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Dedication

To the loving memory of Prof. Andrew Walls (21 April 1928 – 12 August 2021)



The Scottish historian of missions will be remembered for his groundbreaking research re-centering Christianity from West to South and for his personal support to Church and Mission Studies especially on the African continent. He can well be described as a colossus who came to our world, saw and conquered all barriers including death. He is not dead, but alive in the hearts and minds of many who knew him and read his numerous works. He was the Grand Patron of NACHAMS. May his soul continue to rest in Peace!

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1.Editorial Policy

Nigerian Journal of Church History and Missiological Studies (NJOCHAMS) is a peer reviewed journal of the Nigerian Association of Church History and Missiological Studies (NACHAMS) which has just been established in Nigeria. The journal's focus is to publish well researched papers in Church History and Missiology from any perspectives (historical, theological, sociological, ethical, philosophical, psychological, phenomenological, (etc).

Original scholarly papers will be given due preference. Two prominent scholars review all manuscripts anonymously. The editors are more inclined to inclusive language. Contributors are thus urged to avoid exclusive language since the world is, no doubt, becoming more and more pluralistic.

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Manuscripts should be submitted in an electronic version (soft copy) to: The Editor. Contributors can send their articles to the following e-mail address: njocham7@gmail.com. Papers for submission should not be more than fifteen typewritten double spaced pages on A4 including the references, charts, tables and any other attachments.

3. General Guidelines

The paper to be submitted to the *Nigerian Journal of Church History and Missiological Studies* must be original, not more than 15 pages, with 1.5 line spacing, font 12, New Times Roman, and Turabian (Footnotes) References.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Samson Adetunji Fatokun, Ph.D is a Professor of Church History, Doctrinal Theology, and Pentecostal Studies with the Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. He is the current Chairman, Board of Trustees, Samuel Adegboyega University, Ogwa, Edo State, Nigeria

Professor Fatokun is a member of several bodies including: African Theological Fellowship (A.T.F.); African Association for the Study of Religions (AASR); American Studies Association of Nigeria (ASAN); National Association for the Study of Religions and Education (NASRED); Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, (EATWOT); International Association for Mission Studies (IAMS); American Society of Church History (ASCH), U.S.A.; American Sociological Association, U.S.A ; Association for the Sociology of Religion (ASR); British Sociological Association (Sociology of Religion Study Group) (SOCREEL), U.K.; Society for Pentecostal Studies (S.P.S.), U.S.A and , Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), U.S.A and he is the President of the Nigerian Association of Church History and Missiological Studies (NACHAMS).

Florence Adetoun Oso, Ph.D is a member of the Eucharist Heart of Jesus (EHJ), a Religious Congregation in the Roman Catholic Church. She is a Lecturer at the Department of Theology, SS. Peter and Paul Major Seminary, Bodija-Ibadan, Nigeria.

Michael Adeleke Ogunewu lectures at the Faculty of Theological Studies, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, Nigeria.

Felix Ehimare Enegho, PhD is a Professor of Church History and Mission Studies at the Department of Religious Studies, Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria. He is the Secretary-General, Nigerian Association of Church History and Missiological Studies (NACHAMS). He is the Editor, *Nigerian Journal of Church History and Missiological Studies (NJOCHAMS).* He is a Research Fellow at the Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology, University of South Africa, Pretoria.

Jesutunwase, Jones Segun, PhD is a Research Assistant at the Department of Religious Studies, Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria. He is the Secretary to the *Nigerian Journal of Church History and Missiological Studies (NJOCHMAS.*

Tiwatola, A. Falaye, Ph.D is a Lecturer at the Department of Religious Studies Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Samuel S. Alamu, Ph.D teaches at the Department of Christian Religious Studies and Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, Redeemer's University, Ede, Osun State**,** Nigeria

Fortunatus G. Alabi, Ph.D lectures at the Department of Christian Religious Studies and Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, Redeemer's University, Ede, Osun State**,** Nigeria

Godspower, Chris Nwagurum is a Lecturer at the Methodist Theological Institute, Sagamu-Ogun State, Nigeria.

Ifabiyi, Alaba Bukola, Ph.D lectures at the Department of Philosophy of Religion and Theology, Crowther Graduate Theological Seminary, Abeokuta, Ogun - State Nigeria

Comfort Kamimi Gemade, Ph.D teaches at theDepartment of Religion and Cultural Studies Benue State University, Makurdi, Nigeria.

Rimamsikwe Habila Kitause, Ph.Dis aLecturer at the Department of Christian Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts, Taraba State University, Jalingo, Nigeria.

EDITORIAL

This second volume of the Nigerian Journal of Church History and Missiological Studies, (NJOCHAMS), contains ten well written papers which were presented at the maiden conference of the Association in 2019. It is being published at this time due to circumstances beyond the control of the Board. On behalf of the Editorial Board of NJOCHAMS, I sincerely apologize. Other papers from the maiden conference are contained in the other volumes of the journal.

The lead paper titled "Presidential Welcome Address delivered at the Opening Ceremony of the Maiden Conference of NACHAMS and Fellowship Awards Ceremony/Induction of the Nigerian Academy of Church History and Missiology (NACHAM), held at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria on Monday, 25 November, 2019" was by the President of NACHAMS, Samson Adetunji Fatokun. He welcomed members to the maiden conference of the Association and went on to inform the gathering that the conference was specially convoked to honour Professor Andrew Walls who has been instrumental to the growth and development of Church History and Missiological Studies in Nigeria. Among other contributions of Andrew Walls according to Fatokun Samson was his mentorship of key Church historians in Nigeria, who have continued to illuminate the Nigerian terrain with their knowledge of Christian history.

The second paper with the title "Women and the Church in Nigeria," authored byFlorence Adetoun Oso states that from the creation narration, the woman is the perfection of God's work, and that from the Salvation history point of view, it became necessary for a woman to be drafted into God's plan and the Virgin Mary was chosen. For her, women have always played vital roles in Christian human history. Little wonder that at the arrival of the missionaries in Nigeria; they saw the need to bring women to work on the field. This is why the history of the church in Nigeria will be incomplete without acknowledging the role of women in it because; women were diligent workers in the Nigerian church and will continue to have a place in Nigerian Christianity.

The paper by Michael Adeleke Ogunewu, **"**Taming the "Monster" of Religious Fanaticism for the Expansion of the Christian Faith in Nigeria explores the situation, identifying the causes and how it can be curbed, so as to provide an atmosphere of friendliness for practitioners of religions in the country, which by extension is believed, will engender social cohesion and the expansion of the Christian faith in Nigeria.

The duo of Felix Ehimare Enegho and Jesutunwase Jones Segun in their paper titled **"**Christian History and the Building of the Nigerian Nation," address the part played by the Christian church and history in the birth, growth and developmental strides of Nigeria as a nation; especially as one which is striving to make impacts in all spheres of life not just on the African continent, but in our very fast-growing global community.

The contribution by Tiwatola, A. Falaye**,** entitled **"**An Appraisal of Poverty Alleviation in the Baptist Convention, Nigeria" recommends that the Church should focus on activities that can empower people, and he also stressed the need for the Church to partner with non-governmental organisations that are genuinely involved in ameliorating poverty in our society.

The paper "Christians as Salt of the Earth in Matthew 5:13 among the Yoruba of Southwestern, Nigeria" which is a contribution by Samuel S. Alamu andFortunatus G. Alabi,

shows that Christians in Nigeria have fundamental roles to play in order to save the society from the present rots. The findings of the paper show that although Nigeria may be having so many challenges, it is believed, the trends leading to this situation are not without solutions, if the sermon of Jesus could be adopted by Christians.

Godspower, Chris Nwagurum's paper with the title, **"**An Assessment of Tithing and the Nigerian Christianity" addressed the reflection of Tithes within the paradigm of the Old and New Testament; definition and etymology of Tithes; purposes, abuses and benefits of Tithing. All the issues raised were discussed according to the Bible and Christian experience.

"Addressing the Problem of Indecent Dressing in Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), Lagos Zone" authored by Ifabiyi, Alaba Bukola, reveals that there is a decline in moral values in Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), Lagos Zone as a result indecent dressing. Furthermore, it was discovered that disciplinary measure to check mate indecent dressing is weak as a result of lack of moral teaching. Also, the study discovered that some of the leaders do not display enough boldness to enforce the rules and regulations of ECWA, Lagos Zone. The study concludes that the ECWA, Lagos Zone should seriously address the decline in moral values among its members.

Comfort Kanimi Gemade**'s** paper titled "Assessing the Universal Reformed Christian Church in the Development of Benue State, Nigeria" seeks to investigate the current status of her contributions to the development of Benue State as well as what URCC can do to sustain the development of state in the future. The paper found out that despite the contributions of the Universal Reformed Church of Christ to the development of Benue State past and present, there is a dearth of sustained development of the church in areas of training of her workers in specialized areas to effectively carry out the numerous projects. The paper recommends the setting up of more small and medium scale cottage industries in partnership with government through the Women Fellowship, Youth Fellowship, active engagement of the "NKST League" and active participation of her members in partisan politics in the state.

The paper entitled "The Challenge of Gay Marriage on the Church in Nigeria" authored by Rimamsikwe Habila Kitause, submits that it is high time the Nigerian Church maintains her firm stand on the issue of gay marriage, and prevail on the Nigerian government to bring the culprits of gay marriage to face the full wrath of the law so that the moral question associated with it can be better answered and handled.

Prof. Felix Ehimare Enegho

Editor

PRESIDENTIAL WELCOME ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE MAIDEN CONFERENCE OF NACHAMS AND FELLOWSHIP AWARDS CEREMONY/INDUCTION OF THE NIGERIAN ACADEMY OF CHURCH HISTORY AND MISSIOLOGY (NACHAM) HELD AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN, NIGERIA ON MONDAY 25 NOVEMBER, 2019

Samson Adetunji Fatokun, Ph.D
Department of Religious Studies
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

It gladdens my heart to welcome all our erudite scholars from overseas and across the country to the Maiden Conference of Nigerian Association of Church History and Missiological Studies (NACHAMS) - the first national academic society of Church Historians and Missiologists in the history of Nigerian higher institutions of learning. Remarkably, the birth of this society on March 6 this year during the 70th Birthday and Retirement Ceremony of Professor Isaac Deji Ayegboyin[1] (a Distinguished Professor of Church History and African Christianity), is a realization of a long time dream by our academic patriarchs.

This Maiden Conference in honour of the 92 years old Professor Emeritus Andrew Walls, an Officer of the British Empire (O.B.E.), is very significant. It is both in recognition and appreciation of the pioneering sacrificial roles played by this European *guru* during his academic career as a Church Historian & Missiologist at the Department of Religious Studies, University of Nsukka in the 1960s (where he served as the first Head of Department). Papa Andrew Walls, together with some of his Nigerian contemporaries like Professor J.F. Ade-Ajayi, and Dr William Ola Ajayi, laboured indefatigably for the documentation of African and Nigerian Church History and Missiology. While at Nsukka, he (Andrew Walls) even laboured to pioneer the first world known 'Journal of African Society for Church History', on behalf of 'Society of African Church History', which was formed at Fouray Bay College, Sierra-Leone (founded in 1961). But this journal became moribund shortly after his return to Europe.

Thus, the launching of the Maiden Edition of 'Nigerian Journal of Church History and Missiology (NJOCHAM)'[2] today, dedicated to Professor Andrew Walls, as well as the holding of this Maiden Conference in his name, you would all agree with me, are honours well deserved by this Officer of the British Empire - who self-lessly laboured to lay a solid foundation for African and particularly Nigerian Church History and Missiological Studies on Nigerian soil in the brief years of his sojourning in our beloved country. In other words, I can boldly say that while Papa Professor Andrew Walls is a European by race and colour, he is indeed a Nigerian by heart till date as we can see it in his home-coming at this very old age, purposely because of this great occasion.

