



---

Volume 59 | Issue 1

Article 9

---

2016

# Comparative Study of Ethics in Librarianship and the Bible

Japheth Abdulazeez Yaya  
*Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary*

*The Christian Librarian* is the official publication of the Association of Christian Librarians (ACL). To learn more about ACL and its products and services please visit <http://www.acl.org/>

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/tcl>

 Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), [Ethics in Religion Commons](#), and the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Yaya, Japheth Abdulazeez (2016) "Comparative Study of Ethics in Librarianship and the Bible," *The Christian Librarian*: Vol. 59 : Iss. 1 , Article 9.  
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/tcl/vol59/iss1/9>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Christian Librarian by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ George Fox University. For more information, please contact [arolfe@georgefox.edu](mailto:arolfe@georgefox.edu).

# Comparative Study of Ethics in Librarianship and the Bible



**Japheth Abdulazeez Yaya, Seminary Librarian  
Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary**

## ABSTRACT

This paper is a comparative study that discusses ethical issues in librarianship and the Bible. Such issues include: Laws in librarianship vs. laws in the Bible; censorship in librarianship vs. censorship in the Bible; Bible teachings on access to information and access to information in librarianship; purification (i.e., book binding), conservation and preservation practices in the library and in the Bible; weeding of library collections and weeding practices in the Bible; privacy and confidentiality in the library and in the Bible; orderliness of the library collections and the Bible; consortium building of library collections and in the Bible; and consequences of human action in the library and in the Bible. These topics are carefully discussed in order to discover the differences and similarities between the library and biblical ethics. The paper concludes that there is correlation between some ethical issues in the Bible and that of librarianship. It is clear that some aspects of librarianship are rooted in the Bible.

## Introduction

A library can be regarded as a place, building or room where books and other educational resources are being acquired, processed, organized and preserved for reading, reference and research purposes. Also, library refers to a place where literary and artistic materials are kept for the purpose of reading and research. These materials include books, pamphlets, records, and periodicals. There are five major types of libraries: academic, public, school, special, and virtual libraries.

The Bible is a record of the inspired words of God. According to Akinsanmi (2005) the letters of the word Bible can be known as **B**eliever's **I**nformation **B**ringing **L**ife **E**ternal, or **B**asic **I**nstructions **B**efore **L**eaving **E**arth. Second Timothy 2:16-17 states, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (KJV). The introduction to the Gideon International Bible states:

The Bible contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be holy. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christian's chatter. Here, paradise is restored, heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed (Gideon International, 2010).

Akinsanmi (2005) further states that the word Bible has its root in the Greek language: *biblia*, which means books. The Bible has 66 divinely inspired books written by about forty authors over the period of 1600 years. These forty different writers were writing different chapters of the same story without seeing or talking to one another; yet, the Bible doctrines are coherent, unique and complete. Therefore, we can say that the Bible is the Word of God breathed by the Holy Spirit to the writers with divine accuracy (Akinsanmi, 2005). The Bible is divided into two parts: the Old Testament, which is comprised of 39 books, and the New Testament, which is comprised of 27 books. The Bible contains some set of laws (ethics) to direct, divine food to support and comfort to cheer its readers.

According to Eckman (2004), the word ethics comes from the Greek word *ethos*, meaning a “stall” for horses, a place of stability and permanence. In addition, the word morality comes from *mores*, which describes the shifting behavioral patterns of society. Ethics is the philosophical study of morality, a rational examination into people’s moral beliefs and behavior. It refers to a set of standards around which we organize our lives and from which we define our duties and obligations. It results in a set of imperatives that establishes acceptable behavior patterns. It is what people *ought* to do. By contrast, morality is more concerned with what people *do*. It describes what people are already doing, often regardless of any absolute set of standards (Eckman, 2004, p. 8). It is important to note that ethics is focused on the voluntary, moral choices people make because they have decided they ought to take one course of action rather than an alternative. There is a difference between “ethics” and “morals.” Morals reflect the changing whims of culture, but ethics do not change. For the Christian, ethics are rooted in the absolutes revealed in God’s Word to inform and nurture our moral conduct. Followers of Christ must learn to evaluate their thoughts and actions biblically. “Ethics is not concerned about involuntary choices or choices outside the moral realm” (Quinn, 2010, p. 59).

The purpose of this paper is to discover the relationships that exist among the ethics in librarianship and that of the Bible, and to discover how the ethical issues discussed in librarianship have their roots in the Bible. This will help us to establish the fact that information resources management has its foundation in the Bible.

