

**THE VERSATILE LEGAL PRACTITIONER IN OUR FAST CHANGING SOCIETY:
NEED FOR AND CHALLENGES***

Abstract

There is a popular saying that: jack of all trades masters none. This applies to legal practice and legal practitioners. A legal practitioner is a human, and thus encumbered and bedeviled with so many frailties and limitations imposed on him by his imperfect nature which is aggravated and exacerbated by time, unforeseen and unexpected events and occurrences. So, there is need for legal practitioners to obey the law governing division of labours in order to attain desired results. In this article, we are going to look at the versatile legal practitioner in our fast changing society.

Key words: versatile legal practitioner, fast changing society, need and challenges

Introduction

Who is a versatile Legal Practitioner? Why is our society described as a fast changing one and when did this fast change begin? What are the implications of such a changing society? If these questions are answered without successful contradiction, then the need and the challenge aspects become easier and less difficult to perceive. The collage of such two ambidextrous concepts, to wit, versatile and changing society does not help matters at all. However, I shall attempt to present what I know about the theme. After all Bertrand Russell has said that “philosophy in one man's good reasons for rejecting another man's good reasons”. Now let's stop right here and unpack all these because there is a lot to unpack.

Clarification of Concepts

Naturally attempting some explanation of core concepts is the first port of call. This calls for definitions. Again, I recall that a text writer has once said that definition means not much other than a mere mnemonics of elucidation to follow so that what is presented thereafter is seen to be in tandem with the presenter's idea. I begin with explaining or better being of the same mind with you in respect of the core terms.

Versatile

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary provides the following definition:

- A. Changing or fluctuating readily.
- B. Embracing a variety of subjects, fields or skills.
- C. Capable of turning with ease from one thing to another; capable of turning forward or backward; reversible.
- D. Having many uses or applications.¹

From another source I got these:

1. Capable of doing many things.
2. Having varied uses or many functions.
3. Changeable or inconstant.

* **PROFESSOR CHUKWUEMEKA EMMA IBE**, is a Professor of Law, Faculty of Law, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka; Anambra State, Nigeria; Phone: 07031105599.

¹ G. & C. Merriam Company, Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 7th Edition.

Legal Practitioner

I am sure that we know who a Legal Practitioner is but for clarity purposes, section 24 of Legal Practitioners Act defines a Legal Practitioner as a person entitled within the provision of the Act to practice as a barrister and solicitor either generally or for the purpose of any particular office or proceedings. Thus, there are three categories of persons who are referred to as Legal Practitioners. They are: general practitioners - by far - the most common. Those entitled to practice for purpose of any particular office. This category takes in particularly those in government service such as the Attorney General, Solicitor General, and State Counsel. Then there are those entitled to practice for the purpose of any particular proceedings. This is a onetime affair. To this end, the same law also provided that if an application is made to the Chief Justice of Nigeria by a person or on his behalf and he appears to the Chief Justice to be entitled to practice as an advocate in any country which the legal system is similar to that of Nigeria and he is of the opinion that it is expedient to permit that person to practice as a barrister for the purpose of the proceedings prescribed in the application, he may by warrant authorize that person on payment to the Register of fees to practice as a barrister for the purpose of those proceeding.²

Society

Webster also gives the following definition:

1. Companionship or association with one's fellow; friendly or intimate intercourse: company
2. Voluntary association of individuals for common ends especially an organized group working together or periodically meeting because of common interests or beliefs or profession
3. An enduring or co-operating social group whose members have developed organized patterns of relationship through interaction with one another
4. Part of community that is a unit distinguishable by particular aims or standards of living or conduct.³

Another source adds:

1. A long standing group of people sharing cultural aspects such as language, dress, norms of behaviour and artistic forms.
2. A group of people who meet from time to time to engage in common interests; an association or organization.
3. The sum total of all voluntary interrelations.
4. The people of one's country or community taken as a whole.
5. A number of people joined by mutual consent to deliberate determine and act toward a common goal.

