human person extends beyond the boundaries of time. God's will is to lavish upon man a sharing in his own divine life. Hence Christ makes it clear when he says: “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly”. (John. 10: 10), Man

reaches fullness of life only in God. Man is called to life in abundance or fullness of life which Christ came to give, this he can only achieve by sharing in God' life which is beyond time. Natural life culminates in the supernatural or heavenly life as a continuation of this earthly life... It is the same life which is a gift of God here on earth that is transformed into heavenly, eternal life hereafter. (pp. 18-19).

Many theologians and scholars of traditional religions re-echo the importance of life in the hereafter which is lived in God over this earthly life and Matthew (42: 26) in the sacred scriptures enjoins Christians to live good life here on earth less they suffer the loss of their souls in the next world; “what, then, will a man gain if he wins the whole world and ruins his life”. Again, “what has a man to offer in exchange of his life? In concurrence to the transcendental nature of the supernatural life or heavenly life over this earthly one, philosophers are of the opinion that any attempt to answer the problem of auto transcendence that has no reference to God is a biased one. Hence man goes out of himself to perfect himself, perfect the society and finally to find himself in God. If Christ came that we may have life and have it abundantly, and if man reaches fullness of life in God which he can only achieve by sharing in God's life which is beyond time, it follows that preparation for this eternal life which supersedes this earthly life must be given priority attention. This has informed my topic in this article: “Family and the Ontogenesis of Human life.

Definition of Terms

Most times, the clarification of concepts solves problems where the problem lies with meaning or linguistic clarification. Again, we shall examine the relationship between the family and all historical attempts of scholars at the justification of the role it plays in the development of the individual human being from its origins, developmental stages, and earlier states of the individual history which culminates in what might be regarded as the epicenter and proximate events leading to his eternal life. The essence of these critical examination is to bring out the thrust of our thesis, that the family is the nucleus of the development of an individual human being as he moves from his origin through developmental stages, earlier states till age begins to tell on him, draws closer to his grave and finally succumbs to the greatest limit situation which is death.

The Resultant Effects of the Family on the Individual Person's Stages of Human Development

The question of the gradual development of a person's existential condition and what makes up the essential features of man loomed large in the existentialist's style of philosophizing but it is addressed today with renewed urgency. The existentialist philosophers like Kierkegaard, Heidegger etc have assigned these duties solely to the individual to the exclusion of that of the family. In the family more or less the human person is properly prepared to handle the three stages of his existential condition,

namely the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious stages. Also in the family he is groomed to battle with the fundamental features of man, namely, factuality, existentiality and fallenness.

In the aesthetic stage a man behaves according to his impulses and emotions. He is for the most part governed by his senses. He knows nothing of any universal moral standards, no specific religious beliefs. He is solely motivated by his desire to enjoy the widest variety of pleasures of the senses. His life has no principle of limitation except his own taste; he resents anything that would limit his vast freedom of choice. Kierkegaard was of the view that:

In this stage, the focus is on pleasure for the sake of pleasure. Something is good if it gives pleasure, bad if it does not....The person in this stage can find pleasure in music and philosophy as well. The only problem with this stage is boredom which is the root of all evil, it is that which must be kept away when the aesthetic becomes bored and realizes that this way of life cannot truly fulfill him, he is faced with a decision. Either he can remain in despair at the present level or he can change his way of life.

The individual can achieve existence in this stage but he lacks quality in terms of authenticity. At this point the family injects this quality, and trains him to understand the consequences of remaining in this stage, that his life consists or ought to consist, of more than this emotive and sense experience. It is the family that inculcates in the individual that life at this level cannot possibly produce authentic self, cannot result in true existence, and opens the window of knowledge for him to understand the fatal attractions, namely the dreaded anxiety, despair, depression etc. Even the method to be used to transcend or move from this untoward evils which is not achieved through mere wishful thinking alone, but must be achieved by making a decision or by an act of the will by commitment.