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[1] For details see S.A. Fatokun *et al.* (eds) (2019), *African Christianity in Local and Global Contexts (A Festschrift in Honour of Rev. Professor Isaac Deji Ayegboyin, FNAL @ 70 (Religious Studies Series, Vol.7),* Ibadan: Department of Religious Studies, 1-589

[2] See the Maiden Edition of *Nigerian Journal of Church History and Missiological Studies (NJOCHAMS)* – Journal of Nigerian Association of Church History and Missiological Studies (NACHAMS),Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan), Vol. 1, No. 1, 2019, iii

Dear conference participants and our special guests of honour, with great joy in my heart, I can confidently declare to you all this day that the seed sown by Professor Walls on Nigerian soil over fifty years ago has indeed yielded much fruit today. Aside the Maiden Conference and the Maiden Edition of NJOCHAM that will be unveiled on this occasion, to lay a solid and permanent foundation for promotion of Nigerian Church History and Mission Studies, we are instituting the NIGERIAN ACADEMY OF CHURCH HISTORY AND MISSIOLOGY (NACHAM), as the inner circle of Nigerian Association of Church History and Missiological Studies (NACHAMS), which will feature as the highest Nigeria's academic body on Nigerian Church History, Missiological Studies and Other Related Matters purposely for the advancement of Christianity in Nigeria and proper documentation of Nigerian Church History and Missions. It is remarkably significant to state at this juncture that this would be the first Academy to be instituted within the numerous Areas of Specialisation[3] we have in the Field of Religious Studies in all Nigeria's higher institutions of learning. The situation of its National Headquarters here at the Nigeria's Premier Department of Religious Studies, in the Nigeria's Premier University, The University of Ibadan[4]*(The First and the Best)*, as unanimously agreed upon by its governing body, is also very significant.

In laying this solid foundation therefore, we are today inducting some carefully selected erudite Professors of Church History and Missiology as 'Foundation Fellows' of this academy. I must reiterate once again that, this day is also very significant in the history of the Nigerian Church as we are for the first time, as Nigerian Church Historians and Missiologists honouring and inducting some carefully selected Nigerian National Church leaders as 'Distinguished Honorary Fellows' of this great Academy with all Rights and Privileges, to serve as a smooth link between the Academy with its Association and the Nigerian Church, with a view to facilitating good communication of our research findings to the appropriate quarters so that our conferences and researches as academics will no longer be treated by the Church authorities as mere 'academic gymnastics '. With this in view, we are equally, on application, opening the door of ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP of this Association (NACHAMS) and its Academy (NACHAM), to carefully and successfully screened Nigerian churches as well as some Nigerian owned theological institutions/seminaries, with a view to better equipping our churches and seminaries with current research findings on Church History and Missiological Studies carried out in our nation's higher institutions of learning.

In recognition and appreciation of the pioneering roles played in advancing Nigerian Christianity and Missions across the globe, we are today going to induct the carefully selected national leaders of Nigerian initiated churches of earliest 20th century origin as 'Distinguished Honorary Fellows' of Nigerian Academy of Church History and Missiology (with the post-fix *dhfnacham* henceforth added to their names). Historically evaluated, the four selected Nigerian instituted churches, whose national leaders shall be presented to be honoured today, have in

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[3] See *Postgraduate Prospectus (2006-2008), Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan,* Ibadan: Department of Religious Studies, 8.
The Areas of Specialization in Religious Studies include: Old Testament Studies, New Testament Studies, Church History and Doctrine, Christian Theology, Christian Ethics/Religious Ethics, Sociology of Religion, Philosophy of Religion, African Traditional Religion, Comparative Study of Religions, and Islamic Studies.

[4] The Department of Religious Studies at the Nigerian premier university -The University of Ibadan, is the first Department of Religious Studies to be established in Nigerian universities. The history of the department goes back to 1948 - the founding year of the university.

their formative years in the country, significantly played pivotal roles (without the physical presence of any Western Missions with them), in laying the foundation for indigenous Pentecostal Christianity in the Nigerian Church[5] which in turn ignited the flame of 'Spirit-Renewal Movement' (the Pentecostal Revival) we have all over the country today. This move, unequivocally, was characteristically, basically an indigenous response to African indigenous religious temperament, as well as spiritual, material and psychological yearnings of African Christians, which today have culminated into a full-blown power-demonstrating and experience-dominating Nigerian Christianity in stiff competition with Western-oriented mission churches, which some Africans at that time considered as stereo-typed and luke-warm, a religious atavistic regression, degenerating the once 'lively African worshippers' to 'frozen people of God' with its cemetery-like worship and formulae prayers[6].

Characteristically the first two churches selected for honour at this conference, 'The Apostolic Church Nigeria' and 'Christ Apostolic Church World-wide', as indicate in their names, share a common spiritual source of an indigenous Prophetic, Holiness, Evangelical, and Faith-healing Pentecostal Movement - the 1918 'Precious Stone Society' of Ijebu- Ode[7]. Similarly, the last two churches, the 'Cherubim and Seraphim Church' - founded in Lagos in the year 1925 by *Baba Aladura*, Moses Orimolade Tunlase[8], together with 'The Church of the LORD (Aladura - that is, Prayer Fellowship, as it is called today)' - founded at Ogere- Remo in 1930 by Primate Josiah Olunowo Oshitelu[9], symbolically adopted the wearing of white garments, in their emphasis on a 'Holiness, Experience-Dominating and Power Demonstrating Spirit-Renewal Movement' in Nigerian Christianity.

My dear conference participants, you would agree with me as historical facts attest, that these four indigenously initiated churches, have contributed in a great deal to the advancement of Nigerian indigenous Christianity, and have indeed served as a good spring-board, from which a host of several Nigerian independent church denominations have emerged today (either directly or indirectly) as daughters, grand-daughters, great-grand daughters, and great-great-grand daughters churches - spreading the flame of the gospel of Christ through the nooks and crannies of Nigeria[10], other African countries, and even across the globe, significantly doing

[5] I. D. Ayegboyin & S.A. Ishola (1997), *African Indigenous Churches*, Lagos: Greater Heights Publications

[6] S.A. Fatokun (2005), "Pentecostalism in Nigeria with Particular Reference to The Apostolic Church in South-western Nigeria, 1931-2001, a PhD Thesis, Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan.

[7] S.A. Fatokun (2006), "The Apostolic Church Nigeria: The 'Metamorphosis of an African Indigenous Prophetic-Healing Movement into a Classical Pentecostal Denomination", in *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, Volume 37, June & Dec. 2006

[8] J.A. Omowajowo (1982), *Cherubim and Seraphim: The History of an African Independent Church*, New York: NOK Publishers International; J.A. Omowajowo (1995), *Makers of Church History in Nigeria*, Lagos: CSS Bookshop.

[9] J. W. Turner, (1967); *History of an African Instituted Church: The Life and the Faith of the Lord Aladura Churches*, Oxford: Oxford University Press; J.D.Y. Peel (1968),

[10] Andrew F. Walls, "The Christian Tradition in Today's World" in F.B. Whaling (ed.) Religion in Today's World, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1987; M.A. Ojo (1988), "The Contextual Significance of Charismatic Movements in Independent Nigeria", in *Journal of International African Institute*, Vol. 58, No. 2;See also M.A. Ojo (1990), The 1970 Charismatic Revival in Nigeria in THELIA - A Quarterly Christian magazine, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1-11

great exploits in Europe and North America[11] in what scholars like Olupona and Afe Adogame[12] call 'reversed mission" or 'reversed in mission'.

Dear Great Nigerian Church Historians and Missiologists and other conference participants, you would all agree with me that, in the light of proven historical evidences, that when we talk of Nigerian Indigenous Christianity, these eminent leaders of the four principal Nigerian indigenously instituted churches so selected for honour today:

1) Pastor (Dr) Emmanuel Segun Awojide JP
(National Vice-President & LAWNA Territorial Chairman, The Apostolic Church Nigeria)
2) Pastor (Dr) Abraham Olukunle Akinosun JP
(President, Christ Apostolic Church World-wide)
3) His Eminence, Most Elder/Apostle & Prophet (Dr) Solomon Ade Alao JP
(Spiritual Head (Olori), Cherubim and Seraphim Unification Church World-wide)
4) His Holiness, Most Revd. Rufus Okikiola Olubiyi Oshitelu, PhD, PhD
(Primate, Church of the LORD (Prayer Fellowship) World-wide)

- are indeed men of 'timber and caliber' who have significantly contributed through their respective church denominations, to the advancement of Nigerian indigenous Christianity both in African countries and overseas, as evident in their numerous branches outside Nigeria with striking Nigerian indigenous identifies. On this note, I humbly welcome our great spiritual fathers, the plenipotentiaries of Nigerian Indigenous Churches, and all their entourages, to this 'August Occasion' in the Month of November.

I equally welcome and at the same time felicitate with our Grand Patron and Patrons, who will be inducted today as Foundation Fellows of Nigerian Academy of Church History and Missiology (NACHAM):

1) Professor Andrew Findlay Walls, O.B.E (University of Aberdeen, Scotland)
2) Professor Christopher Oshun (Lagos State University)
3) Professor Isaac Deji Ayegboyin (Bowen University)
4) Professor Musa Gaiya (University of Jos)
5) Professor Hillary Achunike (University of Nigeria, Nsukka), and
6) Professor Matthews Ojo (Obafemi Awolowo University).

Dear conference participants and honorary awardees, with great delight and utmost praises to the Almighty God, I wish to draw your attentionto a very interesting historical fact. The displayed list of our Foundation Fellows, is by divine design, a representation of a '4-Generational Mentorship Chain' of Nigerian Erudite Professors of Church History and Missiology', whom God has graciously spared their lives to witness this long dreamt occasion. It will interest you to hear this – that, today we have here present in the field of academic study of Nigerian Church History and Missions, distinguished scholars I would classify as 'son-professors, father-professors, grand-father-professors, and great-grand-father-professor'.

[11] S.A. Fatokun (ed) (2017), *A Pentecost from Africa to Europe, from Europe to Africa: History and Distinctiveness of The Apostolic Church Nigeria, 1918-2017*, Ibadan: Global Estida Publishers. 738pp.

[12] See Israel Olofinjana (2010), *Reverse in Ministry & Missions: Africans in the Dark Continent of Europe (An Historical Study of African Churches in Europe)*, London: AuthorHouse UK Ltd. See also Ogbu Kalu (2008), *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

How, Professor Andrew Walls mentored Professors Oshun, Ojo and Ayegboyin (and supervised the PhD Thesis of Professor Tasie); Professor Oshun and Professor Tasie in turn co-supervised Professor Ayegboyin's PhD Thesis; Professor Ojo in turn taught and mentored Professor Fatokun in his B.A. Degree Programme; remarkably, Professor Ayegboyin both taught and supervised Professor Fatokun at M.A. and PhD levels - and also mentored him to professorial cadre; while Professor Oshun supervised both the M.A, and PhD works of Professor Enegho. Very significantly, recently, Professor Fatokun has equally produced a son-professor, in person of Professor Wale Ogunrinade of Gombe State University (whom he taught and supervised to PhD level. Thus, Professor Ayegboyin can now be called a 'grand-father professor'. In other words, by further extension of circle of Professorship, Professor Andrew Walls can further be called a 'great-great-grand father professor'; Professor Christopher Oshun now a 'great-grand-father professor; Professors Ayegboyin, Gaiya, and Ojo, now 'grand-father professors', while Professors Fatokun and Enegho are now 'grand-father' and 'son-professor' respectively.

I wish to bring this address to a close by remarking that the theme for this Maiden Conference: 'The Church in the Pluralistic Nigerian Society: Challenges and the Way Forward' is a very timely and highly relevant subject of academic discourse, considering the different 'Internally Generated Spiritually Carnal Wars (IGSCW)' and the 'Carnally Motivated Self-incurred Spiritual Challenges (CMSSC)' that have plagued contemporary Nigerian Christianity. Ironically, the contemporary Church in Nigeria, in spite of our 'aggressive evangelism' and indiscriminate church planting drive', is suffering from what I call a 'More Churches, More Crimes Syndrome', with high proliferation of 'holy crimes in holy places'[13].

The above and other alarming challenging issues are what scholars from different geo-political zones and outside the shores of this country, who gathered for this conference, will approach from different academic perspectives. I therefore enjoin all our distinguished guests to please wait after this opening session to attend all the different parallel sessions today and tomorrow where the papers will be presented.

Once again, I want to welcome you all to this Maiden Conference and Fellowship Award Ceremony. I pray it will be a season of spiritual refreshing and rewarding time to us all, in Jesus' Name. Amen.

WOMEN AND THE CHURCH IN NIGERIA

[13] S.A. Fatokun (2013), "Insecurity in Holy Places: A Historical Appraisal of the Church and Security Challenges from Nigerian Experience" in J,K. Ayantayo & S.A. Fatokun (eds.) *Religion and Security Issues (Religious Studies Series, Vol. 5)*, Ibadan: Department of Religious Studies, 94-103

Florence Adetoun Oso, Ph.D

Seminary of Ss. Peter and Paul

Bodija, Ibadan, Nigeria.