## **Objective of the Study**

The aim of this paper is to look at some ethics in librarianship as compared with ethics described in the Bible. This is done in order to discover their similarities and differences, and to see the relationship between biblical ethics and ethics in librarianship.

## **An Overview of Ethics in Librarianship and in the Bible**

According to the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (2012):

Librarianship is, in its very essence, an ethical activity embodying a value-rich approach to professional work with information. The need to share ideas and information has grown more important with the increasing complexity of society in recent centuries and this provides a rationale for libraries and the practice of librarianship. The role of information institutions and professionals, including libraries and librarians, in modern society is to support the optimization of the record and representation of information and to provide access to it. Information service in the interest of social, cultural and economic well-being is at the heart of librarianship and therefore librarians have social responsibilities (p. 1).

The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy defines ethics as follows: “concerned with distinguishing between good and evil in the world, between right and wrong human actions, and between virtuous and non-virtuous characteristics of people” (Hirsch, Kett, & Trefil, 2002, p. 92). Eckman (2004) refers to ethics as a set of standards around which we organize our lives and from which we define our duties and obligations. It results in a set of imperatives that establishes acceptable behavior patterns. It is what people ought to do. By contrast, morality is more concerned with what people *do*. Ethics is the philosophical study of morality, a rational examination into people’s moral beliefs and behavior. Ethics is a branch of philosophy. It shows the right and wrong behavior of people in the human society; it is a set of code that guides human actions in the larger society.

The study of ethics is particularly important right now. Our society is changing rapidly as it incorporates the latest advances in information technology. Just think about how cell phones, portable digital music players, laptop computers, and the World Wide Web have changed our society for good or bad and how we spend our time to interact with others! These inventions have brought us many benefits. However, some people selfishly exploit new technologies for personal gain, even if that reduces their overall benefit for the rest of us. Here are two examples: While most of us are happy to have the ability to send e-mail to people all over the world, we are dismayed at the amount of spam-unsolicited bulk e-mails we receive. Access to the World Wide Web provides libraries with an important new information resource for its patrons, but should children be exposed to pop-up advertisements for pornographic Web sites? When we encounter new problems such as spam or pornographic Web sites, we need to decide which activities are “good” which are “neutral” and which are “bad,” unfortunately, existing moral guidelines sometimes seem old-fashioned or unclear (Quinn, 2010, p. 56).

However, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) provides a code for ethics and professional conduct, offered as a series of ethical propositions for the guidance of individual librarians as well as other information workers and users (2012). IFLA stresses that ethics improves professional self-awareness and it provides transparency to users and society in general. From

the aforementioned statement, it can be deduced that ethics are some set of rules and regulations (laws) that guide the activities of librarians, library users and other information workers. Ethical issues are subjects of great concern in the society; these have to be discussed as they help in guiding various human endeavors in the society especially in library and information services.

Most religions in the world have an ethical component, often derived from purported supernatural revelation or guidance. According to Blackburn (2001):

For many people, ethics is not only tied up with religion, but is completely settled by it. Such people do not need to think too much about ethics, because there is an authoritative code of instructions, a handbook of how to live (para. 1).

Ethics, which is a major branch of philosophy, encompasses right conduct and good life. It is significantly broader than the common conception of analyzing right and wrong. A central aspect of ethics is “the good life,” the life worth living or life that is simply satisfying, which is held by many philosophers to be more important than traditional moral conduct.

Therefore, biblical ethics are a set of standards that are used to regulate the activities of Christians within the church and outside the church premises. Biblical ethics are otherwise known as Christian ethics. Christian ethics in general have tended to stress the need for love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness because of sin. With divine assistance, the Christian is called to become increasingly virtuous in both thought and deed. Conversely, the Christian is also called to abstain from every appearance of evil and other vices in the society. Hence, Christian ethical principles are based on the teachings within the Bible. They begin with the notion of inherent sinfulness, which requires essential atonement. Sin is estrangement from God, which is the result of not doing God’s will. God’s will can be summed up by the precept stated in Mark 12:30-31: “And thou shalt Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (KJV) (cf. Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, commonly called the Great Commandment). Christian ethics are founded upon the concept of grace that transforms a person’s life and enables one to choose and act righteously. As sin is both individual and social, so is grace applied to both the individual and society. Specific ethical behaviors originate in the Old Testament’s Ten Commandments, and are enriched by teachings in the Psalms and morals contained in historical accounts of the Bible.