Having done with explanation of key terms, I believe, distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen that by now you would easily grasp the unenviable position I was thrown into when I was assigned to handle this theme. Nevertheless, I will now proceed with the marriage of “versatile” and legal practitioner which of necessity is first in place before he makes a debut in a society which is fast changing.

² Legal Practitioners Act; Laws of Federation of Nigeria 2004; Section 2 (2).

³ G. & C. Merriam Company, Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 7th Edition.

Identifying the versatile Legal Practitioner

As can be seen, whereas a Legal Practitioner is defined in the law, the Versatile Legal Practitioner is not so defined. The question is: Is the versatile legal practitioner, a practitioner who changes or fluctuates readily changing and inconsistent; turning with ease from one thing to another? Is he or she a person capable of embracing a variety of subject fields or skills; thus capable of doing many things and functioning in many areas?

I am of the view that that the term “versatile legal practitioner” is subjective and thus a versatile Legal Practitioner must of necessity be limited in his so-called versatility. For one thing, no mortal can fit perfectly into these molds of meaning assigned to the word versatile. A legal practitioner, of course, is a human, and thus encumbered and bedeviled with so many frailties and limitations imposed on him by his imperfect nature which is aggravated and exacerbated by time, unforeseen and unexpected events and occurrences. Consequently, I am constrained to narrow down the confines of the versatile legal practitioner.

This may sound paradoxical but it is not unusual. Paradox exists in every sphere of life. In this context, the qualities of a versatile Legal Practitioner must be precursory to his position in our changing society. It may be easy to go along with me if I ask, using a cliché: is he or she, a jack of all trade but being master of none? Of course, I do not think so. That immediately takes us to specialization, again justifying my paradoxical assumption that a versatile legal practitioner is after all not strictly speaking versatile, for he cannot afford to dabble at the same time into many areas of legal practice, which is so profuse, prolific and which is not at all helped by the dynamism immanent in law, legal practice, and society. To be sure, the versatile legal practitioner must, quite apart from being generally aware of the contemporary scene understand and conduce to some basics.

A pertinent fact to be considered

It has been empirically proved that a person may be very competent in an aspect of a job but very incompetent in another. It does not matter whether his competence is in an area considered less glamorous/inferior. Thus a person should stick to an area of practice compatible with his natural inclinations, which involve his physical ability, emotion and the like. That is to say, he should confine himself to an area of practice where he is best suited. Therefore, the first accomplishment is for the versatile legal practitioner to discover his area of competence and stick to it whether it is considered beneath his dignity or not or that he has by so doing “failed to make it.” Failure to appreciate this will lead to catastrophic level of incompetence. True, we often hear people talk in such a way as to imply that unless one attains the pinnacle of the legal profession, he has not arrived. This is so because a somewhat pyramidal structure exists in the legal profession. Once this kind of arrangement exists, a principle which I may refer to as “be the best of what you are” comes into play.

In this wise, the legal practitioner must be a good manger. In practical management arena this has been identified as “the final placement syndrome” and dubbed the “Peter Principle”. To get down to this point, I will relate a gist given by the authors of *The Peter Principle*. The gist is:

Mr. Tinker was exceptionally zealous and intelligent as apprentice at an auto repair company and soon rose to journeyman rank. In this work he showed outstanding ability in diagnosing obscure faults, and endless patience in correcting them. He was promoted to foreman of the repair shop. But here, his love of things mechanical and his perfectionism become liabilities. He will undertake any job that he thinks looks interesting, no matter how busy the shop

may be. We'll work it in somehow; he says . . . He meddles constantly. He is seldom to be found at his desk. He is usually up to his elbows in a dismantled motor and while the man who should be doing the work stands watching, other workmen sit around waiting to be assigned new tasks. As a result the shop is always overcrowded with work, always in a muddle, and delivery times are often missed. Tinker . . . was a competent mechanic, but is now an incompetent foreman.⁴

I hope we got the lesson from this story.