This does not mean that the family is the sole instructor and character molder, the whole gamut of human beings in constant relation with the individual especially formal education, influence of law, the larger society play minimal roles here but that of the family is both primary and fundamental and as such overrides the whole range of his relations with other beings he is in constant relationship with, that is, those beings he encounters in the universe except God who is the principle of creation of all beings. Even nature plays its own role here, the influence of other beings below man in the hierarchy of being not excluded.

The next stage which the individual must pass through in this life is what philosophers like Kierkegaard might describe as a more admirable one better than the previous stage, the ethical stage:

In this stage deliberate choice replaces the immediacy of the aesthete. The ethicist chooses to create for himself ethical values with which to live his life. The ethical man is also concerned with self-reflection in order to make his choices. However, the times come when man realizes that "he is involved in

something more profound". He realizes that his future to conform fully to the moral law is due to the inherent inability to conform. In this case, he is faced with another either/or. He may remain there as well or make a leap of faith.

Here the individual is thought to recognize and accept rules of conduct that reason formulates which gives man's life the element of form and consistency. An individual in this stage is assisted by his family on how he has to behave? What is the good life for him? Whether or not man has any final end? The notions of right, wrong, good, bad, duty etc are critical to his survival which are his bible which his family must teach him and zealously too. What might be considered the most important role of the family in fashioning an individual's moral life is to educate him that he has to accept limitations upon his life that moral responsibilities impose. The family has to drum into the ears of the individual being to imbibe the mood of moral self-sufficiency, to take a firm stand on moral questions or issues and as Socrates argued, to assume that to know the good is to do the good. More importantly, for the most part the individual for the most part is trained by the family to consider moral evil as being a product either of ignorance or of weakness of the will. The church, the social organizations, the government and non-governmental organizations apply their own contributions to complement the indispensable role being played by the family in these moral issues at this level of the individual human being.

It has been widely agreed upon both in philosophy and psychology as well as in religion that there is a dialectic or gradual development of a person's existential condition. In man, there is a movement of the self from one level of existence to another through an act of the will, an act of choice. In philosophy this development or dialectic movement is expounded by Hegel as the mind moves from one stage of intellectual awareness to another through the process of thinking. While Kierkegaard describes this movement of the individual from one level of existence to another through an act of the will, an act of choice, Hegel's dialectic moves gradually towards knowledge of the universal, whereas Kierkegaard's dialectic involves the progressive actualization of the self. The implication of this comparative analysis is that the role of the family is exposed to include teaching the individual about the progressive actualization of the individual self not only by a conceptual act, but by an act of personal commitment. This is because theory and praxis are the rudiments of human success and since everything changes and nothing remains the same, a child today is the mature man of tomorrow thrown into the world with the unborn tomorrows within which he is expected to make uncountable judgments amidst many choices

The point being made here is that the family is the nucleus of an individual's moral upbringing. There is a time in a man's life when he is expected to know or realize that he is involved in something more profound than knowledge of moral law, and that he has insufficient strength of will. In fact he is incapable of fulfilling moral law, that he deliberately violates the law and therefore he becomes conscious of his guilt and that he

must either remain at the ethical stage and try to fulfill the moral law, or he must respond to his new awareness, the awareness of his own finitude and estrangement from God to Him he belongs and from whom he must derive his strength. In this stage Kierkegaard observes that “each person must decide for himself how to approach these levels, but the goal, at least for Kierkegaard, is to achieve the third stage, the religious stage. This consists of not only choosing for him, but in being infinitely interested in the reality of another”.

Again the family injects an element of courage in the finite individual to resort to the infinite which he must be educated that this does not come so easy but again by an act of the will or commitment, by a leap of faith which assures the existing individual of his personal relationship with God. Man is therefore a more in that he avails himself of every opportunity offered by the family from birth through morals and his consequent arrival at the end of his earthly life into the presence of God who is the ultimate being in world ontology. This is an elaborate journey which begins in the family flowers in the society and ultimately terminates in the family as the individual is committed to mother earth by his family.