Abstract

When God created all other creatures and finally created Adam, God felt His work of creation was incomplete and imperfect because Adam was alone and lonely. Since God can never be associated with imperfection, He perfected his work by creating Eve, the woman. When this was done, God considered His creation good and beautiful. From the creation narration, the woman is the perfection of God's work. From the Salvation history point of view, it became necessary for a woman to be drafted into God's plan and Mary was chosen. Women have always played vital role in Christian human history generally. When the missionaries arrived the mission field in Nigeria, they saw the need to bring women to become co-partners with them in their enterprise. The history of the church in Nigeria cannot be complete without acknowledging the role of women in it. Women were pillars and the perfection of the church in Nigeria and will continue to be part of the structure of Nigerian Christianity.

Keywords: Women, Church, Nigeria

Introduction

On the 9th of June 2017 Pope Francis while addressing the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue said, "today more than ever, it is necessary that women are present (and active) in the Church…given their natural ability to build relationships and fraternity"[14]. Though this statement was made within the context of interreligious dialogue, it however tells the state of the Church today. Prior to the second Vatican council, the Church paid little or no attention to the laity especially the women. However, with the *aggiornamento* of Vatican II, the place and role of the laity became more precise and pronounced. The awareness that women with their gifts and tasks have their own specific vocation, has increased and been deepened in the years following the Council and has found its fundamental inspiration in the Gospel and the Church's history.

Though not called to the apostolate of the Twelve and thereby, to the ministerial priesthood, many women nevertheless, accompanied Jesus in his ministry and assisted the group of Apostles (cf. Lk 8:2-3), were present at the foot of the Cross (cf. Lk 23:49), assisted at the burial of Christ (cf. Lk 23:55), received and transmitted the message of Resurrection on Easter morning (cf. Lk 24:10), and prayed with the apostles in the Cenacle awaiting Pentecost (cf. Acts 1:14).[15] Women in different Churches have contributed in no small measure to the growth and development in the life and ministry of the church. In this paper we shall be discussing the role women have played in the Church in Nigeria.

[14] E. HARRIS, *Living Faith*, 2017in http://www.catholic.org accessed 16th October, 2019.

[15]JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, (30 December 1988), n. 49.

When the Christian missionaries came in the middle of the 19th Century they found out that the people were not able to read and write therefore the missionaries introduced Western education. The Colonial Government was interested in commerce but gave some encouragement in educational work, but education was promoted largely by missionaries which resulted in bringing in the women religious to teach and work in hospitals. Since then women have been gradually allowed to play important roles in the Church.

1.Women in the Scriptures

In the Old Testament we have seen women who have distinguished themselves in the religious history of their people such as: Sarah the matriarch, Esther the queen, Deborah the prophetess, wife and judge of Israel for forty years, Judith the celibate warrior and Hannah the prophetess.

The New Testament gives testimony to the service of women inJesus' ministry (Matt. 27:55, 56; 28:1-10; Lk. 8:1-3). In the ministry and teaching of Jesus, there were women who accompanied him and contributed to his mission. Lk 8:1-3: "He made his way through town and villages preaching and proclaiming the Good news of the kingdom of God. With him went the twelve, as well as certain women who had been cured of evil spirits and ailments: Mary surnamed the Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, Suzanna, and many others who provided for them out of their own resources."

One of the greatest assets of the Church is its women. According to Scripture, women are full heirs of the grace of life (1 Pt 3:7), equal recipients of the saving work of Christ (Gal 3:28) and partakers of the Holy Spirit and his gifts (Acts 2:17; 1Cor 12:4-6, 12, 13; 1Pt 4:10, 11). Women serve throughout Christ's Church around the world exalting God in countless ways, and in the life of the early Church (Titus 2:3; 2 Timothy 1:5 with 3:14; Acts 18:26). Going through biblical foundation, Paul does not only theorize. He implements his theology of equality in the life of his churches. The evidence is found in his greetings to women, whom he referred to as fellow workers in the church. Here we need only cite the passages where Paul mentions or greets women who have been associated with him in ministry. In Philippians 4:2, women are fellow workers and have laboured and struggled with Paul in his work. Among the persons mentioned in Romans 16, six are women, and they are all said to have participated in the building up of the Christian communities. Phoebe, whom Paul commends to the recipients of the letter, is both a *diakonos*, a minister, and a *prostatis*, a helper. The word *diakonos* here is in the masculine; it is the same word Paul uses to describe himself and Apollos in 1 Corinthians 3:5, Tychicus in Ephesians 6:21 and Colossians 4:7, and Timothy in 1Timothy 4:6. It seems clear that Phoebe is a minister in the Church in Cenchreae. Since her title is in the masculine, there seem no linguistic or theological grounds to distinguish between her and other male "ministers." She is to be honoured and helped by the Romans.

The attitude of Jesus to women is found in the stories of Jesus at the house of Martha and Mary and the Samaritan woman. Jesus broke with convention to provide religious instruction directly to women. Mary sits at Jesus' feet as he preaches, while her sister toils in the kitchen preparing a meal. When Martha complains to Mary that she should instead be helping in the

kitchen, Jesus says that, "Mary has chosen what is better" (Luke 10:38-42). The Samaritan woman also received catechesis from Jesus. (John 4:4-42)

1. Women in the Society:

Women are the backbone of the family in the African society. The Synodal Exhortation, *Africae Munus* in Chapter one, stresses that women have a vital role to play in the society and the Church. The male would have been the only human existing should he not have become lonely, His loneliness caused God to find him another creature to keep him company since the animals could not give the needs of the man. Then God created the woman from the man's rib bone and from then on man's needs were met. (Cf. Gen.2:18) Since God can never be associated with imperfection, He perfected his work by creating a helpmate, a companion for the man. When this was done, God considered His creation good and beautiful. The woman therefore becomes the perfection of God's work. When the man (Adam) and the woman (Eve) brought imperfection into this beautiful creation of God, it became necessary for a woman to be drafted into God's plan and the lot fell on another woman, Mary the Mother of Christ.

"Women are extremely valuable in the sight of society. Not only do they bear life, but they nurse, they cherish, they give warmth, they care for life since all human life passes through their own bodies."[16] Consequently, they are like bridge between God and their children and between the father and their children. "The mother or wife is probably the most important member of the family, the centre of familyhood".[17] The woman is the first educator of a child and a transmitter of culture and of faith. In traditional African life women play a significant role in the religious activities of the society. One of the areas where this role is prominent is in the offering of prayers for the family and their communities in general.[18]

Women have always played vital role in Christian human history generally, and the history of the church in Nigeria cannot be complete without acknowledging the role of women in it. Women were pillars and the perfection of the church in Nigeria and will continue to be.

2. The Role of Women in The Church

Let it be stated here that the role of the faithful (both men and women) draws impetus from the role of the Church in the world. In other words, whatever role the faithful play in the Church is a way of participating in the Church's role in the world. The Church continues the work of Christ in establishing the kingdom of God here on Earth.[19] In this vein, whatever the role women are going to play, it must be in consonance with this. In this regard, what is said of the Church, applies to the universal Church as well as the Church in Nigeria. In the words of Pope John Paul II in *Christifideles Laici*, "The Church's mission of salvation in the world is realized not only by the ministries in virtue of the Sacrament of Orders, but also by all the lay faithful; indeed, because of their Baptismal state and their specific vocation, in the measure proper to

[16] John Mbiti, The Tole of Women in African Traditional Religion, Published in Cahiers des Religions Africaines 22 (1988), 69-82.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Lumen Gentium 1

each person, the lay faithful participate in the priestly, prophetic and kingly mission of Christ."[20] It is in this context that the particular role of women comes to play.

The role of women in the church cannot be overemphasized, as they probably remain the gender with the larger population in the Church. Safe to say that they have generally been great help mates, right from the Church's humble beginnings. 'While the Twelve Apostles were all male, and there is much debate about the beliefs of early church leaders such as St. Paul, women were known to be very active in the early spread of Christianity'.[21] According to Alister McGrath, Christianity had the effect of undermining traditional roles of both women and slaves in two ways: By asserting that all were "one in Christ", regardless of whether they were Jew or Gentile, male or female, master or slave. McGrath describes Paul's egalitarian approach as "profoundly liberating" in that it implied new freedoms for women.[22]

The role of women in the Church has oftentimes being a controversial topic in Catholic social thought.[23] Nonetheless, individual roles differ in the Church, as each, exercises his/her role according to his/her condition. According to Katherine Maria, "the role of women in the Church issue, in its demanding spirit of equality, is simply wrong. The concept of a struggle between men and women in their capacity to serve God is generated because we have confused the standards of the world, which is a natural existence, with the standards of the Church, which is a supernatural institution."[24] The two spheres are diametrically opposed. Hence, the clamour for equal rights and exercise of functions in the Church is unwarranted even though all Christ's faithful are equal in dignity and action by virtue of our baptism; there is an essential diversity in the exercise of their function with respect to the mission of the Church.[25] To this effect, women have the right to exercise their functions in the Church, according to their condition without any conflict.

Therefore, it is time, Pope John Paul II, says, to examine the past with courage, to assign responsibility where it is due in a review of the long history of humanity to which women have contributed, as much as men and, more often than not, they did so in much more difficult conditions as they have often time being relegated to second place.[26] Thus:

> The dignity and vocation of women – a subject of constant human and Christian reflection – have gained exceptional prominence in recent years. This is seen, for example in the statement of the Church's Magisterium present in various documents of the Second Vatican Council, which declares in its closing message: "the hour is coming, in fact has come, when the vocation of women is being acknowledged in its fullness.[27]

The Synod Fathers gave special attention to the status and role of women, with two purposes in mind: to acknowledge the indispensable contribution of women to the building up of

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[20] JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, (30 December 1988), n.23.
[21] Some Female Saints and Bleated History of Christianity, Oxford University Press, pg. 3.
[22] Ibid
[3]STEWART, CYNTHIA, The Catholic Church: A Brief Popular History. Saint Mary's Press, 2008. p. 322
[23]LABRIE ROSS, *The Catholic Imagination in American Literature*, University of Missouri Press, 1997, 12.
[24] KATHERINE MARIA, *The Role of Women in the Church*, in www.olrl.org/misc (Retrieved 12/10/2019)
[25] Cf. Canon 208
[26] JOHN PAUL II, Letter to Women, (29 June 1995), n.3.
[27] JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* on the Dignity and Vocation of Women, (15 August 1988), n.1.

the Church and the development of society. They wished as well to work on a more analysis of women's participation in the life and mission of Church.[28] In particular, when speaking of active and responsible participation in the life and mission of the Church, some particular significant citations from the Second Vatican Council merit recollection here: "Since in our days women are taking an increasingly active share in the whole life of society, it is very important that they participate more widely also in the various fields of the Church's apostolate."[29] Both in her earliest days as far back as the apostolic era and in her successive developments, the Church has always known women who have exercised an oftentimes decisive role in the Church herself and accomplished tasks of considerable value on her behalf.

Pope John Paul II in his letter to women said, "In this vast domain of service, the Church's two-thousand-year history, for all its historical conditioning, has truly experienced the 'genius of women.' From the heart of the Church there have emerged women of the highest caliber who have left impressive and beneficial mark in history." Going further, the Holy Father made mention of the great line of women martyrs, saints and famous mystics, in a, saint Catherine of Siena and saint Teresa of Avila, whom Pope Paul VI of happy memory granted the title of Doctor of the Church. In the same vein, there are many women, inspired by faith, who were responsible for initiatives of extraordinary social importance, especially in serving in the poorest of the poor. Thus, the life of the Church in the Third Millennium will certainly not be lacking in new and surprising manifestation of "the feminine genius".[30] Needless to mention names of Nigerian women who have distinguished themselves in various capacities in the Church.