It has been observed that this condition of high level of incompetence, whether people realize it or not leads to frustration and such people often develop ulcers high blood pressure, numerous physical problems and even strange mental aberration. This being a principle of general application, it cannot be excluded in the parlance of the legal profession. Therefore, it is the height of unintelligence for a legal practitioner to aspire to be versatile generally in the practice of law. That is to say, to be a Mr. Know-it-all, who handles every type of brief or job.

Let me collapse, in one dimension, what I am trying to put across. The versatile legal practitioner must be so in a particular area of law and which must be one he is naturally inclined to, so as to spare him from health hazards which frustration of incompetence naturally arising out of overload will lead to. Yes I mean health hazard, because a live dog is better than a dead lion. After all, our versatile legal practitioner must first be alive and in the land of the living before adapting himself to the changing society. It may also be concluded rightly that this is even recognized and provided for in the law wherein a lawyer is forbidden from handling a legal matter which he knows or ought to know that he is not competent to handle without associating himself with a lawyer who is competent to handle it, unless the client objects.⁵

In this wise so many areas of specialization abound. Let me just name some:

1. Data protection;
2. Intellectual property;
3. Telecommunication, media and technology;
4. Financial Technology “fintech”;
5. Dispute Resolution;
6. Capital Market;
7. Corporate financing;
8. Mergers and Acquisition;
9. Energy and Natural Resources;
10. Real Estate;
11. Robotics and so on.

The choice needs not be confined to only one area. To be sure, there may be areas of overlapping and intersections. It does not matter. What is important is for the practitioner to avoid biting more than he can chew.

The Background of a Versatile Legal Practitioner

Happily, the requirement for a successful legal practice in any age and place, for any one whether an all-around, described as versatile or a specialist who is regarded as limited (and in that context not versatile) is seen to be a constant and this we shall consider in brief, very

⁴ Dr. J. Peter and Raymond Hill, *The Peter Principle*, cited in W 77 6/1; p 3.

⁵ Legal Practitioners Act; Laws of Federation of Nigeria 2004; Rules of Professional Conduct for Legal Practitioners 2007 Rule 16 (1)(a).

succinctly. Much is involved but I shall narrow this down to some core needs. I must emphasize that what is presented here, is no way comprehensive, giving the obvious constraints in a publication of this nature. In general, the practitioner must be conversant with his relationship and duty to (a) the client (b) the court and (c) the State. No matter what the vagaries of his client, court, state and colleagues may turn out from time to time, the above forms the fulcrum of his activities. Therefore, the versatile legal practitioner needs to master these rudiments of legal practice so as to be able to come to grips with the outcome of different circles of life and meet societal expectations.

Duty of Legal Practitioners to Clients

Someone needs the services of any practitioner because such a person believes that the practitioner consulted will carry him through his difficulties, ordeal and debacles. Thus a starting point is for the legal practitioner to understand what kind of relationship he must maintain with his client. The relationship is fiduciary in nature. This means that it is a relationship based on confidence and trust where one party is considered “superior” and the other party “inferior” or “subaltern.” Out of this flow a lot of demands and requirements. In our case the legal practitioner is the superior party and the client the subaltern party. This is well cut out in the dictum of Lord Dennin in *Griffith v Evans* where he said

*The duty of a solicitor depends, of course, very much on what he is employed to do. The client is presumed ignorant in matters of law while the solicitor is presumed learned or should be learned.*⁶

That informs the elaborate provisions in the Rules of Professional Conduct for Legal Practitioners. Thus the versatile one cannot afford to be deficient in knowledge of that law for in it one is properly guided in this respect.