The outer world existentially and phenomenologically understood is the region of any individual human being. In relation to his environment his concerns are to be practical, but in relation to the communal world his concerns are personal. This analysis of man's relationship with the world which is compartmentalized into three relational terms shows that nature, is there at the service of man, for utilitarian purposes, and he must conquer it, subdue it for his own existential needs. But in relation to his family, it is a different kind of relation. The individual, more or less is defined in terms of his family members and the society who exist for each other in mutual complementarities and self donation in times of do nothing heroic. A time when man's life, his vital force, and all that make him what he is fades into oblivion. A time for ageing, for preparing to bid farewell to his beloved ones, a time of face to face with dying, and a time to pass away from this ephemeral, transient, and visible world into the invisible, the supersensible or the transcendental, the noumenal world if we may use Kantian phraseology. The journey thus started in the family ends in it and no other place offers man this golden opportunity, if we were to assume that God's hand is not in all the rudimentary aspects of nature as the principle of creation, providence, sustenance and continued existence of all.

The Indispensability of the Family on the Question of the Essential Features of Man

Any critical study of the family and the Ontogenesis of the individual human being without making any reference to the existential condition of human existence, namely: Facticity, Existentiality and fallenness is a biased one. Factuality, philosophically understood is a fundamental feature of man. He is already involved in the world amidst difficulties. Man is born in the family from where he begins to strive, considers

alternatives, makes choices, and above all commits himself. Some of the matters that should be of great importance to the upbringing of the individual are freedom, decision making, responsibility. Others include; the changing feelings, mood or affects that appear in the human mind. It is through these that an individual is in our world and can learn some things about it that are inaccessible to the merely objective beholding. The provision of brilliant analysis of such feeling states as anxiety, boredom nausea, shows that these are very significant in the formation of the individual human being. It is in the explanation, exploration and developing and inculcating these themes in the individual that the family tops other forms of learning available to an individual man.

Existentiality and Fallenness

Existentiality, existentially and phenomenologically understood means that man is a project and a possibility, that which has been but also that which can become. He is always going beyond himself to his ultimate possibilities. Fallenness means that man has the tendency to become a mere presence in the world, failing to make the most of his possibilities because of gossips, curiosity and ambiguity. Through anxiety man encounters nothingness and becomes aware of his finitude and the necessity of death; but through resolution, man, who moves in time, from past to future through the present, appraises himself, chooses with the whole of his being, and thereby achieves authentic existence. There are two modes of existing: authentic and unauthentic modes. The authentic person goes up to the situation and takes up full responsibility for his decisions which are always clear-cut and deliberate. He follows convention only when it coincides with his own personal decisions in the circumstance. The unauthentic person is a slave of convention and drifts with the crowd to follow the accepted standards for which he feels no responsibility. He shuffles off his responsibility on the shoulders of the anonymous 'one', "one does this, but one does not do that". His world is a functionalized world in which the actor is submerged by his job

The Pivotal and Fundamental role of the family among the Ageing, Dying and the Dead

When Okeke was writing on the importance of the family for the human society in general he made serious allusion to the truth found in Arinze (1980: 172) where he affirms the importance of the family and its fundamental nature in human life when he writes that:

The family is fundamental indeed. From it we receive our major orientation in life. The family gives us our sense of direction, our philosophy of life, our basic values, and our spiritual and moral major points of reference. The family has therefore, far reaching consequences on the Church, government and the society as a whole.

Elsewhere, Arinze (1980: 172) rightly observes that:

It is the family that brings an individual into the world, surrounds him with love and care and guides him year after year. It is the family that protects the individual from menaces of hunger and disease, educates him equips him to set out on the road of life on his own. It is from the family that the individual inherits his initial character make up, in the family that he begins to develop his qualities and in the family that he begins to learn how to react to the outside world. It is to the family that he returns in days of rejoicing and in days of heart break and disappointment, to the family that he has recourse in doubts and confusion, by the family that he is given stern but loving rebuke in time of misbehavior and in the family that he anchors his last hope of understanding, forgiveness and love without counting the cost.

Affirming the role of the family in the developmental history of the human person Okeke (2008: 2008; 26 27) insists that “the family is a fulcrum where new members of the human race are given opportunity to learn how to live... on three levels, on the physical, biological level... on the social level... on the spiritual level”. And Arinze (1980: 72) writing in consonance with Okeke contends that:

The family is a cell of the social, economic, educational and religious life of man. God has endowed this fundamental institution with the qualities, values and purposes which are crucial for the continuance of the human race; for the personal progress and welfare, temporal and eternal, of the members, and for the dignity, stability, peace and prosperity of human society as a whole.