However, according to *Holman Bible Dictionary*, biblical ethics is connected with Christian doctrines (Ethics, 1991). The problem with trying to speak about the ethics of the Bible is that ethical content is not offered in isolation from the doctrine and teaching of the Bible. Therefore, what God is in His character and wills in His

revelation defines what is right, good, and ethical. In this sense, then, the Bible has had a decisive influence in molding ethics, morality, and human character in society.

Furthermore, Christian ethics would be the principles derived from the Christian faith by which we act. While God's Word may not cover every situation we face throughout our lives, its principles give us the standards by which we must conduct ourselves in those situations where there are no explicit instructions. As an example: the Bible does not say anything explicitly about the use of illegal drugs, yet based on the principles we learn through Scripture, we can know that use of illegal drugs is wrong. For one thing, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 states, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price, therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit which is God." Knowing what hard drugs do to our bodies – the harm they cause to various organs – we know that by using them we would be destroying the temple of the Holy Spirit. That is certainly not honoring to God. Secondly, Romans 13:1 states "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." Given the illegal nature of the hard drugs, by using them we are not submitting to the authorities but are rebelling against them (What is Christian ethics?, n.d.).

### **Correlation between Ethics in Librarianship and the Bible**

In this paper, we shall closely look at some ethical issues in librarianship as compared with biblical ethics. Hence, the paper shall discuss the following topics:

- Laws in librarianship vs. laws in the Bible
- Censorship in librarianship vs. censorship in the Bible
- Access to information in librarianship and biblical teachings on access to information
- Purification (i.e. bindery, conservation and preservation practices) in the library and in the Bible
- Weeding of library collections and weeding practices in the Bible
- Privacy and confidentiality in the library and in the Bible.
- Orderliness of the library collections and the Bible
- Consortium building of library collections and in the Bible
- Consequences of human action in the library and in the Bible
- Laws in Librarianship vs. Laws in the Bible

According to Aina (2004), the library user is very critical in the practice of librarianship. He affirms that library processes revolve around users. Thus, it is important that the staff of a library always relate with users in a pleasant, friendly, courteous and efficient manner. Hence, in order to carry out this fundamental task, library operations are

being guided by some set of rules and regulations to create a conducive reading environment for its users. It is very important that library users should familiarize themselves with those rules and regulations. Alokun (2004) opines that libraries are guided by fifteen laws. These serve as a code of ethics for the smooth operations of any library in society. Some of those rules and regulations guiding the library services as were listed by Alokun include: readers are searched when leaving the library. Any person caught stealing, or attempt to steal library materials or mutilating books shall be expelled if he is a student or dismissed if he is a staff or handed over to the police in case of external users; silence should be maintained at all times. There should be no group discussion, and respect all library staff since respect begets respect.

Likewise, in Exodus 20:3–17 God gives Israel the Ten Commandments. Also, other laws which are given by God to regulate the activities of mankind can be found in different parts of the Bible such as Romans 1:28–32:

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers; backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents; without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful, and who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

Additionally, the Bible warns in 1 Corinthians 6:9–10: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind; nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” (cf. Galatians 5:19–21 and Revelation 21:8.)

All these laws are to guide the activities of people in the society. Among the Ten Commandments that correlate with library operations and services are the command against theft and the command to honor one’s parents. In the library operations and services, stealing of library collections is a serious offense as this will deny other library users from accessing such educational materials. Also, library users are to respect both librarians and other library staff so as to obtain the best services provided by the library staff.

With regard to silence, Zechariah 2:13 states, “Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord: for He is raised up out of His holy habitation,” and Habakkuk 2:20 states, “But the Lord is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him.” From the above Bible references, God commands that silence should be maintained in His

house. Likewise, in the library silence should be maintained at all time as noise will distract the concentration of readers and hinder their studies.

## **Censorship in Librarianship vs. Censorship in the Bible**

The Global Internet Literacy Campaign (n. d.) states that:

Censorship can be regarded as the control of the information and ideas circulated within a society. This has been a hallmark of dictatorships throughout history. In the 20th Century, censorship was achieved through the examination of books, plays, films, television and radio programs, news reports, and other forms of communication for the purpose of altering or suppressing ideas found to be objectionable or offensive. The rationales for censorship have varied, with some censors targeting material deemed to be indecent or obscene; heretical or blasphemous; or seditious or treasonous. Thus, ideas have been suppressed under the guise of protecting three basic social institutions: the family, the church, and the state (para. 1).