3. Women in The History of the Church in Nigeria

Christianity arrived in Nigeria as early as the 15th century through the Portuguese explorers and their missionaries. Though this first attempt was unsuccessful, but in the 17th century, Christianity in the form of Catholicism became established through the efforts of the Society of African Missions (SMA).[31] The notion of sending women missionaries to West Africa was conceived by the SMA Rev. Fathers as a result of the frustration encountered by the Fathers in their efforts in approaching women and children.[32] This was followed by the arrival of the Franciscan Sisters of the Propagation of Faith in Port-Novo (1867) and Later in Lagos. This group missionary women worked in Nigeria until the first group of OLA Sisters founded in 1876 in arrived Lagos.[33] Over the following years, we see a rapid growth and development of the Church in Nigeria. Today, the Church in Nigeria is one of the vibrant Churches in Africa as indicated through the ministerial boom it is currently experiencing. On the Catholic side many young men and women are embracing Religious life of Consecration while numerous male and female Church ministers are equally being raised from among other denominations. This vibrancy of the Church cannot be attributed to the male folk alone, but to females as well. Women have also contributed to the growth and vibrancy. In this section of this paper, we are

[28] JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, (30 December 1988), n. 49.
[29] PAUL VI, Discourse on the Committee for the International Women's Year (18 April 1975): *AAS* 67 (1975), 266.
[30] JOHN PAUl II, Letter to Women, (29 June 1995), n.11.
[31] D. B. BARRETT, "Nigeria" in *World Christian Encyclopedia*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001, 549.
[32] OLA Sisters, Province of Nigeria, Fruits of Courageous Simplicity: Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles (OLA) in Nigeria, (OLA Nigeria Publication, Lagos, 2018),7. The founder of the OLA Sisters in his letter to his Confrere wrote: "You will not be able to work among women and children yourselves".
[33] Cf. Ibid., 10-11.

going to look at the contribution of women generally to the growth of the Church in Nigeria, with special reference to the Religious Women in Consecrated life in the Catholic Church. In the history of the Church in Nigeria, women like Mary Mitchel Slessor whose intervention stopped the killing of twins in Nigeria; Mercy Amba Oduyoye, the Ghanaian married to Nigerian Methodist Theologian specialized in African women theology and many others along with the host of Religious Women in Consecrated life have contributed to the life and mission of the Church.

4. Women in Church Leadership

The rising population of women in the ministry and in church leadership in Nigeria seems to indicate a gradual reclaim of the identity of women as *imago Dei*. Today, women have been given and are assuming remarkable roles in the Church which include, Founder of Churches, Officiating Ministers, choir leaders and a new dimension has been added to this in form of the emerging classification of women groups, in solidarity and women to women ministry such as: The Daughters of Deborah, Daughters of Sarah, Women of Grace, Women of Faith and many more.

The Catholic Church does not distinguish between lay men and women in Church ministries in Nigeria. Presently we have women in different ministries in the church as doctors of the Church, catechists, altar servers and lectors, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, church wardens and leaders in Pastoral Councils. They are formed into various pious societies, associations and organizations in the Church: Catholic Women, Christian Mothers, Ladies of St. Mulumba and many more. In this regard, the Synod Fathers have written:

> Without discrimination women should be participants in the life of the Church, and in consultation and the process of coming to decisions." And again: "women, who already hold places of great importance in transmitting the faith and offering every kind of service in the life of the Church, ought to be associated in the preparation of pastoral and missionary documents and ought to be recognized as cooperators in the mission of the Church in the family, in professional life and in the civil community.[34]

Although the hierarchy of the Church in the Catholic expression is entirely male as a result of the restriction against ordination of women, most Catholics that participate in lay ministry are women. According to Stewart, approximately eighty five percent of all Church roles that do not require ordination are performed by women.[35] Hence, not only do women play vital roles in the Church as religious, they equally do so as lay members of the Church. According to Pope Francis, "women have a unique ability to share the Catholic faith because of their penchant to experience love and share it with others."[36] He says further that women are driven by love and they know to accept the proclamation of the resurrection with faith, as such they believe and immediately transmit it to others. "Women have had and still have a special role in opening doors to the Lord, in following him and communicating his face, because the eyes of faith always need the simple and profound look of love," the Pope said. "This is the mission of women, of

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[34] *Propositio* 47

[35] STEWART CYNTHIA, *The Catholic Church: A Brief Popular History*, Saint Mary's Press, USA, 2008, 322

[36] National Catholic Reporter, "Francis: Women have Special Role in the Church", http://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/francis-women-have-special-role-church, (April 3, 2012), retrieved October 22, 2019.

mothers and women, to give witness to their children and grandchildren that Christ is risen".[37] There cannot be any role more worthy for women. Hence, it is not about being ordained.

In this regard, the Revised Code of Canon Law contains many provisions on the participation of women in the life and mission of the Church: they are provisions that must be more commonly known and, according to the diverse sensibilities of the culture and opportunities in a pastoral situation, be realized with greater timeliness and determination.[38] In the more specific area of evangelization and catechesis the particular work that women have in the transmission of the faith, not only in the family, but also in the various educational environments, is to be more strongly fostered.[39] That is to say, their abilities, with regards to the mission of the Church, should never be undermined. In addition, Pope John Paul II invites priests and all concerned, to reread *Mulieris Dignitatem* and reflect on the important roles which women have played in their lives as mothers, sisters and co-workers in the apostolate.[40] Women have traditionally fulfilled supportive roles in serving in the Church.

5. Women in Religious Orders in Nigeria

The female religious comprise of women who, through profession of the Evangelical Counsels have set apart their lives for service to God and His people.[41] Currently in Nigeria, we have the presence of numerous Religious institutions and communities spread across the country, with different apostolates and projects as well as with a given charism to help in the spread of the Gospel in a way that aims ultimately at bearing witness to Christ by their way of life. In order to make their participation more effective, Religious women have come together in a spirit of love and unity to form a conference that promotes the work of evangelization and gives humanitarian services.[42]According to the records of Nigeria Conference of Women Religious (NCWR), there are 68 officially recognized and registered member congregations operating in the Church in Nigeria, and of these 68, 7 are Nuns of the Monastic Order.[43] Their apostolates comprises of evangelization and catechesis, care for the handicapped and disabled, school management, hospital management aside the demands of their calling.

Education of the young has been a major ministry for Catholic women in Religious Institutes. Many of the Catholic schools in Nigeria are being managed by female religious who inculcate in children not just good knowledge, but one accompanied by good moral upbringing in areas that are both physically and spiritually enriching. In this regard, the words of Pope John Paul II, is very instructive:

> I express appreciation to those women who are involved in various areas of education extending well beyond the family: schools of various levels, social service agencies, parishes, associations and movements. Wherever the work of education is called for, we can note that women are ever ready and willing to give themselves generously to others, especially in serving the weakest and most defenseless. In this work, they exhibit a kind

[37] Ibid.
[38] JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, (30 December 1988), n. 50.
[39] Ibid.
[40] JOHN PAUL II, Letter to Women, (29 June 1995), n. 10.
[41] Can. 573.
[42] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church_in_Nigeria
[43] Members of the Nigerian Conference of Women religious, www.ncwr.org.ng (accessed on October 18, 2019).

of effective, cultural and spiritual motherhood which has inestimable value for the development of individuals and the future of society.[44]

In addition, he mentioned the witness of so many Catholic women and Religious Congregations of women from every continent who have made education, particularly the education of boys and girls, their principal apostolate. Also worthy of note are all women who have worked and continue to work in the area of healthcare. Many parishes have women *pastoral associates,* usually nuns or religious sisters who help the pastor with many spiritual and pastoral duties. They assist in teaching catechism and preparing catechumens for the reception of the sacraments.

The impact of the Women Religious can be considered in the light of their specific apostolate. They have impacted so much in Nigeria generally by being signs of God's tender love towards humanity and they have borne special witness to the mystery of the church. The women religious have worked so hard to impact basic human values that bothers majorly on human dignity and the dignity of labour into the Nigerian system. Many of the Women Religious Institutes run orphanages and motherless baby's homes and home for the destitute. They also engage in prison apostolate.

One of the greatest impacts of the women religious in Nigeria is in the field of education. Majority of the women religious in Nigeria had taken upon themselves the responsibility of improving the standard of education. Many of the women religious groups in Nigeria established schools, at different levels ranging from primary to tertiary institutions and they ensure to provide standard and quality education to the people. The women religious in Nigeria have impacted so much in health sector. Many women religious provide health services; making health facilities available, especially to remote places, where there is little or no hope such. They have made remarkable impacts in this area by reducing mortality rate in the country. Finally, the Women Religious have gone a long way in fostering ecumenism in the church in Nigerian with their indiscriminative individual and communal services to all and sundry in their mission field irrespective of denomination or religion.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, we have been able to establish that in the history of the Church, women have played variety of roles and through them, the Church has affected societal attitudes to women throughout the world in significant ways. In a nutshell, women serve the Church in various ways. The roles of men and women in the church are more clearly stipulated than in the Secular World. To this effect, the saintly Pope John Paul II in his post synodal apostolic exhortation *Vita Consacrata* says "the church fully reveals her varied spiritual richness when she overcomes all discrimination and welcomes as a true blessing the gifts lavished by God upon both men and women, considering them in their equal dignity.[45] Women have equal rights with men in the Church. In Matrimony, they are treated and regarded as full, equal partners with their husbands. Irrespective of the subtle gender discrimination in our society

[44] JOHN PAUL II, Letter to Women, (29 June 1995), n.9.

[45] JOHN PAUL II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* (25 march 1996), 96-97

In accordance to the provisions of the Canon law, lay persons such as women can be admitted to certain ecclesiastical offices and functions that enable them to render assistance to the pastor.[46] As such, women can help in the parish administration by being constituted as members of committees and councils. They can work in the parish offices; teach religious education, and so on, just like their male counterparts. On the intellectual role the Church has women, both lay and in Religious orders who are Theologians, Scripture Scholars and Canon lawyers across Nigeria. The first African woman Scripture Scholar is from Nigeria, in the person of Sr. Dr. Mary Jerome Obiora. Since the Church has allowed Local Bishops and pastors the option to permit female altar servers at Mass, many parishes now have both altar girls and altar boys.

The Church in all sincerity must appreciate the irreplaceable role women play in the Church, and thus encourage them to be more committed to the mission of the Church. If you go around churches in Nigeria on a Sunday to take census of attendance, you will realize that the population of women is much higher than that of men. Women are called housewives probably because they mind the home and the kitchen as their space. Going by this reasoning, we can equally say that women own the church in Nigeria and elsewhere in the world because they are the majority in every Church. Women are the pillars in the Church without which the church will collapse because they are the ones who nurse and groom them members of the church. They quietly build the church without being noticed. Women are known for their dedication in the Church, where they are often the majority in the choir. The worth and importance of women in the Church is immeasurable. According to UN first quarter demography report 2019, out of the 7.8 Billion people on planet women are 5.6 Billion while men are 2.2 Billion therefore if you remove the role of women in the Church there will be shortage of manpower.

[46] CIC., 228.

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TAMING THE "MONSTER" OF RELIGIOUS FANATICISM FOR EXPANSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IN NIGERIA

Michael Adeleke Ogunewu

Faculty of Theological Studies,

Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary,

Ogbomoso, Nigeria

Abstract

Religion has both positive and negative functions within the society. In Nigeria, its contributions to the social development of the nation, in time past have been quite tremendous. For instance, for a considerable length of time, the provision of western education was shouldered solely by the religious groups. Even today many of them have continued to make giant strides in the economic development of the nation, through their many establishments. Paradoxically however, irrespective of these positive contributions of religion to national development, one disturbing aspect is the tension which religion has also been generating in the country through conflicts of various dimensions. Observably at the heart of all these chaos is the potency of religious fanaticism, which is a demonstration of an attitude of repulsion against the religions of others. Suffice to say that fanaticism is not new in the practice of religion in Nigeria. It is an issue which had over the decades engaged the attention of scholars. Notable scholars like O. A. Olukunle (1980) and Sam Bab Mala (1985) are among those who had tried to address it in the past, but it had remained till now a recurring issue. In this regard, this paper explores the situation, identifying the causes and how it can be curbed, so as to provide an atmosphere of friendliness for practitioners of religions in the country, which by extension is believed, will engender social cohesion and the expansion of the Christian faith in Nigeria. The study is descriptive in nature, generating information from personal observation and qualitative study of existing literature.

Key Words: Taming, Monster, Religious Fanaticism, Impetus, Religious Friendliness, Social Cohesion, Expansion of the Christian Faith

Introduction

From centuries past, religion has attracted the attention of many notable personalities, who made various postulations about the phenomenon; some in favour, and others against. Among those whose postulations were against the survival of religion are Karl Max and Friedrich Nietzsche. For Karl Max (170), "religion is the sob of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, the spirit of conditions utterly unspiritual. It is the opium of the poor (170)." To Karl Max, religion is of no value to a society; rather it is a mechanism by which the rich dominates the poor, within a capitalist society. Arguing further, he stressed that the idea of God is a figment of man's imagination and that "God did not create mankind; instead mankind created God." He then postulated that whenever people come to the realization that religious views are a falsification of the scientific truth of the meaning and purpose of life, they will be

freed from the obsession of religion and this will automatically lead to the natural death of religions and superstitions (Oshitelu 6). Friedrich Nietzsche on his part cannot be referred to as an atheist, but he was one who never wanted to have anything to do with religion or God. He declared that "God is dead" and that churches are only monuments over God's grave.