A lot is involved that we cannot itemize and deal with them here and now. However, one string upon which all the provisions hang on is honesty. For instance the law provides that the legal practitioner must not disclose any confidential communication made to him by his client without the client’s knowledge and consent. This duty has no end and so it subsists even after proceedings and judgment and where the lawyer withdraws his representation. The exceptions are where the client waives his right (2) communication made in furtherance of any illegal purpose and (3) facts observed by the legal practitioner in the course of his employment as such showing that any crime or fraud has been committed since the commencement of his employment.⁷ Furthermore, the practitioner must act with utmost good faith. On the wings of this is the rule barring the lawyer from engaging in matters which may lead to a conflict of interest.⁸ Therefore, the budding practitioner aspiring to heights would certainly be able to fashion out ways of taking all these in his strides.

In today’s world, temptations in respect of illegitimate briefs and jobs abound, and an astute practitioner must be honest enough to know when to say no. Not quite long ago in one of my media platforms, a message was posted of an SAN who was reprimanded and unceremoniously walked out of the court by a judge of an Appellate court for accepting an inappropriate brief.

⁶ (1953) 2 All ER 1364.

⁷ See for instance, Evidence Act, 2011, Sections 192, 193, 193, 195 and 196 and Rule 15 of Rules of Professional Conduct.

⁸ *Ibid* Rule 13.

The versatile practitioner equally needs to go beyond his clients instructions to probe and peer into facts hidden in the bosom of the client. It is observed that many times these come up mid-way and in litigation they may be corrected by means of an amendment when they are detected. However, in many cases, they may surface when it is too late to amend. A legal luminary of our day had once commented on this issue of making forays into the mind of the client:

This must be done by anticipating all preemptory challenges to the suit by the defence as well as the possible defence on the merits that may be mustered. In this context, the lawyer must always play the “Devil’s Advocate” because it is by this means that you can even elicit from your client those salient aspects of the case which he would prefer to isolate. Invariably cases depend on such matters and if the result is adverse, the lawyer will be blamed for failure on account of matters which were never voluntarily presented for his consideration.⁹

Duty of Legal Practitioners to the Court

Essentially this involves respect for the judge. We know the obvious requirements, such as standup when a judge addresses a counsel and the like decorum. However, because the *Judex* is a human, a subtle difficulty exists. No one in all honesty would claim that *judex* is perfect. The law recognizes this and provides that “error of law” can be a ground of appeal. However, sometimes the *Judex* may exhibit behavior that obviously is out of tune with his position. In this situation, counsel must not fly away. Here, humility and discernment come into play. Since all err, counsel should take it easy, and maintain cool-headedness. This requires counsel to apply not merely knowledge but wisdom. Counsel must appreciate fully the nature of man whether he is a judge or not. Counsel must make progress.

Duty of Legal Practitioners to the State

It has become needful and urgent for the practitioner to once again reflect on his duty to uphold the Rule of Law. In view of what has become the general “norm” today among people especially the politicians, it is imperative that the legal practitioner must stand out *today* in society as one who advocates the rule of law and who maintains the high standard of professional conduct. He must not, in any way, be involved in acts or omissions, capable of tarnishing the nobility of the legal profession. To this end he should not, whether overtly or covertly, aid or facilitate the violation of any law. This aspect of legal practice is said to be on the decline today and for this reason the practitioner must exert himself vigorously to maintain integrity amongst a crooked generation of people especially those who exercise various powers. This is not easy but that is one of the challenges that must be met.

The Challenge of applying Legal Practitioners’ skills in service of Society

With the above background in mind, the versatile legal practitioner will then apply his skills, but is it for himself alone? Of course not and this naturally leads us to examine who is the recipient of his skills for it is in this connection that challenges arise. Immediately we think of people, individuals, and groups – for in essence - that is what society is made up of.

It is not amiss for us now to take a critical look at society that is in the sense of individuals and groups. Early enough, I had, most respectfully, drawn your attention to the myriads of meanings assigned to that word. It is now time to adapt some for our immediate purpose. We

⁹ Dr Onyechi Ikpeazu SAN; Grooming the Young Lawyers to greatness.

are reminded that society may refer to voluntary association of individuals for common ends especially an organized group working together or periodically meeting because of common interest, beliefs or profession and a group of people who meet from time to time to engage in common interest, an association or organization. We will include in our thinking, a legal corporation – that artificial person - who is a creature of law and who the legal practitioner may serve.