In the librarian profession, there is strong opposition to censorship. This is rightly portrayed in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) as cited by IFLA (2012): "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers" (para. 19). Similarly, the Bible states in Matthew 10:8: "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out the devils: freely ye have received, freely give." This shows that anything (information) that is freely received should be freely given out to whosoever that needs it. Additionally, Job 22:7 states, "Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withheld bread from the hungry." Also, Psalm 132:15 states, "I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread." Here, God commands that we should not withhold bread (information) from the hungry (information seekers), so, God satisfies the poor with bread.

Exodus 16:12-15 states:

I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, at even ye shall eat flesh and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God ; and it came to pass, that at even the quail came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host; And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground; And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, it is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, this is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat." (See also Numbers 11:6-9.)

God demonstrated His kindness in feeding the children of Israel with manna (bread) for forty years in the wilderness.

Therefore, in managing the library and its services, the librarian should promote inclusion and should not discriminate against any library user regardless of sex, ethnic group, nationality, social condition, religion or political opinions. The librarian should provide the highest level of service through courteous, prompt, adequate, skillful, accurate and unbiased responses to all requests for assistance from the user. As information providers, we must resist self-imposed censorship of any form; we must avoid it as fire. Information is power; everybody in the society needs it for their survival. Once it is made available, the users will be on top of their challenges.

Although censorship of information in any format is against our profession as librarians and the Bible wants us to give information freely to anyone that needs it, librarians are facing some challenges in doing this especially when such information is in conflict with the security of people in the society or the entire country. There are some educational materials in the library collections that clearly demonstrate to people how to manufacture bombs and other sophisticated ammunitions; should such books be displayed and accessed by anyone that seeks for such information having known that some criminals may use information in such books to manufacture arms to foment trouble against the peace of the land?

For example, in Nigeria, we are currently having security challenges whereby some religious fanatics (*boko haram*) are taking ammunitions against the society, which has led to the massacre of many innocent souls mostly in the northern part of Nigeria. For example, on Monday September 30, 2013, it was reported on the front page of the Vanguard daily newspaper that this *boko haram* group killed seventy-eight students from the College of Agriculture, Yobe State, Nigeria. This *boko haram* group later moved to other houses near the college where they killed residents at will.

### **Biblical Teachings on Access to Information and Access to Information in Librarianship**

This is another thorny issue in librarianship. According to IFLA (2012), the core mission of librarians and other information workers is to ensure access to information for all for personal development, education, research, cultural enrichment, leisure, economic activity and informed participation in and enhancement of democracy. IFLA (2012) further reiterates that:

librarians and other information workers offering services to the public should make every endeavour to offer access to their collections and services free of cost to the user. If membership fees and administrative charges are inevitable, they should be kept as low as possible and practical solutions found so that socially

disadvantaged people are not excluded. Librarians and other information workers promote and publicize their collection and services so that users and prospective users are aware of their existence and availability.

For this purpose, Librarians and other information workers seek to ensure that the websites of libraries and other information institutions comply with international standards for accessibility and access to them is not subject to barriers. Librarians and other information workers use the most effective ways to make the material accessible to all; through open access journals, electronic journals and books which are displayed on the net for people to access their collections globally (para. 10 & 11).

The Bible also talks about access. Ephesians 2:18 states, “For through Him [Jesus Christ] we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father [God].” Here we can have access to information about God through Jesus Christ and this is made possible through His crucifixion and death on the cross of Calvary. Before that point, especially in the Old Testament during the era of the prophets, people did not have direct access to God but had to go through the high priest to make atonement for them before God. This changed after the death of Jesus Christ on the cross when the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom; this gave people direct access to God: as we pray and read His word. This scenario was recorded in Matthew 27:50-52: “Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost; 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; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose.”

It is clear that librarianship and the Bible encourage accessibility to information. However, we must be careful here, for there are some pornographic and occultist educational materials among library resources which may not be appropriate for children and other godly-minded library users. Such materials may corrupt innocent children and turn their hearts away from God. Because of this, partial censorship may be practiced by the library. Such classified materials may be withdrawn from the public view and kept in the reserved section of the library for consultation by matured library users and researchers; librarians must give detailed information on how to have access to such restricted materials in the library. This practice is seen in Deuteronomy 29:29: “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.” This shows that there is some information about God that can be revealed and some that is not revealed to humanity; we should not probe further into such unrevealed information as doing this may lead to occult practices and thereby attract divine judgment of God.