Okeke (2008: 29) concludes that in whatever senses or level from where one considers the role of the family one comes to a clear conception that, “the family is like a cradle from which human life springs, and a school in which he is prepared for many important aspects of life that will enable him to live a full and wholesome life”.

Any role played by the family geared towards integrative development of human life that does not take into account his full and wholesome life, preparation of the individual for the eschatological dimension of the Christian beliefs which is more important and more fundamental than the metaphysical and cosmological beliefs of the Christian is defective. Consequently, let us reflect on the role of the family in the preparation of the individual for his exit from this temporal world to an abode of eternal life where he receives reward for actions done in this transient world.

The Role of the Family in preparing the Individual for Ageing, Death and Dying

One is sure that the values and circumstances surrounding an elderly person, his dying, death and burial surpass that of his birth. The so much fuss about care of the elderly; about decent burial, feeling and cries of sadness commingled with joy at the death of

loved ones; constant visits, attention and spiritual encouragement to the aged and the dying; the administering of the sacrament of the sick as many times as the sick and the dying needs it; booking of Holy Masses for recovery and other anonymous intentions; closing of the mouth and positioning the dying well; the funeral masses and other rites of passage;(befitting burial) are sure indices that these events in an individual's life are more fundamental. Indeed all the duties and role of the family towards an individual before ageing, death and dying would be better described as kick starting the individual for transit to a mysterious end where life is lived in eternity. And if life is a race it matters how one ends it less we start well and end badly which is a disaster.

Ageing

In the words of Ifelunni (2009: 14) “the term 'age' refers to the number of years of an individual or a period in history. In like manner, ageing is the process in an orderly cycle progressing through childhood, middle adulthood to old age”. Catering for the welfare of the aged in the society is a very serious apostolate and is the primary role of the family which is not so in today's globalized world. Many elderly people in our society today, especially ageing parents, increasingly lack the necessary care and support from their children and other close relations that often reside in distant cities away from their home in the rural villages. In great awareness of the biblical injunction: (EX. 20: 12) “Honor your father and your mother”. The Church with its charitable organization comes in to supply by building “Old people's” homes where elderly people who are supposed to get adequate care by the members of their families but are neglected can find succor, love, warmth, care and friendship from fellow Christians and specially trained health officers dedicated to offering services of love and hospitality.

Most scholars agree that the aged and the sick require special kind of care and attention due to the unique nature and limitations of their situations. Pope John Paul II (2009:) was very emphatic on the best way to take care of the ageing. He writes:

In addition to the obvious psychological need of the elderly themselves, the most natural place to spend one's old age continues to be the environment in which one feels most “at home”, among family members, acquaintances and friends, where one can still make oneself useful... it will become more and more important to promote a widespread attitude of acceptance and appreciation of the elderly, and not relegate them to the fringes. The ideal is still for the elderly, to remain within the family, with the guarantee of effective social assistance for the great needs which age or illness entail.

However, while all seem to agree that the hospital remains the best place to give proper care to the sick, it is still open to debate as to the ideal place most suitable to take care of the aged in the society. Hence, while some people advocate for the erection of old peoples' home for them, others strongly believe that the family home is the best place to take care of our ageing or elderly parents and close relatives. Okafor (2009: 4) rightly argues that:

Old people's homes are not ideal environment in which one has to spend his or her old age. The ideal environment is the family home and remains so even as demanded by our custom and tradition. Sending someone away from his or her home or community is interdiction, ostracism, which traditionally is visited on only persons that commit abomination. That is why the case for building and sending old people to homes for elders in our cultural background has not been convincing.

Home is the ideal place for the fact that it tallies with the communal nature of life in Africa (the extended family system, for example), as opposed to the extreme individualism that obtains today especially in Western Europe and America.