The practitioner may be engaged by the people of his country or community. Thus generally, he must be abreast with the *grundnorm* and the constitution of this group. This society must be understood. It is vast, variegated, pluralistic and often in conflict within. It will be madness and sound in a wild goose chase for our model practitioner to attempt a mastery of all that is involved. Indeed, the entire range of practice field can fit in perfectly here.

The practitioner would of necessity interact with people joined by mutual consent to deliberate, determine and act towards a common goal. We think of his duty towards the profession and his client, his interactions with the Bar and Bench. This to a great extent captures the essence of the society.

Understanding our fast changing Society

Recall that the society which we are here concerned with is aptly described, not merely as changing, but as doing so rapidly. Human society has always being in a state of flux. However, lately the nature of change has taken a new dimension and perhaps that is why the adjective “fast” is added. It is common to hear people say that one searching for the eye, must go to the head. Generally for any episode, age or era there must be a characteristic, a beginning and an end. So what is the characteristic of this society? When did this fast change in society begin? We may also rightly ask: what will be the finale? It is vital to understand these phenomena because here is the root or source of challenges which our versatile one must deal with and this is the core of this text. This calls for a peep into history.

Before embarking on this, I think you will all agree with me that the society of today, world over, is such a mess that it must be a harbinger or sign of something. This was well captured decades ago by some insightful personage. The German Statesman Konrad Adenauer reflected:

*Thoughts and pictures come to my mind; thoughts from before the year 1914 when there was real peace, quiet and security on earth - a time when we didn't know fear . . . security and quiet have disappeared from the lives of men since 1914.*¹⁰

The former US Secretary of State, Dean Acheson said:

*Our time is a period of unequalled instability, unequalled violence” and he concluded then that “soon this world is going to be too dangerous to live in.”*¹¹

Concerning the war in 1914, Mr. Chapman, a Columnist reported that “the war was a turning point in more than a military and technological sense. It was a social and Cultural Revolution and the old way of life was shattered utterly.”¹² Another Newspaper published: “The last completely ‘normal’ year in history is 1913, the year before World War 1 began.”¹³

¹⁰ *The West Parker*, Cleveland, Ohio, USA, January 20, 1966.

¹¹ *U.S News and World Report*, June 13, 1960 pp 116,119.

¹² *Their World Came to an End*, Watchtower, October 1, 1982.

¹³ *Times Herald* Washington DC, USA, March 13, 1949.

Walter Lipmann a famous historian stated:

*For us all the world is disorderly and dangerous, ungoverned and apparently ungovernable. Everywhere there is great anxiety and bewilderment. All this marks, I believe, is the historic fact that we are living through the closing chapters of the established and traditional way of life.*¹⁴

Can that be true? Think about that which is happening today in terms of security, integrity of people in general. I will not bore you with gory details of what has now become the “norm” here in Nigeria. But let us not be carried away. What is the nexus of all these to our theme?

Answer: Understanding our fast changing society; when it began, the challenges posed by same and the final outcome which the versatile legal practitioner has got to factor on.

The Challenge of Integrity

The versatile legal practitioner, unlike in the past, has to live, exist and interact with people of this age. People also encompass himself, other counsels and the person of the *judex*. Of course, we know that this versatile person is not an island to himself. He has juniors working with him; clients brief him and many times he appears before judges, magistrates etc. All, in these critical times hard to deal with as foretold above. Quite apart from adequate professional training and knowledge, I take up one major challenge facing the versatile practitioner today. It is that of integrity - Integrity on his part and on the part of his client, colleagues, the judge and people in general I have to deal with this empirically. If you aspire to be versatile or you believe you are already versatile, ask yourself: Are you able to deal with the challenges of being honest to yourself and to your client?