## **Purification in the Library and in the Bible**

Purification is a biblical process of making someone or something clean, to get rid of bad materials from the actual materials needed. From Genesis to Revelation, God emphasizes the need for anyone that wants to enter His kingdom to be holy. Therefore, purification is the act of having our hearts, souls, and minds cleansed from all sinful acts and serve God in holiness and righteousness. Purification also means sanctification and perfection of the heart. Sanctification is a command from God. Genesis 17:1 states, "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect [holy]." Likewise, Leviticus 19:2 states, "Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy" (cf. Leviticus 21:8; Matthew 5:8, 48; Revelation 21:27). From the above scriptural passages, God expects anyone that wants to enter His kingdom to be pure in heart and live a holy life. For this to be possible, Jesus Christ shed His blood on the cross of Calvary for the remission of sin and for the redemption of mankind (see Hebrews 9:22, 13:12). Also, Jesus prayed for the sanctification of all His disciples and those that believe in Him:

They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world; sanctify them through thy truth thy word is truth; as thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world; and for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth; neither pray I for this alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word. (John 17:16-20.)

However, in librarianship, purification is applicable in book binding, conservation and preservation of the library and archival materials. Reitz (2004) refers to book binding as the process of fastening the leaves or sections of a publication together by sewing or stitching or by applying adhesive to the back, and then attaching a cover by hand or by machine under the supervision of a skilled binder. Book binding is an aspect of conservation and preservation of the library collections. It involves the reinforcement of the weak and worn out books, pamphlets and periodicals to the original format. This helps in prolonging the lifespan of the library and archival materials.

Conservation is an important aspect of collection development management of library materials. Conservation is defined by Viñas and Viñas (1988) as the operations that are intended to prolong the life of an object by forestalling or remedying deterioration. IFLA (2010) defined conservation as specific practices taken to slow down deterioration and prolong the lifespan of an object by direct intervening in its physical or chemical make-up. Preservation has also been defined by IFLA (2010) to include all the managerial and financial considerations including storage and accommodation provisions, staffing levels, policies, techniques, and methods

involved in preserving library and archival materials and the information contained in them. Kemoni (1996) categorized conservation into three steps. These include:

1. Determining the causes and extent of damage to a document.
2. Preservation: that is stabilizing the environment under which library and archival materials are kept. This includes controlling excessive temperature, relative humidity and instituting good housekeeping practices.
3. Restoration: this involves repair and prolonging the lifespan of materials of which binding is the most prominent methods of restoration. Reformatting of information is increasingly being adopted as a means of conserving information materials.

Aina (2004) listed the following as the possible causes of damage to library and archival materials. These include:

1. Mutilation of library materials. This involves the deliberate removal of pages from library materials. This usually occurs when a delinquent reader is interested in a particular section of a document. Rather than borrowing the whole book (or a journal in some cases), there is a resort to the removal of pages that are interest to the reader. Sometimes a reader might deface some library materials that might render the materials unreadable.
2. Damage to library materials could be in the form of normal wear and tear, which may have resulted from prolonged or excessive use. The damage could arise because of negligence of the user.
3. Natural disaster such as fire, flood, and earthquakes may destroy library and archival materials.
4. Exposure to excessive light.
5. Uncontrolled temperatures and humidity leading to library materials becoming too brittle or damp resulting in the growth of mould or fungus.
6. Pests such as cockroaches, termites, bookworms or silverfishes may also cause damage.
7. Perhaps the most important cause of damage to library and archival documents is the deterioration of library materials. This is as a result of poor quality of papers. This is chemical deterioration (Aina, 2004:264).

While some of the causes of the damage of library materials can be prevented through security measures and careful handling of library and archival materials, deterioration of library and archival resources needs to be prevented or reduced so that the lifespan of library materials can be prolonged. The following factors lead to the deterioration of library and archival materials: environmental factors such as high temperature, relative humidity, exposure to rays of sunlight; biological agents including fungi, bacteria, insects, rodents and man; and chemical factors.

On the other hand, preservation according to Aina (2004) is the maintenance of library materials so that they can be close to the original conditions much as possible. Ogunmodede and Ebijuwa (2013) state that in preservation consideration should be given to every element that promotes the protection of the materials including the housing, storage system and security against such threats as theft, mutilation and poor handling. Preservation methods include:

- Eliminating or reducing the factors that accelerate deterioration of papers.
- Proper or careful handling and storage of library and archival materials.
- Reformatting – photocopying, microfilming and digitization.

In summary, librarians and archivists must ensure that library and archival materials in their custody are conserved and preserved so that they are not damaged. Also, it is necessary to provide security for library materials so that they are not defaced, mutilated or stolen.