With this type of pronouncements against religion, one would have expected it to go into extinction. However, rather than religion going into extinction, it has overtime made and still making giant strides across communities around the world. One factor responsible for this advancement is the positive functions of religion in the society. Naturally, religion is expected to play certain positive roles in the society. It is considered in most societies the world over as an instrument for the promotion of ideals which are expected to engender peace and cohesion and it is always the aspirations of every society to get the best of life out of her religion. In Nigeria for instance, the contribution of religion to the social development of the nation has been enormous. It has since inception assisted in promoting the welfare of the masses through provision of education, health care delivery and other social services. Even today many of the religious groups have moved from mere worshipping communities to employers of labour and have continued to make giant strides in the economic development of the nation. This makes religion a beneficial institution within the society and a thing to be desired and encouraged.

Paradoxically however, these positive contributions of religion to national development notwithstanding, one disturbing aspect is the tension which religion has also been generating in the country through conflicts of various dimensions. Principally, over the decades Nigeria has witnessed religious violence of vary magnitude. The frequency and the increasing intensity of these crises often characterized by massive destruction of human and material resources have become appalling to every right thinking Nigerian. Observably, at the root of these crises as explained by researchers is the potency of religious fanaticism, a feeling and demonstration of repulsion against the religions of others (Adamolekun 145). Today, well-meaning Nigerians yearn for succour from the upheaval and the excruciating pains being occasioned by fanaticism often demonstrated by adherents of religions against one another. Suffice to say that fanaticism in not new in the practice of religion in Nigeria. It is an issue which had over the decades engaged the attention of scholars. Notable scholars like O. A. Olukunle (1980) and Sam Bab Mala (1985) were among those who had tried to address the issue in the past, but it has remained till now a recurring issue. In this regard, this paper explores the situation, identifying the causes of fanaticism in religion from the Nigerian perspective and how it can be curbed, so as to provide an atmosphere of friendliness for practitioners of religions in the country, which by extension is believed, will engender social cohesion and the expansion of the Christian faith in Nigeria. The study is descriptive in nature, generating information from personal observation and qualitative study of existing literature

Understanding Religious Fanaticism

Religion fanaticism has been described or defined in various ways. According to Hornby a fanatic is a person who is extremely enthusiastic about something. Fanaticism therefore can be referred to as extreme beliefs or behaviour, especially in connection with religion or politics (421). Nmah states that religious fanaticism denotes religious extremism, which in other words is an irrational attitude to religion which leads the religionist to the practice of religion beyond the

bounds of reason and, therefore, without moderation (52). Religious fanaticism, according to Balogun is a violent and unreasoning religious enthusiasm 121), while Danfulani affirms that religious fanaticism is essentially a negative and vicious attitude to religion, characterized by exaggeration and immoderation, manipulation and exploitation, excesses and violence (15). In the words of Iwe, religious fanatics describe themselves as custodians of the community and religion which opposes innovations and uplifts the practices of their founder (80).

Bringing all the above definitions together, religious fanaticism can be described as a feeling and demonstration of repulsion against the religions of others. It is the claim and confidence that one's religion is the only authentic religion sanctioned by the Divine and that vouchsafes salvation for humankind. With this feeling of repulsion, religious fanatics have tended to legitimise violence in the name of religion. They are willing to murder and even give themselves up to suicide all in the practice of religion. This is because they embrace teachings that promote violence in the service of the Divine. They often consider those opposed to their religion as enemies of God, whom they are helping to eliminate, and they readily sacrifice their own lives, all for some enormous consideration in the hereafter. This attitude had fuelled much religious tumult, which had occasioned bloodshed, tears anguish and created distrust among adherents of religions in the country.

Catalyst to Religious Fanaticism in Nigeria

It is rather disheartening that religion whose basic role is to unite people together in peace and affection has become a catalyst for conflicts and incessant bloodshed, loss of properties and destruction of the economic livelihood of many in the society. Many factors provide fertile soils for religious fanaticism to thrive. Some are hereby discussed.

Religious Particularities

Religious particularism is one strong source of fanaticism. This is a feature that is highly pronounced in virtually all religions. It is the belief that one's own religion is a special, and in fact, the best and the only one that gives assurance of ultimate salvation to humankind (Awoniyi 127). For instance, the Christians do asserts the supremacy of their religion over others with such statements as Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father (God) except through Him (John 14:6), while the Muslims asserts that there is no God but *Allah.* In the same vein, while the Christians consider Jesus to be the Son of God, the Muslims believe that he is only a messenger (prophet). Such assertions have repeatedly being a source of rancour between adherents of the two religions. Often, these assertions are communicated aggressively through inciting sermons and this has to a large extent assisted to fan the embers of religious violence in the country.

Manipulation of Religion

Another catalyst of religious fanaticism in Nigeria is manipulation of religion, especially by the ruling class. Members of the political class are in the habit of manipulating religion for political ends. Few times the religion of Islam has been given undue advantage over other religions in the country, especially in the northern part of Nigeria. Observably, this has often given the adherents a false impression that their religion is superior to those of others and thereby emboldened to perpetrate acts of violence against them. Invariably too, in this type of situation,

those of other religions often considered themselves marginalized and in trying to assert their importance in the scheme of things had often approached it forcefully, hence generating heat in the process.

One of such instance which is still generating heat in the country is the introduction of Nigeria into the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1986 during the era of Ibrahim Babangida. Before 1986, successive leaders of Nigeria tended to play safe on the issue. However, in January 1986, Nigerians discovered that the country had been ambiguously admitted as the 46th member of the OIC, under the Ibrahim Babangida regime. The OIC is principally an association of Muslim nations and it has a solely Islamic agenda. But despite the so-called secularity of the nation the Ibrahim Babangida administration went ahead and registered Nigeria as a member. Agitations by Christians on the issue were countered by explanations from the proponents that Nigeria stands a lot to gain from this association. According to Ehianu, some Muslims even asserted that since Nigeria maintains diplomatic relations with the Vatican, her membership of OIC is proper (223-224). However, one would have felt that maintaining diplomatic relations with the Vatican is the same as doing so with Saudi Arabia which is the principal seat of Islam. Equating the OIC with the Vatican is mischievous since the Vatican is like a nation; the OIC is an association of Muslim nations and Nigeria is recognized as a secular state.

Ehianu explaining further states that the issue became spiteful with the revelations of Ebitu Ukiwe, the then Vice President that the registration never went through the normal decision making process (223-224). Consequently, public outcry forced the presidency to constitute a panel to investigate the issue and advice it accordingly (Enwerem 140). Over three decades after, Nigeria's membership of the OIC can only be a matter of speculation. Such issue as this has often made adherents of religions to deal with one another with an attitude of suspicion and acrimony. Mimiko testifying to this describes the situation thus:

> …… the issue of religion did not come to the front burner as a critical issue dividing Nigerians until 1986.The major event that opened the floodgate of religious antagonism was the decision of the government to secretly upgrade Nigeria's membership in the Organisation of Islamic Countries, OIC, from that of an observer to a substantive one. This move was seen by Christians as a ploy to turn Nigeria into an Islamic State against the spirit and the letter of the constitution. This singular action of the Babangida regime as at that moment marked the epoch of intractable intra (in the case of Islam) and inter-religious violence in Nigeria (261).

In the same vein, Gofwen identified the introduction of the Sharia legal code in the north during the administration of Olusegun Obasanjo as another instance of manipulation of religion. According to his observation, the northern elite suddenly saw themselves losing out of power at the inception of the Obasanjo administration. Having been in power for over thirty-five years of Nigerian's independent political existence, the northern power elite suddenly found themselves in a power vacuum, a strange political wilderness as a result of power shift to the south under the leadership of Olusegun Obasanjo. The result was that for the first time since independence, the northern political elite started crying of being marginalized in terms of political appointment and distribution of the country's resources (143). Speaking further, he explains that one of the major

areas of displeasure of the northern elite against the Obasanjo regime was the compulsory retirement of the military politicians who have either been governors or federal ministers. The 'core' northern elite felt that his policy was directly aimed at neutralizing their political status as they claim to have been most affected by the purge. Having complained but without any attention given to them, they retired to religion as an instrument of identifying and mobilizing their people whose support they needed as a decisive springboard to launch a counter offensive that will be worthy of recognition. Thus the clamour for the full implementation of the sharia legal code in most parts of northern Nigeria became a handy instrument (144). The explanation of Gofwen here only reveals the extent to which the political class can go to manipulate religion for selfish political aspirations.

Usman writing on the subject matter of "manipulation of religion in Nigeria" established that (though) religious and ethnic conflicts are part of the inevitable competition for scarce resources by modernizing ethnic elites, however he observes further that:

> The real basis of the manipulation of religion in Nigeria today is the need to obscure from the people of Nigeria a fundamental aspect of our reality; that is the domination of our political economy by a class of intermediaries who are being increasingly exposed. And this is, to enable this class to cover themselves with religious and ethnic disguise in order to further entrench division among our people, and slow down their awakening at any cost…. (23).

He then concludes his observation thus:

> A series of violent demonstrations, riots and civil uprisings in this country in the last two years, have forcefully made many Nigerians come face-to-face with the harsh reality that religion is being systematically manipulated, by some forces, for specific purposes which are clearly opposed to the unity of the people of this country (71).

Usman's contention is that for a very long time religion has been manipulated by some members of the ruling class for their own selfish end. To use the words of Karl Max, they have often used religion as "opium for the masses." They tend to mask the faces of the people with religion, pretending that they are fighting their cause, when in actual fact they are out to achieve their political agenda.

The evil done to this nation through manipulation of religion is one major reason why religion has almost lost its savour among Nigerians. In the best interest of the corporate existence of the nation and the comfort of the masses, it is high time for our political leaders to desist from this practice. They should be honest with themselves, the nation, their religion and the God or Allah whom they profess to serve by allowing religion to occupy a pride of place within the scheme of things in the nation, so that we may reap its benefit rather than being continually ravaged by its negative dimensions.

Jihad Disposition in Islam

Another catalyst is the jihad tendencies in Islam, especially in the north. Northern Nigeria seems to practice a form of Islam different from that in other parts of the country. It sustained a form of Islam with Jihad at the centrepoint - Jihadist Islam. That is, a kind of Islam that is practiced or promoted through fighting and violence. Jihadist Islam has fostered on Northern Nigeria a militant form of Islamic faith, which is promoted and defended with violence. Regrettably, this form of Islam regards non-Muslims as unbelievers and infidels; and invariably as 'enemies' who should be conquered, converted or subdued by force. Thus, as long as this tradition persists, violence is not likely to abate. Initially the violence was limited to the use of bows and arrows, swords and cudgels, but today it had graduated into that of sophisticated weapons and explosives.

Apart from its Jihad tendency, northern Islam is always seeking to dominate other religions, through the promotion of one peculiarity or the other, among which are the craving for Sharia system of justice, Islamic Banking etc.,. Ayuk et al explains that one of the catalysts of religious violence in the northern part is the introduction of Sharia Law. Sharia Law gives more rights and advantages to Muslim than to non-Muslim. In fact, it tends to trample on the rights of non-Muslim, hence its introduction and imposition was greeted with resentment and widespread violence and crises with enormous casualties. Ayuk et al concludes that "as long as the northern states continue to mix religion and politics and refuse to separate mosque and state, and as long as, they refuse to recognize, respect and defend the equal rights of individuals irrespective of religious believes, religious hatred and uprising shall continue" (616-623).

Religious and leaders of thought in the north therefore have a lot of work to do in this regard. One wonders why northern form of Islam is different from that in other parts of the country, say the southwest. They should come to the realization that religion is dynamic and not static. Consequently, they cannot afford to practice Islam at the expense of the lives and freedom of others. While one is not advocating for a corruption or compromise of the Islamic message, it is imperative to note that there is the need to allow moderation in all aspects of religious activities. The issue of Jihad is very controversial. Since the *Boko Haram* debacle, some Muslims especially from the southwest and a handful from the north, had reiterated that Jihad does not mean the killing and/or maiming of non-Muslims, rather it only means striving to right the wrong and that in a persuasive manner rather than the use of force. If these two forms of Islam are at variance in their teachings, then there is need for harmonization in the interest of peace and national security.