Pope John Paul II viewed the old age as a blessing, a moment of sober reflection and dignifying stage of life and their care in society is three dimensional, namely: It demands respect; it demands honor; and it demands love. This is against the unfortunate modern trend that has deprived the aged the blessings, honor, reverence and respect associated with old age in the past. In any case, there is no gain saying that the family home is the ideal environment to look after old people since they feel happier in the midst of their loved ones. However, one believes that the ideal is not always possible in many situations; the old peoples' home remains the best alternative where our elderly persons can receive a good care from friendly care-givers.

The aged experience loneliness due to withdrawal of people from them especially the biological ageing, which refers to a situation in some families where the adults at a certain range of age in their lives begin to suffer from illness such as diabetes, hypertension, cancer, etc. At this age the aged needs care from the family and the Church to put in place the form of social security scheme for the elderly, certain measures such as (a) ensuring pre and post retirement counseling, (b) Social support services, (c) training the aged in entrepreneurial skills, (d) exposing the aged to health care services and (e) relieving the aged from all payments they make especially in rural villages. Indeed there must be policies and programmes of governments and Churches for caring for old people in our midst. The family and the Church should not be left to carry out these systematic principles and regulations organized into an articulated arrangements aimed at caring for the aged. It is the duty of the Church to sell this idea to the government where there is oversight.

The Dying and the Family

Based on the findings of psychologists, the dying old person feel in a certain way when they are nearing their graves, and according to Oraemesi (2009: 4) they face four challenges: Managing his reactions to the symptoms of his terminal state and altered psychology; Reacting to the impending separation from loved ones and friends; Reacting to a transition to an unknown state; Adjusting his perception to his life.

Consequently the family and in particular the Church as a caring mother should not be silent in the question of caring for the dying in the society. Dying people again pass through various stages when faced with death. These stages are categorized into two: Disadvantaged stages and Advantaged stage and by the very nature of these stages the family members must play core role in managing these stages to the advantage of the soul of the dying.

Disadvantaged Stages: Stage of Denial; Stage of Anger; Stage of Bargaining and Stage of Depression.

Advantaged Stage: The Stage of Acceptance.

The first stage: This is the stage of denial when the dying reacts to the awareness of death with the statement: Kubler Ross (1970: 38) “No, not me, it cannot be true”. Ross (1970: 39) “Put simply the dying considers the possibility of [impending] death for a while but then has to put this consideration away in order to pursue life. Denial here functions as a buffer after unexpected shocking news, allows the dying to recollect himself and with time, mobilize other, less radical defenses”.

The second stage: The stage of Anger. “Fortunately or unfortunately very few dying people are able to maintain a make-belief world, in which they are healthy and well until they die. When the stage of denial cannot be maintained any longer, it is replaced by a feeling of anger, rage, envy and resentment. The logical next question for Kubler Ross (1970: 50) becomes: “why me? This stage of anger is very difficult to cope with from the point of view of family. The reason for this is the fact that this anger is displaced in all directions and projected onto the environment at times almost at random.

The third stage: The Stage of Bargaining. Here the dying person aware of the fact that he has a slim chance that he may be rewarded for good behavior and be granted a wish for special services wishes an extension of life and a few days without pain or physical discomfort. The bargaining is really an attempt to postpone, it has to include a price offered for good behavior, it also sets a self imposed deadline, e.g. one more performance, the son's wedding. The bargains are made with God and are usually in the secret of the dying person's heart.

The fourth stage: The Stage of Depression, when the dying experiences a sense of great loss, shock, dismay. This is only one of the many losses that such a dying person has to endure. The family members have the duty to cheer this individual up to tell him not to look at things so grimly or hopelessly, encourage him to look at the bright side of life, at all the colorful, positive things around him.

The fifth stage: The Stage of Acceptance. This is a stage for the strong, a stage which those who have enough time (not sudden, or unexpected death) and have been given some help in working through the previously described stages, a stage which the individual is neither depressed nor angry about his fate etc but begins to contemplate his coming end with a certain degree of quiet expectation. Ross (1970:113) framed this question thus: “It is not a resigned and hopeless “giving up”, a sense of “what is the use or I just cannot fight it any longer”, though we hear such statements too”.