### **Weeding of the Library Collections and Weeding Practices in the Bible**

In librarianship, weeding means systematic removal of obsolete, old and irrelevant materials from the library collections. Aina (2004) and Boon (2009) define weeding as a process of removing some library materials from the shelves because they are obsolete in terms of content, they are physically damaged, or they are excessively used. They opine that weeding should be done from time to time to create space for more relevant and current materials in the library collection. Doing so helps in reducing the cost of processing and maintaining library materials. Sometimes, weeded materials could be replaced if there is a demand for such materials or when there is a newer edition of the weeded materials.

Weeding has to be done from time to time, but librarians should be careful not to weed from the library stacks vital educational materials, which may be useful to readers in the near future. All the weeded materials have to be replaced with more current and relevant educational materials so that readers will not be denied information needed from the library. Similarly, in the Bible, believers should guide their hearts diligently (Proverbs 4:23) and should not allow any sinful thought that could disturb their relationship with God.

Furthermore, weeding in the Bible can be referred to as the process of separating the wheat from the tares. Matthew 13:24–30 describes this:

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way; but when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also; so the servants of

the house-holder came and said unto him, sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? He said an enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, nay, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them; let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

Also, there is a correlation with the separation between sheep and goats that is between the righteous and sinners. This can be seen in Matthew 25:31-34, 41:

When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; vand before him shall be gathered all nations and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left; then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, come, ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

Moreover, it can be re-emphasized that weeding practices should be carried out frequently in the library so that relevant and current educational materials can be acquired, processed and made available to our readers. This will make readers to patronize our resources from time to time.

## **Privacy and Confidentiality of Users**

These two issues while different, are closely related to each other. Protecting user privacy and confidentiality has long been an integral part of the mission of libraries. In a library (physical or virtual), privacy is the right to open inquiry without having the subject of one's interests examined or scrutinized by others. "Confidentiality exists when a library is in possession of personally identifiable information about users and keeps that information private on their behalf" (American Library Association, 2002).

Privacy is the right an individual has which prevents other people from having access to his or her personal data. It should be noted here that our personal data in the hands of other people gives them power over us, as they learn about our beliefs, tastes, hobbies, political views and so on. Libraries and information centers must keep in mind this right from the moment they begin handling data of such sort.

In turn, confidentiality consists in not revealing the relationship between the user and the professional. It also carries with it the duty to declare any conflict of interest that could undermine confidentiality, as well as the need to keep all the names and

personal records of library users secret and should not be divulged to a third party. According to Multnomah County Library (2012), information the library may gather and retain about current library users includes the following:

- Information required to register for a library card or use (e.g. name, contact address, telephone number, email address, date of birth),
- Records of material charged and discharged from the library collections,
- Electronic access information,
- Requests for interlibrary loan or reference service,
- Information about topics a person searches for that does not contain any personal information about the person searching.

Likewise in the Bible, records are kept and the right of owners of such information is protected. This can be sealed up by God Himself in the mind of His prophets and could be revealed at the nearest future. Again, Deuteronomy 29:29 states “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law,” (cf. Daniel 12:7-9). There is information that concerns membership of a church, which well known to the pastor, information that relates to members’ marital affairs, personal afflictions, and other personal problems; this information must not be revealed to a third party. The revelation of such information may discourage members from having confidence in such a pastor and it may also prevent him or her from attending that particular church.

### **Orderliness: Classification of Library Resources**

Library materials are to be classified in order to facilitate their accessibility by the library’s users. Classification according to Harrold’s Librarian Glossary (Prytherch, 1995) is the arrangement of things in logical order according to their degree of likeness, especially the assignment of books to their proper places in a scheme of book classification. It is the arrangement of similar library resources in a class for easy identification and usage. Alokun (2004) further states that book classification is set to achieve two jobs:

- Sorting the books into groups that will best meet the needs who will use them, that is classifying them by a characteristic that has significance.
- Marking the books in a conspicuous place by giving each book its subjects identifying sign or symbol of the notation.

Therefore, to classify a collection of objects is to place together in classes those objects which have certain characteristics in common and to separate them from others which do not have these characteristics. All the books acquired by the library may be classified according to the following classification schemes: Library of

Congress (LC), Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC), Bliss Classification, Universal Decimal Classification (UDC), Colon Classification, Bernard Classification and the Superintendent of Documents Classification (Alokun, 2004). Any of these schemes may be used to organize library resources but the most widely used especially in the academic and public libraries are Library of Congress and Dewey Decimal Classification schemes.