Lack of Justice

Lack of justice is responsible for most of the vices which pervades the Nigerian environment. There is therefore the need to take the administration of justice seriously for them to be reduced to the barest minimum. Justice is a part of religion because God is a God of justice. Fanaticism thrives in our nation because people who have been indicted in case of it were never brought to book.Consequently,absence of justice or the weakness of it is an encouragement for

those who have not been caught to continue in the act. This strengthens their act of fanaticism; conscious of the fact that they may not be apprehended and if apprehended may not be brought to book. It is not enough to pay lip service to the eradication of vices, but there must be adequate legislation and structure to deal with it. It is only when this is done that the present situation can be ameliorated. In the execution of justice, there should be no scapegoats or sacred cows. All must be treated equal before the law.

Consequences of Fanaticism

Fanaticism has led to various forms of religious upheaval, which foisted misfortune on the nation and resulted in the loss of both human and material resources.

Violent Conflict, Pains and Death

Fanaticism which has continually remained a knotty issue in the practice of religion in Nigeria has over the decades occasioned much trauma for the nation. As earlier explained, at the root of all religious crises in Nigeria is the potency of religious fanaticism, which tends to give birth to all other factors. It is a problematic issue confronting Nigeria today as a nation. Ushe citing Opitz is of the view that "religious fanaticism" is a deep mess into which Nigeria has been plunged. Speaking further he states that the prevailing religious conflicts, persistent religious riots, rampant killings of innocent persons and destruction of property, all in the name of religion are indicative of the fact that religious fanaticism has taken over the Nigerian scene (51). Omoregbe explains that fanaticism is the root cause of many evils which have manifested in the practice of religion in the country. According to him it usually developed out of the totally unjustified claim by each religion that it is the only true religion sanctioned, revealed or approved by God for all mankind and that all the others are false (299). Consequently, certain adherents of religion manifesting this trait have often detested and seek the extermination of other religions and their adherents, through violent hostilities, which have continued to plunge the nation into chaos and disaster of various magnitudes.

These have often manifested in the form of violent crises, especially in the northern part of the country. It is estimated that the Maitatsine uprising in Kano in 1980 which is believed to be one of the most devastating religious crises in the history of the country claimed over 4,177 lives (49), and Adamolekun declares that fanaticism was the root cause of the crisis (145). According to Shadrack Gaya Best, even though there were a couple of crises in the country with religious connotations, a little after independence, religious conflict became quite pronounced in the country as from the mid 1980s, and assummed an especially alarming proportion under the regime of Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1993) (Best 64). Since that time, the nation has reeled under various forms of religious violence.

Ojo identified roughly forty-eight (48) cases of religious cum ethnic violence, most of which occurred in the northern part of the country between 1980-2005. This according to him resulted in killing, destruction of religious buildings and properties and large scale social displacement (21). In the same vein, Boer in one of his studies on religious crises in Nigeria documented close to twenty violent riots which took place in the northern part of the country from 1980-2002. This is a report from one of the crises:

> Since last Friday, 6th March 1987, violent attacks have been launched against life, property and places of worship in most of the major cities and towns in Kaduna State. … In these seven days many people have been killed and wounded. Many more have been harrassed, molested, completely frightened and make totally insecure. … Right now in Zaria, almost all economic, educational and other activities have stopped. Hundreds of people are on the roads and motor parks and railway stations looking for transport to travel back to their hometowns for safety and security. … This type of violent campaign of Muslims against Christians is unprecedented in the history of our country. It directly threatens her continued survival as a single entity (107-108).

Just like the above report,virtually all the religious crises experienced so far, have foisted tales of woes on the nation – thousands of deaths and destruction of properties worth millions of naira (Boer 39).

Creates Insecurity

Religious fanaticism created an atmosphere of insecurity in Nigeria. Concerned citizens have incessantly showed concern to the deteriorating security situation in the country since the end of the civil war in 1970. However, rather than the situation improving, it has continued to deteriorate on a daily basis. A dangerous trend was introduced into the already worsened security situation by the Islamic sect popularly known as "*Boko Haram."* The catastrophic terrorism unleashed by the sect heightened insecurity in the nation. Since 2009 the activities of the *Boko Haram* have constituted a menace to the security of the nation. The group has perpetrated numerous attacks which had resulted in the death and maiming of many. It has engaged in targeted killings, kidnappings, robberies, shootings, and bombings, across key locations in the northern part of the country.

Despite the assurance by the federal government in December 2015 that the group has been crushed, it has continued to wreak havoc. A Reuter report in the Nigerian Tribune on August 21, 2018 declares that nineteen (19) persons were feared killed, while forty (40) houses were razed as a result of Boko Haram attack in a Borno village (38), while another report in the same newspaper states that despite successes achieved in the fight against insurgency in the North-East in recent times, the FG says the security situation in the region is still worrisome (Usighe 36). All these are indications that the fight is still far from being over. Apprehensively, there are insinuations in certain quarters that the resurgence of insecurity which the nation is presently experiencing in the form of herdsmen and bandit attacks in the Middle Belt and the northwest area respectively are nothing but *Boko Haram* in another guise. However, all these atrocious acts on the part of *Boko Haram,* was no doubt fired by the fanaticism of its members.

Fanaticism and its attendant chaos do not only threaten physical security, it is also a threat to economic security both of the individual and the state. It is a fact that nothing thrive in an environment where crisis and violence is prevalent. Naturally, violence attacks and destroys masses' sources of livelihood. By extension, insecurity is a risk factor which investors the world over dread and makes them to move elsewhere. Consequently, it discourages foreign investors

from coming into the country, as no reasonable person will want to invest in an environment where returns cannot be guaranteed.

In June 2018, an academic conference which was earlier schedule for Nigeria was transferred to Ghana because of the adverse security situation in the country. When Nigeria was selected as the venue for the conference, governments of prospective participants warned their citizens and were emphatic as to the fact that they cannot guarantee their safety while in Nigeria. Consequently Ghana was favoured as an alternative venue, since the conference must take place in West Africa. With this type of experience, only God knows how many foreign investments have been lost to this type of warning. Okorie commenting as far back as 2011on the economic woes which the insecurity created by the *Boko Haram* insurgency is likely to imposed on the nation laments that Nigeria would not be able to tap into about $1.4 trillion investment capital which circulates around the world for as long as the insecurity situation persists. According to him, this is because the severe security threat to life and property all over the country sends wrong signals to the international community (37-38).

Threatens National Cohesion

At the height of the Boko Haram crisis in the year 2012,millions of non-indigenes in the north, especially Igbo, who were observed to be the worst hit, were desperate to return to their home states for fear of being annihilated. Okpaga et al observes that as at the last week of January 2012, about 22,000 Igbo and Yoruba residing in Adamawa State fled due to the then security situation (9). As an aftermath of the multiple explosions in Kano in 2012, Kano State Chapter of Ohanaeze Ndigbo in a press statement signed by its President, Hon, Tobias Michael Idika, called on the governors of south east and south-south geo-political zones to come to the aid of their citizens stranded in Kano State. He declared thus:

> The Igbo resident in Kano are living with naked fear and apprehension. Though there are few of us who like to stay and defend ourselves, the majority of us, particularly, women and children, numbering over three million are jostling to leave the North (Kano), because unfolding events indicate that the North (Kano) is no longer safe for easterners… Ohanaeze Ndigbo Kano hereby calls on the governors of the eastern states and the South-South to provide means of transportation with adequate security to evacuate our brethren who would want to leave because human life is precious and should be protected as such (16-17).

The matter was made worse by a bomb attack in Kano targeted at the Motor Park at the Sabongari area on Monday, March 18, 2013. The Igbo considers this a direct attack on them because it targeted their principal place of business. Once again Idika decried the situation referring to it as the worst experience of the life of Igbo in Kano. According to him “we (the Igbo) have lost over 60 souls, while five buses were burnt to ashes, which show that we have always been the target of the attack, moving without protection” (Usigbe, Oyelere and Bwala 2). Frankly speaking, although people of other ethnic groups might be affected, the Igbo are likely to be in the majority. This then heightened disaffection among the Igbo and people of the north, as

the Igbo saw themselves as a people targeted for annihilation by the *Boko Haram* with connivance of the northern leaders. They then sounded a warning that should such carnage be repeated, they can no longer guarantee peace in the east (Alechenu et al 2), and only God knows what part the memory of all these is playing in the agitation by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), for a declaration of a Republic of Biafra in the East. Observably therefore, fanaticism is not only threatening national security, but also has serious negative implications for national unity.

Discouraging Fanaticism

Nigerians must be encouraged to shun fanaticism in religion. Fanaticism breeds violence and it is the source of religious conflicts which this nation had experienced over the decades. However, there seems to be a consensus of opinion as to the fact that fanaticism manifests itself in virtually all religions. They argued that it is rather impossible for any religious person not to be fanatical. Mala describes fanaticism as a naughty child of a difficult mother - religion. He emphasized that just as it is impossible to separate a child from the mother, so also it is not possible to separate fanaticism from religion. According to him, a religious person whether he is a Christian, Muslim, Jew, or Hindu worth that name cannot claim to be completely immune from some form of fanaticism at some stage of his life. In this context therefore, it may not be ideal for any religious person to accuse the other of fanaticism. He disclosed that one of the factors which usually give rise to fanaticism in religion is the particularities of each religion. Religion particularities can be defined as the beliefs that one's own religion is a special or distinctive one. It is a claim that one's own religion is the best and the only universal religion that bestows salvation to man. He concluded that in as much as these particularities are still in religion it will be rather impossible to divorce fanaticism from religion (109-133).

However, Olukunle in his own view drew a line of distinction between two forms of particularities - acceptable and unacceptable particularities. He asserts that there is nothing wrong in the doctrinal statements of beliefs made by each religion. But when the adherents of one religion proceed to use these doctrines as a basis to pronounce damnable or hell judgment upon the adherents of other religions, then their positions of particularity become unacceptable, indefensible and unjustifiable (114-117). What Olukunle is saying here is that it will be ideal for adherents of religion to practice their doctrines for the good of their life and that of the environment rather than using it to criticize others and condemning those who do not share their points of view. This is one reason why religion has continued to be a source of conflict in Nigeria and the sooner we realize this, the better. Tenets of each faith should be reserved for the consumption of the adherents and leaders of religion should make it a point of duty to educate their followers on these.

Granted that conversion drive pervades the two principal religions in Nigeria, it will be ideal for each religion to device strategies of promoting their faith, which will not be offensive to others. They should learn how to evangelize without antagonism. There is a big gap between the two – evangelism and antagonism. A situation whereby one religion specializes in criticizing the doctrines of another under the guise of evangelism is nothing but antagonism. This is detrimental to peaceful co-existence and does not allow religion to achieve any positive goal for the society. Awoniyi citing Umezurike cautions on the danger inherent in religious fanaticism. He remarks

that fanaticism ruined early Jerusalem, destroyed Constantinople in the 15th century, and brought about the demise of Spain (180). In this regard, it behoves Nigerians to exercise caution in the practice of their religions, ensuring that none of their actions is aimed at ridiculing the religions of others. This is necessary if Nigeria is not to be consumed by religious fanaticism.

Our leaders should desist from creating acrimony among the populace, through manipulation of religion. They should desist from uncomplimentary utterances which are capable of inciting adherents of one religion against the other. Also they should not underestimate the importance of the fact that Nigerians of all faiths are carrying on their daily activities, facing their common challenges, making friends across religious divide and generally working together in the different spheres of national activities. They work together in government offices, within the Armed Forces, in the political parties, in the markets and even within the same family. It is now the responsibility of government to build on this firm, broad based foundation, so that they can continue to promote it as a normal way of life for the people, and the good of the nation. It is observed that religion mainly becomes problematic when it is manipulated for selfish ends.

On the part of the government, there is the need for a re-emphasising and re-definition of the secular nature of the Nigerian State. Balogun suggested that the Federal Government should give a strict and comprehensive re-interpretation of Nigeria's secular status. He explains that Nigeria should be recognized not as absolutely a secular state but a multi – religious state that respects the peculiarities of all religions in the country. What Balogun is saying is that declaring the state a full secular state with the heavy presence of religion in it is not realistic. However, while there is recognition of the religious pluralistic nature of the country and each adherent is given the freedom to determine where he chooses to belong, pro-actively, efforts should be made to separate state from religion and uphold the secularity enshrined in the Nigerian constitution. While the administration is secular, the administrators have their individual religions, but secularity demands that they should not promote one religion to the detriment of the other, rather their religious convictions should be personal, ordering their individual lives and not used as a controlling factor for the machinery of governance. Consequently, the high level victimisation and marginalisation of people of other faiths which is reportedly rampant in certain part of the country should be eradicated to give room for peace and security in the nation. For as long as we refuse to recognize, respect and defend the equal rights of individuals of different faiths and beliefs, religious hatred and violence will not abate.