Next is honesty with colleagues. I think by far, this is the budding, and complex challenge today. The dishonesty of associates and juniors nowadays is mind boggling. I will leave out my own experience in this respect and illustrate with experiences of some other lawyers. While preparing this text, I interacted with some colleagues. Unsolicited for, one and all, related tales of woes they suffer in the hands of juniors, associates, and colleagues. One narrated how his junior took a brief from an adversary and instituted an action against their own client who the said junior was acting for in another case. The principal was shocked to the marrow when he saw his junior doing the case against their own client in court. Another scenario: A junior brought a process prepared by him for the principal to vet. The principal saw that the process was to be filed against their client and drew the attention of the junior. To the principal's chagrin the junior became annoyed and resisted the advice against doing such a thing. Result: the junior broke away from the principal. One very senior lawyer stated that he removes vital documents from the file while handing over a file to the junior who will represent him in court on “light matters.” This sort of wrongdoing was a rarity in times past.

To be sure, the assortment of unbridled avarice on the part of juniors and associates nowadays is not closed but these illustrate the fast changing nature of those who will make up the team in the chambers of the versatile legal practitioner, for of necessity he cannot practice alone.

I have left off the general complaint by juniors and associates namely, insufficient remuneration on the part of seniors as a reason for such. This is because a mischief is not cured by another mischief. More so, the junior of today is the versatile senior and may be the Magistrate or Judge of tomorrow. Importantly, I do not believe in any reasoning that tends to

¹⁴ *Newsweek*, October 9, 1967, p.21.

justify wrong doing because it is integrity that is lacking on the part of any wrongdoer. On this, Drucker has observed

*Character is not something a man can acquire; if he does not bring it to the job, he will never have it. It is not something one can fool people about. They may forgive a man a great deal: incompetence, ignorance, insecurity or bad manners. But they will not forgive him lack of integrity.*¹⁵

Elaborate training on professional ethics alone cannot solve this problem because one must first be imbued with the quality of integrity before being trained on ethics. Even the Almighty God does not give us integrity. Why? Because He gave us free will. Of this Jean wrote: “The free-will endowed on men enables them to possess capacity for choice which often proves the undoing of human beings, but it also allows for improvement.”¹⁶ Remember Adam’s case decided by God and the legal principle “*audi alterem partem*,” which is derived from that case. Integrity is not inherited. It does not come naturally. Only we personally can acquire it. We have to choose to acquire and acquire it, practice it by ourselves and be willing at all times to do it.

One may say that these represent the exceptions as there are many loyal juniors and associates. May be; maybe not. However, judging from experience, one thing is certain, once an evil debuts, it worsens and becomes degenerate. In these days it does not abet until it becomes the “norm.” Consider the beginnings of violence here in our state and even in Nigeria.

Now this is so far the professional challenge aspect of the theme. I have always seen it necessary to refer to Dias who stated:

*No one can be a good lawyer who only knows law. As Buckland well said: A man can be a better lawyer . . . if his mind is open to the movements of thought on the profounder issues of life beyond his immediate professional concerns.*¹⁷

The more profound issues of life involve not merely our lives today for today is as good as gone. The versatile legal practitioner must invariably think of tomorrow and relate his practice and life to such time frame and challenges most likely to arise. So what is the practitioner’s outlook for tomorrow, next week, next month, next year and even for the next 50, 100, or 200 years? Some, may quip: 100 or 200 years? – Oh that’s impossible! A colleague recently bemoaned the lack of certainty regarding who will inherit his practice - books, files etc - upon his demise which he calculated may come within the next one decade or two. At least this shows that some, to some extent, do not consider this issue as unreasonable. Then too, if we were merely to limit our aspirations to just a few more years or decades, that is, if we are fortunate to be, one may be at a loss if he contemplates the difference between him and the rabbit, squirrel or dog. Here is where wisdom comes in. Wisdom in the sense of thinking outside the box, if one chooses to term it so. It has been observed that many people embrace what they were told of or taught not because they have really studied things and are convinced by certain things they consider to be facts. No. They have been told or taught by someone that something is true and so they accept what they have been told or taught. The versatile legal practitioner has got to be discerning otherwise he will be a victim of gullibility.