God declares in the book of 1 Corinthians 14:40, “Let all things be done decently and in order.” At the creation of the universe in Genesis 1, everything in the world was in a state of confusion, darkness and disorderliness; the Spirit of God was hovering the universe thinking on how to bring orderliness to the universe. Then, God created light, plants, animals, man and other living and non-living things in the world. After creation, God described and separated all that He had created by grouping them item by item into different but similar groups; this is known as cataloguing and classification in librarianship. He gave names and notations or class marks to those items He had created. Also, Genesis 2:10–13 describes a river flowing from the Garden of Eden divided into four heads and names were given to each of them. These are examples of cataloguing and classification. In fact, God is the first Cataloguer and Classifier, in other words, God is a Librarian.

### **Consortium Building of Library Collections**

Mabawonku (2006) defines library consortium as an association of libraries that have agreed to cooperate on collection development and share resources by providing access to electronic information resources available in any or all of the cooperating libraries. It is a process whereby two or more libraries agreed to come together to acquire educational materials and share them according to their level of participation. Adeyokun and Yaya (2010) define a library consortium as a comparative alliance of libraries to share human and information resources. It could be further described as a group of organizations (libraries) who come together to fulfill a combined objective that usefully requires cooperation and the sharing of resources and need to have a clear mutual goal to ensure their success. Consortium building of the library collections helps the library users to have unrestricted access to their desired educational materials as those libraries that form the alliance have their resources and records connected through internet or electronic connectivity.

Consortium building of resources had been practiced in the Bible; this is seen in Genesis 11:1–6 at the construction of the tower of Babel: “Behold, the people is one (unity) and they have all one language...” Also, consortium is manifested among the Godhead (Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit; Genesis 1:26; 11:7). Consortium building of library resources helps in reducing the cost of library operations by obtaining a group purchase price for the educational materials acquired into the library.

## Consequences of Human Action

There is always reward for every action done by man. In librarianship, as previously mentioned in this paper, library operations and services are guided by some set of rules and regulations. Readers are searched when leaving the library. Any person caught stealing library materials or mutilating books shall be expelled if he is a student or dismissed if he/she is a staff or handed over to the police in case of external users (Alokun, 2004).

Likewise, the Bible declares in Romans 6:23, “The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Furthermore, Galatians 6:7-9 states, “Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap, for he that sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.” Certainly, there is divine judgment for every sinful action; 2 Corinthians 5:10 states, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” Also, Revelation 21:8 states, “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers and whoremongers, and sorcerers and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Psalm 91:7). From the Bible texts and passages stated above, it is clear that God’s judgment on sinful souls is certain. Hence, the counsel of God for every sinful soul is to repent and be converted, as seen in Acts 17:30-31:

And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commanded all men everywhere to repent; because He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained: whereof he hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised Him from the death.

Similarly, Luke 13:3 states, “I tell you nay, but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” God commands and demands genuine repentance from anyone who wants to enter His kingdom. In the same way, librarians and archivists expect every library user to have positive attitude as they consult educational materials preserved in the library because any information lost cannot be regained easily.

## Conclusion

There is correlation between ethical issues in librarianship and the Bible’s ethical code. It is revealed from the discussion of this paper that librarianship takes its foundation from the Bible; one can rightly affirm that God is a Librarian as He diligently catalogued and classified everything He created in the universe. Libraries and the Bible each have a set of laws that are used to guide the activities of humankind in the society; we are to obey and keep those commandments to have a peaceful environment. As information providers, we must resist self-imposed censorship of

any form; we must avoid it as fire. Information is power, everybody in the society needs it for their survival, once it is made available, the users will be on top of their challenges. The librarian should provide the highest level of service through courteous, prompt, adequate, skillful, accurate and unbiased responses to all requests for assistance to the user.

Additionally, librarians and archivists must ensure that library and archival materials in their custodies are conserved and preserved so that they are not damaged. In addition, it is necessary to provide security for library materials so that they are not defaced, mutilated, or stolen. Librarians and other information workers should use the most effective ways to make material accessible to all through open access journals and electronic journals and books that are displayed on the Internet for people to access their collections globally. This helps in taking information to the doorstep of any information seekers and users. Weeding practices in librarianship and in the Bible has to be done from time to time. However, librarians should be careful not to weed from the library stock vital educational materials that may be useful to readers in the nearest future; all the weeded materials have to be replaced with more current and relevant educational materials so that readers will not be denied of information needed from the library.