Nigerians should come to the realization that the different faiths which we profess have come to stay in the country. The late Chief M. K. O. Abiola of the June 12 election fame in answer to a question during his campaign said that "in as much as a bird cannot afford to fly with one wing, Christianity and Islam will continue to co-exist in Nigeria." What Abiola said here is that we should recognize the fact that these two religions have come to stay in the country, so the question of one trying to wipe out the other does not arise. But it is apparent that some of our religious people have not come to this realization as they are still struggling to promote one religion over the other. This had contributed significantly to the undoing of religion in the country, and the more will tread with caution on these the better.

Finally, the economic dimension to fanaticism is also palpable. It is often said that "the idle mind is the devil's workshop." The statistics of unemployed youth in Nigeria is alarming. All stakeholders in the country should be concerned about how this would be reduced to the barest minimum. This is because, the unavailability of jobs tend to be providing such terrorist

group as Boko Haram with readymade foot soldiers for their nefarious activities. Ladigbolu quoted by Atoyebi appropriately observed that “brigandage and violence follow joblessness. People who would normally be calm will find their nerves on edge and do things against their will when they don’t know when the next meal will come” (58-59). When people are jobless, naturally, there is the tendency for them to accept any form of work, as a survival strategy, even including working with terrorist groups. There is also the need to arrest the staggering level of illiteracy in the country, especially in the northern part. Because many youths in the north are uneducated, they are always at the service of manipulators of religion and often used to perpetrate violence.

Conclusion

Fanaticism is one of the banes of religion in Nigeria. This is usually demonstrated by adherents of religions in the country, through attitudes which bothers on overzealousness in the practice of religion. This has fuelled many religious upheavals, which have led to loss of lives and properties. This is presently threatening the corporate existence of Nigeria and driving the country to the abyss. There is therefore the urgent need to arrest the situation by encouraging adherents of religions in the country to steer clear of fanaticism. This paper examines this phenomenon, discussing the causes, consequences and what can be done to curb the practice of religion in the country of fanaticism. The aim being that if fanaticism is removed from the practice of religion in Nigeria, the nation will enjoy the positive side of religion, which will create an atmosphere of religious friendliness, social cohesion and the expansion of Christianity in the country.

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY AND THE BUILDING OF THE NIGERIAN NATION

Felix Ehimare Enegho, Ph.D
Department of Religious Studies
Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria
&
Jesutunwase, Jones Segun, Ph.D
Department of Religious Studies
Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria

Abstract

When history as a subject is mentioned in Nigeria, it is a situation of mixed feelings as many consider its study as irrelevant, inconsequential and a total waste of time, energy and resources. Yet, many scholars and students are beginning to come to terms with the reality of the significance of history in our society and the global community. There is no area in our world where history is not imperative. Without the knowledge of history, the world would be left with no record of the past and the projection on how to make our world a better place as history aids the quest for advancement in the developmental strides of nations and societies in our world. It is even more significant when Christian history is unmasked in a bid to addressing the events that marked the gradual development in various spheres of life of any nation. It is one mystery that needs to be unravelled of the significant impact of Christianity in the development of Nigeria as a nation. This paper seeks to address the part played by the Christian church and history in the birth, growth and developmental strides of Nigeria as a nation; especially as one which is striving to make impacts in all spheres of life not just on the African continent, but in our very fast-growing global community. These research methods utilized in this paper consist of the socio-historical and analytic approaches.

Keywords: Christian, History, Nigeria, Nation

Introduction

Without the knowledge of history, the world would be left with no record of the past and the projection on how to make our world a better place as history aids the quest for advancement in the development strides of nations and societies in our world. In this paper, we are tasked with the responsibility of unravelling the significant impact of the early church in the development of Nigeria as a nation of which the modern-day church should emulate toward the building of the Nigerian nation. Christian is a follower of Christ, someone who demonstrates the characters of Christ. Christians are the church of Christ.

The concept 'Church' is the English equivalent of the Greek word "Ecclesia" which means a congregation or a community of those who believe (Choate S.O. 20). In its classical sense, the church is the community of the saved. It is the totality of the congregation of believers on (of) the principles taught and represented in Christ. It includes both the saved on earth and beyond. This is why it is called the "Mystical Body of Christ" (Akhilomen 16). The church is therefore tasked with leadership responsibility. The Church History reveals the impact of the church on the birth of Nigeria nation and the process of building her. This effort will seek to also unveil historically the impact of the early and modern-day churches on the spiritual, Educational and the political development of Nigerian citizenry. Finally, these researchers gave their

suggestions on how the church can improve on her status as the Agent of National Development in Nigeria and to the global society.

Cultural and Sociological Development of Nigerians

Here, the researchers contended that the ideal-cultural and sociological development of Nigeria citizens are traceable historically to the good efforts of the early western missionaries to Nigeria and this, of course, suggests that the modern-day Church of God is still the hope of development for this country and the global society. Nigerians (just like the other African nations) make sacrifices to appease the gods and they are involved in many other cultural practices. Although, there are good cultural values of the Africans (Nigerians) the evangelistic efforts of western Christianity to Nigeria have brought changes to the people especially in the aspect of marriage and "family" issues. The family life of the converted Nigerians from African Traditional Religion (ATR) to Christianity was affected by gospel. The coming of these western missionaries to Nigeria and their gospel efforts has promoted the position of women in society. There is an equal opportunity between a husband and wife in the light of their oneness in Christ, polygamous is now minimized. It was an abomination for a woman to give birth to twins, hence such children were killed and the mother had to be subjected to isolation until she had performed a purification (Haye De la 56).

Through Christianity, the birth of twins or even triplets in Nigeria is no longer regarded as a curse but as a blessing from God. It was Mary Slessor that stopped the killing of twins in Calabar, Nigeria. While Ethiel Titcombe, wife of Rev. Tommie Titcombe (Oyinbo Egbe) stopped the killing of twins in Yagbaland, Nigeria (Ogunbiwaje Jones Segun 60). There are other ill-cultural values of the Nigerians that were positively affected by the early Christian missionaries in Nigeria.

Early Christian History on the Political Development of Nigeria

The arrival of the western missionaries marked a new political life of the people. For example, the place where Revd. Tommie Titcombe (A western missionary to Egbe in Nigeria) lived was called "Oke-Igbala" (meaning: Mount of deliverance). Anyone who was able to escape to "Oke-Igbala" whenever there is an attempt to capture such a person would be freed. The intervention of Rev. Tommie Titcombe eradicated political injustice because this action has a reflection on the entire Nigerian populace. The good efforts of some Christians who were British Colonial masters marked the birth of the Nigerian nation. According to Adeyanju Olabisi (*Oral Interview*), in 1956 it was Florence Lugard, the wife of Lord-Lugard that named: "Nigeria". The great impact of her husband, Lord Lugard, the first Governor-General of Nigeria who amalgamated the Northern an Southern parts of Nigeria in 1914; this is still very evergreen in the minds of Nigerians. It was a vibrant stepping stone to the future political trend of the Nigerian nation.

The western missionaries in collaboration with the British navy's-slave trade patrol stopped the slave trade and the slaves were liberated in Sierra Leone. There, the first African missionary and Bishop Ajayi Crowther was liberated, and he was able to do exploit! A Nigerian son, whose impact in Africa can never be overemphasized. The western missionaries laid down good political legacy which was based on political justice. This has helped the Nigerian natives, Christian and Church leaders in the practice of honest political justice in both secular lives and in

the church organization. Christian missionary such as J.B. Wood, David Hinderer in collaboration with some native men: Daniel Olubi and so on, played active roles in the settlement of the conflict between Ekiti Parapo and Ibadan. The slaves who were kept by the Ibadan warlords were freed and returned to their various homes in Ekitilnd, Ijesha-land and other places in Nigeria. Through the interventions of these missionaries. In 1893, Ibadan area became a British protectorate after a treaty signed by Fijabi, the *Baale* (native leader) of Ibadan (Nigeria) with the George C. Denton on 15th August. The British with the collaboration of the western missionaries developed the new colony to facilitate their commercial activities in the area. And Ibadan shortly grew into the major trading centre that it is today (90).

Globalization and Technology and Connection with Christianity in Nigeria

It is an indisputable fact that the advent of Christianity in Nigeria brought along civilization, globalization technology. Globalization in *Macmillan English Dictionary* (638), is the idea that the world is developing a single economy and culture as a result of improved technology and communications and the influence of every multinational company. According to Sola S.O. (42) in "humanities and globalization", globalization is the term used to describe the growing world interdependence of people and countries. This process has accelerated dramatically in the past decade largely because of the huge advances in technology. The technology behind globalization has revolutionized in communication during the past decades (Shola 274). Access to people and information had made communication in the world to be quicker, cheaper and easier (275).

Equally, Ajayi Lawal (144), receives globalization to be the growing interdependence of countries worldwide through the increasing volume and variety of cross-border transactions in good and services and of international capital flows and through the more rapid and the widespread diffusion of technology (212). In our research findings, it was discovered historically that most of the global scientific inventors are Christians.

Christian History on Economic Impact in Nigeria

Eurocentric or western Christianity /western civilization has doubtlessly contributed to the economic growth of this country (Nigeria). Education is the bedrock of national development. The man power needed to be educated on the mechanical, chemical and all other instruments, needed to be used in the various organizations in the country. Human beings therefore after their education would be able to have better productivity.

Historically, Christianity/western civilization has enlightened the Nigerians, including Christian and church leaders in this modern world. No doubt, with the arrival of Christianity that brought along western civilization, the economic life of the Nigerians and the entire world enjoyed the benefits. The succeeding sub topic researches into the rise of some Early Christian Mission Schools in Nigeria which sprang up the other factors of development in Nigeria like a wild-fire.

Early Christian Mission Schools in Nigeria and the Building of the Nigerian Nation

The rise of Christian Mission Schools in Nigeria can be traced to the advent of Christianity in Nigeria through the Europeans, whose original mission was commerce. According to Enegho Felix Ehimare (31), the most powerful factor of the change introduced by these early missionaries was western education. In traditional society, the wealth and power that education could bring introduced education as a new indicator of status. Later, when the occupation of Nigeria by the British brought about a great demand for indigenous employees for the new administration, the benefits of Christian education was seen to be very great. Christian education and English language knowledge of the also gave common ground to members of many widely differing groups of which Nigeria is composed. It was from these early converts that the first African elites to gain the respect of the white men emerged. It was these elites which were to provide the leading members of the professional and commercial world, and which ultimately were to produce the leaders of the nationalist movement for self-government and independence (Enegho 31). The first European visitors were the Portuguese, they visited Bini kingdom in the late 16th century, as time progressed other Europeans – the French, the British, the Germans followed suit (Yorupedia.com/Subjects/Yoruba –pedia…) Roman Catholics (*Esin tabi ijo Aguda*: Yoruba name for Roman Catholic) started the race, followed by the protestant, whose prominent member – church missionary society (C.M.S) made significant inroads into the hinterland and Niger region for the evangelism. Methodist (which is called: *Ijo –Eleto* started the mission in Agbadarigi by Thomas Birch Freeman (new Badagry) in 1842. Henry Townsend, C.C. Golmer and Ajayi Crowther of C.M.S. worked in Abeokuta/Egba Division in 1846. 1853 marked the beginning of the emergence of other Christian missions in Nigeria. The Baptist Missionaries (in Ogbomosho and its environs), Salvation Army Evangelical Churches of West Africa (ECWA popular in Yorubaland and Northern part of the Country). And other non-denominational Christian groups joined (Yorupedia.com/subject…).

Clergy man with C.A. Gollmer (a german) and Bishop Crowther led a mission party of Yoruba extraction from Free town to Abeokuta, religion's dynamics in Yoruba land changed significantly. In fact, the new settlers became the nucleus important, a change –agent that charted a new course for Yoruba, and later Nigeria (Yorupedia, com/subject…). Soon they became opinion leaders and society's intellectuals. And as time went by religious organizations and the colonial government started establishing schools which some of these individuals headed society, no doubt benefited from their endeavours.