There are a few dying persons who fight to the end, who struggle and keep a hope that makes it almost impossible to reach this stage of acceptance with peace and dignity. The family encourages such to fight for life to the end for love of the family enabling the dying to face the torments of death with courage and dignity. A dying person can also be helped by the family members by reassuring him that everything will be done that is possible to care for him including being there always to keep him company and prepare him both bodily and spiritually for his final exit to the next world.

The progressive movement of a human person, a terminally ill or the dying from one stage to another demands the assistance of the members of the family and the Church as a family of God of which this individual is a member. And the duration of the dying person's death can be prolonged by the way the individual is attended to by the family members and the Church. The individual succeeds to the stage of acceptance if he is accosted well through the a priori stages, without which the individual succumbs to death at a disadvantaged stage. And on the part of the dying, the movement from one stage to another demands not only a desire but an act of the will and a leap of faith.

The Dead and the Family

Most philosophers agree that death is a departure of the body's spirit; and apart from ageing and dying the Church sees death as a mystery and Diala (1994: 9) rightly observes that “humanity has no direct experience of death as to be able to describe it. The dead have unfortunately refused to answer questions about their experience; while the dying is able to tell us nothing of what they have not yet experienced”. Though death is seen as a mystery and as a gate-valve to another life, Plato in his Dialogues, *Phaedo*, held that the mind or the soul lives after death, thereby affirming the immortality of the soul. The only one known dissenting voice Bertrand Russell radically held the view that the soul or mind is mortal that is death marks the final disintegration of the body so too is the soul. But because all does not end here there must be death, judgment heaven or hell; she (the Church) also sees beyond death in her belief in the immortality of the soul. The soul survives the death of the body as it moves over to another abode of existence to inherit the reward of actions performed in this earthly life. St Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas and the Catholic Church lend their voices to the fact of the reality of death and the survival of the soul at the time of separation of the soul from the body.

The point of it all is that man lives in a genuinely temporal condition which is directed towards what has really to come after death. The Christian Church as well as the African man believes that man is subject to change just as everything in this world changes. Consequently, they have a firm belief in death, in an afterlife and immortality of the soul. While in African life and thought, good life, perpetuation of one's life through offsprings, good life, good death, and befitting rites of passage are regarded as indispensable for one's entry into the ancestral world. Consequently, the manner the individual lived his life before transiting into the "after Life" matters for both the Christian and other faiths men live by. Dying in a state of grace is what makes death honorable and good life is an essential criterion and in the words of the Scriptures the king will say to the wicked "go away to eternal punishment and to the virtuous to eternal life". A dying person can be helped by his family members to attain heavenly bliss since at this point the dying relies solely on the promptings of the family members to prepare for a good death. What is more, to bury the dead member of the family is primarily one of the essential roles of the family and the Church regards it as one of the corporal works of mercy.

Conclusion

The Ontogenesis of an individual human being from birth to death is an eventful one. The birth announces the beginning of a creature in the image and likeness of God, strives to conquer the world which he understands as the field of his own domain with its fatal attractions, while ageing, death and dying signal and mark the end of this earthly life for the beginning of another life eternal which is life in abundance, life in full which is what is meant when Christ says: "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly". In the cherished and wise statements of the evangelist Matthew (25: 46) "and because this life in abundance or fullness of life which Christ came to give ... can only be achieved by sharing in God's life which is beyond time" and because "natural life culminates in the supernatural or heavenly life as a continuation of this earthly life; the concern for family touches on the concern for life both terrestrial and eternal". Okeke (2008: 18-19.) rightly concludes and rightly too that: "since the institution of the family has very special role to play in the outcome and direction of life", It must be admitted that the role of the family and what happens to man at the end of this earthly life when he is ageing, dying and eventual exit out of this life is more important and fundamental to other events prior to his death. In ageing, dying and death his earthly life ends and brings him into life in abundance or fullness of life which is grounded on the way the family prepares the individual to battle with the essential features of man and its developmental stages and these last stages in his life. The family should therefore pay attention to the human person during the sequence of events involved in his development but more to the last events of his life that he may have life and have it abundantly rather than lose it to eternal damnation.

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