Furthermore, library materials are to be classified in order to facilitate their accessibility by the library users. Library materials that are not accessible may not satisfy the information needs of library users; hence, library materials are to be well organized using a standard classification scheme. This helps as a library is a growing organism and we should save the time of users.

Above all, consortium building of library resources helps in reducing the cost of library operations by obtaining a group purchase price for the educational materials acquired into the library. Libraries should be encouraged to put their resources together in order to form synergy when acquiring educational materials. Also, there is reward for every action done by man. Therefore, as God commands and demands genuine repentance from anyone who wants to enter His kingdom, likewise, librarians and archivists expect every library user to have positive attitude as they consult educational materials preserved in the library because any information lost cannot be regained easily. †

---

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Japheth Abdulazeez Yaya is Seminary Librarian at Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary in Ogbomosho, Oyo State, Nigeria. He can be contacted at [yjapheth@yahoo.com](mailto:yjapheth@yahoo.com).

---

## REFERENCES

- Adeyokun, B. O. & Yaya, J. A. (2010). Consortium building of educational materials in Nigerian libraries. *Jewel Journal of Librarianship*, 2: 128 – 137.
- Aina, L. O. (2004). *Library and information science text for Africa*. Ibadan: Third World Information Services.
- Akinsanmi, J. E. (2005). *Bibliology: The doctrine of the Bible broadening your biblical horizons*. Yaba (Lagos): Soladem Publishing House.
- Alokun, N. A. T. (2004). *The use of library: A textbook for students in tertiary institutions*. Lagos: Nudex International Company.
- American Library Association. (2002). Privacy: an interpretation of the library bill of rights. Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/privacy>
- Blackburn, S. (2001). *Ethics: A very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Boon, B. (2009, May 4). Weeding Library Collections [blog post]. Retrieved from <https://olcsmalibraries.wordpress.com/2009/05/04/weeding-library-collections/>
- Eckman, J. P. (2004). *Biblical ethics: Choosing right in a world gone wrong*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.
- Ethics. (1991). In T. C. Butler (Ed.), *Holman Bible Dictionary*. Retrieved from Gideons International (2010, December 31). An Inspiring Introduction to the Holy Book [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://blog.gideons.org/2010/12/the-bible-contains-the-mind-of-god/>
- Famous, D. K. (2011). Censorship of information and the Nigerian society. *International NGO Journal*, 6(7): 159-165.
- Global Internet Literacy Campaign. (n.d.) What is censorship? Retrieved from <http://gilc.org/speech/osistudy/censorship/>
- Hirsch, E. D., Kett, J. F., & Trefil, J. (2002). *The new dictionary of cultural literacy*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- How Libraries Play an Essential Role in Protecting Your Rights. Available online at: <http://www.ilovelibraries.org/getinformed/privacy>, accessed on 03/10/13.
- International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. (2012). *Professional code of ethics for librarians and information workers*. IFLA-Committee on Freedom of information. Access to Information and Free Expression (FAIFE). Retrieved from International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions website: <http://www.ifla.org/en/faife/professional-codes-of-ethics-for-librarians>
- International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. (2010). Principles for the Care and Handling of Library Materials: An International Issue no. 1. Available online at: <http://www.ifla.org/publications/node/8712>, accessed on 02/11/13.
- Kemoni, H. N. (1996). Preservation and conservation of archive materials: The case of Kenya. *African Journal of Library, Archives and Information Science*, 6(1): 46-51.
- Mabawonku, I. (2006). Capacity building for the sustenance of library consortia in Africa university libraries. *Proceedings of SCAULWA 2005 Conference* (101-106). Darka, Senegal: SCAULWA.
- Multnomah County Library. (2012). Statement on privacy and confidentiality of library records. Available online at: <http://multcolib.org/policies-manuals/statement-privacy-and-confidentiality-library-record>, accessed on 03/10/13.
- Ogunmodede, T. & Ebijuwu, J. A. (2013). Problems of conservation and preservation of library resources in African academic libraries: A review of literature. *Greener Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(1), 50-57.
- Prytherch, R. J. (1995). *Harrod's librarians' glossary: 9,000 terms used in information management, library science, publishing, the book trades, and archive management*. England: Gower.
- Quinn, Michael J. (2010). *Ethics for the Information Age* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: Pearson.
- Reitz, J. M. (2004). *Dictionary for library and information science*. London: Libraries Unlimited.
- Viñas, V. & Viñas, R. (1988). *Traditional restoration techniques: A RAMP study*. Paris: General Information Programme and UNISIST.
- What is Christian ethics? (n.d.) Retrieved from <http://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-ethics.html>