¹⁵ Drucker, *The Practice of Management*, W. Heinemann, pg 192

¹⁶ Jean Starobinski: “The Discourse on Inequality in Starobinsky, Transparency and obstruction page 58

¹⁷ Dias, *Jurisprudence*, 5th Edition, 15.

Turning our backs to events of the past and merely fixing the future on what one has generally been taught is certainly not going to help. The events of the recent past are a vindication of the need for appraisal of our hopes and aspirations and how they affect our profession. Many people's core beliefs, assumptions and even faith were dashed to the ground as these failed them. Some are still bemused, still wondering in great wonderment. Why is it that failures abound in expectations and even the "successful" also ultimately fails?

Hobbes identified a major problem and that is that once we abandon God and try to give a secular account of morality, we seem thrown back on the pervasiveness of self-interest. He and many modern theorists recognized that self interest is an unpromising ground on which to construct morality.¹⁸ Furthermore Grotius while maintaining his own ideas refers to those who may close their eyes to those facts and speaks of "even if we should concede that which cannot be conceded without the utmost wickedness, that there is no God or that the affairs of men are of no concern to him."¹⁹

These great thinkers, at least acknowledged the need for reference to the Divine one which is mostly lacking today because of emergence of high level of secularism. These thinkers had since died before the epochal year of 1914 A. D.

Someone may ask: from where did 1914 emerge? Recall that earlier I posed these questions: When did this fast changing society begin? What will be the finale? I then drew your respected attention to what leading men of the 20th century foresaw about our times. In a handout used in one of our universities for the Course Jurisprudence, students were expected to read and understand the following text:

Revival of Natural Law

The 20th Century witnessed a revival of natural law. This was due to a number of factors. First, there was dissatisfaction with materialism and (the abortive) social and economic stability which were the main pivot of the rival doctrine (especially legal positivism) that emerged in the twilight of classical natural law. Materialism indicated a belief in the salvation of mankind through economic progress. The outbreak of World War I (1914-18) with its brutality shattered this myth. A search for ideal of justice came once more to the forefront.²⁰

Sometimes there is a need to think outside the box so as to contribute to learning, knowledge and understanding thus assuring progress in society. It is now time to fully answer those questions which I earlier posed and I wrap up after two more references. The London Evening Star in its comments once stated that

*World War I tore the whole World's political setup apart. Nothing could ever be the same again. . . .Some historians in the next century may well conclude that the day the world went mad was August 4, 1914.*²¹

In the same vein, H.R Trevor-Roper opined

It is instructive to compare the First World War with the second . . . the first war marked a far greater change in history. It closed a long era of general peace and began a new age of violence in which the second war is simply an episode. Since 1914 the world has a new character: a character of

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Grotius, *Law of War and Peace, Prolegomerea* p.13.

²⁰ Handout provided by a Lecturer in Jurisprudence to students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka (Final year class 2022-2023 Session).

²¹ *London Evening Star* quoted in *New Orleans Times* – Picayune, Aug.5, 1960.

*international anarchy. Thus First World War marks a turning point in modern history.*²²

At the risk of repetition, many wise men of the 20th century referred to that year as a pivotal one, a turning point in man's history. Consider: 1914 was the year of the 1st World War to be followed in 1939 by the 2nd World War which culminated in the detonating of atomic bomb - first ever in history. The end of the 2nd World War ushered in our modern nuclear age, a great upheaval and revolutionary changes in people's morality and consequent behavior such that today in some climes one can simply change his gender by a mere declaration thus changing from perhaps male to female and demanding that society should view and treat him/her as such oblivious and deliberately unperturbed of other people's plight. Not to be relegated is the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) with all its yet-to-be fully understood implications which the legal practitioner must come to terms with. Today we have in place the Domsday Clock (which many view with concern and disgust) maintained by top level scientists.

History is replete with great turning points, momentous events which brought about changes that spelt doom for regimes and systems. A text writer has once observed that much of these events began in closed doors - in private council chambers, in throne rooms or in government offices. Nonetheless such changes affected and continue to affect millions of lives.

In 1914 the lease of power which God granted men to rule and dominate the earth without God's interference ended.²³ God's Sovereign Rule was re-established in the invisible realm. Human ruler ships and their system of things entered their last days. This has triggered in a period of unprecedented trouble for peoples of all nations because in 1914, God's great adversary was ousted from Heaven and God's enemy and his wicked angels are here in the vicinity of the earth and sea fomenting all kinds of troubles, horrendous and multitudinous ruinous acts of unprecedented proportions.²⁴ Remember the coinage "demonized person." That is the reason for our fast changing society whereof morality has been debased and seen as old fashioned. Money, selfishness, arrogance and unbridled quest for power, influence and materialism has taken the center stage.²⁵

On the sunny side, is that soon God will completely relive humans of governmental powers.²⁶ He will organize world affairs by himself through his appointed Messiah.²⁷ The Messiah who is Jesus Christ will usher in a world where no one is oppressed. Everyone will dwell in peace, security and tranquility, even of the mind, for death will cease.²⁸ Thus a Versatile Legal Practitioner should be sound not only physically, intellectually, emotionally but spiritually too

²² *The New York Times Magazine*, Aug 1, 1954, pg 9.

²³ For Bible chronology pinpointing the year 1914 as the year of establishment of God's Kingdom (Government) in Heaven, please refer to Daniel Chapters 2, 4 and 7; Mathew Chapter 24; Revelation Chapters 6, 12, and 19.

²⁴ See Revelation Chapter 12 verses 7 - 12. Note particularly verse 12 which explains why occult and demonic practices such a divination, magic, looking for omens, sorcery, binding others with a spell (hypnotism; black magic) consulting spirit mediums or fortune-tellers and other forms of spiritism are increasing in leaps and bounds.

²⁵ This is in tandem with fulfillment of Bible prophesies concerning attitude and characteristics of people generally and events marking a period which the Bible refers to as the last days; that is the last days of human rulership. Please confirm this by reading 2nd Timothy Chapter 3 verses 1 – 5 and verse 13.

²⁶ See Daniel Chapter 2 verse 45.

²⁷ See Luke Chapter 1 verses 31-33; Daniel Chapter 7 verses 13 and 14; Revelation Chapter 19 verse 16; Psalms chapter 2.

²⁸ Please see Psalm 37 verses 9 – 11; Revelation 21 verses 3 -5.

and be awake to happenings around him and thus be able to discern where we are in the stream of time. He should factor this in his versatile practice. If he does this, he will find reason to maintain integrity, even when most around him consider this old fashioned and impractical; knowing that after all, this life is not all there is. The future of this terrestrial globe, the earth, under complete control by God and with His enemies put out of action is incomparable with the present uncertain and unreliable riches. Although some may consider this a fantasy, It is not a fantasy at all. After all, AI (Artificial Intelligence) by man something which in times past was considered a fantasy is now coming on board, how much more The Almighty's promises. Again some say it is just a crutch. However since we are all mortals, we need such a crutch from the true source. Of course, the true source is God. Rather than crutching on promises by humans who are notoriously unreliable, selfish and deceitful is it not the course of true knowledge, understanding and wisdom to turn to God?

Conclusion

The Versatile Legal Practitioner should not attempt to be versatile in all areas of law but only in an area of law that he is best suited. He should be modest, and maintain integrity at all times. He needs not be conventional, stereotyped always, but fresh and often thinking outside the box. This will enable him meet not only present but also eternal challenges which surely will come in due time.