Table 1: Early Christian Secondary Schools in Nigeria

Early Schools	Location	Dates	Founder	Comment
Church Missionary Society School (Aliu Babs Fafunwa (1974)	Bariga, Lagos	1859		The first High School in Yorubaland, and in Nigeria after Amalgamation of Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914.
St. Gregory College (Fafunwa, 1974)	Obalende Lagos	1876	Roman Catholic Mission	
Methodist Boys High School Methodist	Itafaji	1878		
Girls High School (Fafunwa, 1974)	Lagos	1879		
King's College	Lagos	1908	Government	
Abeokuta Grammar School	Abeokuta	1908	C.M.S	
Baptist Boys High School	Lagos	1885	Baptist Church	
Olivet High School	Oyo			
Eko Boys High School	Lagos	1913	Private African Initiative	
Ibadan Grammar School	Ibadan	1913	C.M.S	
St. Mary Convent	Lagos	1913	Roman Catholic Mission	
The First Primary School (Simoyan, 1972)	Egbe Kogi State	1926	Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA)	
The Black School (Simoyan, 1972)	Egbe	1918	Thomas Titcombe	
SIM Central School (Simoyan, 1972)	Egbe	1936	SIM	
Tithombe College	Egbe	1955	Thomas Titcombe	
Nurses Training School	Egbe	1955	SIM	

These schools no doubt blazed education trail with Christianity as the ultimate aim. Children enrolled in these schools were converted to Christianity, as time progressed; these converts, in turn, became advocates of the new religion in Yorubaland. The Religion spread like wildfire, by the end of 19th century, nearly all major towns in Yorubaland had Churches with schools – especially (Primary /Elementary) where more Yoruba children were educated. Towns and villages without school, joined hands to establish Community Schools. The products of these schools became a lightning rod that transformed and changed the society in decades that followed (Yorupedia.com/subject…).

As we doubtlessly celebrate the great impact of the early church on the National building of the Nigerian State; these researchers discovered negative opinions of some people on the impact of the modern-day church on the national building. Some Nigerian Pastors these days sell the gospel as the pathway to riches. The height of the irony is that members cannot afford to send their children to the schools they helped established with the leaders of the modern day's churches in Nigeria, and majority of these preachers benefited free missionary schools. Charity, which is a foundation of Christianity seems to have absconded even those claiming to be involved in charity are just using it as a façade. The church is now a market hub, everything is for sale (www.nairaland.com...).

The researchers support Victor Oyeleke in his reports in www.nairaland.com... By opining that, our contemporary church leaders in Nigeria seem to have forgotten or neglected the laudable primary intention of the early church fathers for establishing educational institutions. The early church established schools, for the effective propagation of the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and to promote the educational life of the populace especially the less privileged in the society. But Alas! The church in Nigeria today is business conscious. Uche Nwadike supports these researchers by asserting that, the downside is you need to have bagged some cash to afford to send one child let alone two to the now termed Nigeria Elite University. Here is a list of some of these Universities and approximate fees that you need to pay to attend (Campustimesui word.press.com/2013/12…):

Table 2: Christian Universities in Nigeria, founders and tuition paid by students

NAME OF THE UNIVERSITIES	FOUNDER	TUITION PER SESSION
Bowen University	Baptist Convention	₦650,000
Covenant University	Bishop David Oyedepo	₦ 640,000
Benson Idahosa University	Benson Idahosa	₦ 500,000
Babcock University	Seventy day Adventist	₦ 450,000
Redeemers University	The Redeemed Christian Church	₦ 450,000
Ajayi Crowther University	Supra Diocesan Board of The church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)	₦ 350,000
Madonna University	A Catholic University	₦ 350,000
Joseph Ayo Babalola University	Christ Apostolic Church	₦ 436,000
Rhema University (Campustimesui word. Press.com /2013/12…)	Rhema	₦ 325,000

All of these Universities were built from tithes and offerings of the people who now cannot afford to send their children there to study. Where has the moral of the church gone? (www.nigeriafilms.com/news/1744/56/...). However, the un-doubtful truth is that these Christian Universities has really contributed to the Educational, Spiritual, Political and Economic growth of Nigerian State. Moreover, Ezenweke E.O. and Kanu I.A. (dx.doi.org/10.4314/afer.v612.9) asserts that, in many parts of Nigeria, many Christian Dioceses are celebrating their centenary – hundred years of evangelization within the area. As this has been the tag of several diocesan celebrations in the past five years, it has become relevant to examine the contribution of the church to Nigeria's national development. Adefarasin Wale, the former National General Secretary of Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria asserts on the "Role of the church in Rebuilding Nigeria" (druthman.wordpress.com/2013/06/19/t…), according to him, "many would describe Nigeria as being in a crisis, with the intractable problems of terrorism, in security, kidnapping, corruption, a stagnant economy, epileptic power supply, unemployment, poor governance, breakdown in health care delivery and the education system amongst others. The stupendous amounts of wealth acquisition by the few to the detriment of the many –by way of cronysm and plain corruption flies in the face. I believe the church can make an invaluable contribution to the transformation of Nigeria…"

However, Akanro Busayo opines that, the church is sleeping, that is why a Nation's Government is killing innocent citizens in the Niger Delta and not much noise is being made about it… Loads of youths have dreams to be successful in the arts (music, graphic arts, dancing etc) and even sports but lack an enabling environment and a platform to launch and the doors of

the church are locked from Monday during the day to Friday during the day with so sort of empowerment going on. How long shall this neglect and wickedness continue. If this nation, Nigeria must develop, the church must take its rightful place again in taking responsibility for the building of this nation academically, spiritually, financially and even politically. Our values are flawed because the church is sleeping. LET THE CHURCH ARISE AND LET THE ENEMIES OF NIGERIA BE SCATTERED (Akanro Busayo.com>Home>Education).

However, for Rotimi Williams Omotoye (www.ces/2010.omotoye.htm), church has contributed significantly to the needed religious, political and social-economic infrastructure for sustainable development of Nigeria in the 21st century. For instance, the establishment of Private Universities, Hospitals, Banks, Campaign against AIDS/HIV, Scholarships, road maintenance and rehabilitation of drugs addicts. He goes on to assert that, the story of the churches are not only "Holistic" there are abounding "negative" findings that are inimical to the growth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Church's Participation in Political Leadership in Nigeria

This section critically examines specifically some of the arguments on church involvement in political leadership in Nigeria. Alamu A.G., quips that "… God is the ground norm of every assignment. Thus this responsibility does not exist outside god's behest; it is called of God… undoubtedly man is enthroned into the leadership position of various capacities so as to carry out fulfill an avowed person's mastery of his skillful or people's acclaim, it is divinely ordained… "(Unilorin.edu.ng/publications/alamu/..).

For Ezichi A. Ituma, "…politics in Nigeria is a dirty game and the Christian is a holy person that could be so easily defiled by this game, yet the Christian is praying for good leadership from a corrupt politician" Ituma asks,… "can dedicated Christian go hand with partisan politics in Nigeria?". He, however, concludes that preaching in the church is not enough to change society. The Nigerian society needs to be led by good people who have zero tolerance to corruption. It is a share naivety for a Christian to think that he can achieve much in the political community without being a partisan politician (www.academic excellence society.com/r…).

In the contrary, unanimous says, nowadays, it is not advisable for any Christian to go for any political office, it has become a do or die affair, he goes on to affirm that, many of them can even kill to get to a particular office, the truth is that, "if you know what all these politicians are doing just to get there, you will run". She feels as a Christian, we do not belong here, this world is not our eternal home, so, why should we be fighting for it (www.nairaland.com/8637-86/born-again...). Similarly, Kenny Kowe (unitenigeria.com/nigerian-pastors-a…), condemns Pastors involvement in politics. He opines that "The church in Nigeria is missing the point! our Spiritual leaders' involvement in politics isn't going to right the wrongs. I believe that it is unfortunate that Pastors are the best candidates the churches can provide for political offices…" The aforementioned few opinions of people represented diverse ideologies of some Christians in Nigeria. In our opinion, we want to suggest that, church leaders and their members should not be passive in Nigerian politics.

Christian History and Constitutional Development in Nigeria

Here, we are tasked to contend that It was the Christian British Colonial Masters that pioneered "constitutional-policy" in Nigeria. Adefarati Adegun (*oral interview*), asserts that the

constitution-making in Nigeria started with the Nigerian council of 1914 during the time of Lord_Lugard. The constitution was basically unwritten. It provided for the office of Governor-General, Executive Council and the Legislative council. The functions of these various organs were spelt out. Therefore, before the colonial era, customs and convention were used to rule the people. Ogunsakin Folake (*Oral Interview*), corroborates Adefarati by asserting the colonial and indigenous institutions in Nigeria:

Colonial and Indigenous Constitutions in Nigeria

1. Clifford Constitution of 1922
2. Richards Constitution of 1946
3. Macpherson Constitution of 1951
4. Lyttetton Constitution of 1954
5. 1957 and 1958 Constitution
6. Independence Constitution of 1960
7. 1963 Republican Constitution
8. 1979 Second Republic Constitution
9. 1989 Constitution
10. The 1999 Constitution

Recommendations

In this section of the paper, we want to give some suggestions which would hopefully foster the present day Christians to be reminded of the great impact of the early church on national development in Nigeria, which would hopefully gear the contemporary Church in Nigeria to continue from where the early church laid down their sword at the feet of the master-Jesus Christ. Church history revealed to us that early church leaders were also national leaders (Okpe Nicholas, *oral interview*), and their impact on the early nations could not be overemphasized, for there were notable successes. Therefore, greater development of the nation-Nigeria, hopefully, depends on the church. The early church leaders were not limited to religious impact but they were involved in the wholistic life of the Nigerians. James Frederick Schon (1802, Obserweiler-30 March 1889, Chatham) was a German Missionary and Linguist who was active in Sierra Leone. He also participated in the Niger expedition of 1841. 1847 he was in Sierra Leone, where he taught at Fourah Bay College … He also wrote other works in Nigeria which include: A vei Grammar and vocabulary; A Bornu Grammar and Vocabulary among others (Enegho 71-72).

In this section too, the opinions of people who argued in favour of Pastors' participation in the political development of nation-Nigeria would be examined. But before then, we want to suggest that the following four factors would propel the church (i.e church leaders and other Christians) in Nigeria into an ideal democracy:

(i) Putting on Christ-like psychological-life.
(ii) Putting off all that is un-Christlike.
(iii) Having the right political vision.
(iv) Sanctification and qualitative mentorship of the Christian Association of Nigeria and other church leaders in Nigeria.

The succeeding opinions of people contended in the favour of Pastors' participation in Nigerian politics towards the development of the Nigerian State. St. John Chrysostom in his support stretched that, "you are the salt of the earth. It is not for your own sake, he says, but for the world's sake that the world is entrusted to you" (www.crossroadsinitiative.com/librar...). In the same vein, Fr. Thomas Rosica explains "Salt the earth" from the ancient biblical world, he asserts that salt was a precious commodity. It gave flavour and zest to food; it served as an important preservative. Jesus wanted His disciples to give flavour and zest to the world through his teaching (Salt and light t.v.org>Home>Biblical Reflective). In addition to being salt for the earth, Jesus called His followers to be the light of the world. Light has the characteristic of dispelling darkness, of warming all the reaches, of exciting forms. To become the salt and the light of the world means for Christians to be flavouring, preserving and spreading everywhere the light that comes from God. It means fighting darkness due to evil and sin, often caused by ignorance, prejudice and selfishness. The more we look on the face of Jesus, like an impressionist painting, the more light we see and the more we are transformed by it (Salt and light t.v.org> Home>Biblical Reflections).

Edmond Ugochukwu (20), suggests that civic responsibilities are the duties which the citizens of a country are expected to perform to ensure peace, progress and the unity of their Country. In our suggestions, we want to agree with the assertion of Arlan koppendrayer (www.capitalcommentary.org/Abraham-k...), that the knowledge of civic education from the Christian perspectives would help in a multifaceted society like ours. And it shed a brighter light to the fact that God is the originator of any government. Hence, as God is involved in theocracy He is also involved in a democracy where Christians or even church leaders are expected to be involved in National politics. The knowledge of Democracy allows all gender to participate in government. All gender could elect and be elected. As Christians, it is good to be available to cast our votes whenever it is required.

Conclusion

The history of the church has unfolded the impact played by the early Christian Missionaries, Modern day Christian and Church leaders towards the building of the Nigerian Nation. In this effort of brief historical enfoldments, the researchers have investigated the various opinions of people on the Educational, Economic and Political Impacts of the church in Nigeria. The researchers researched the different opinions of people on the impacts of the church on the building of the Nigerian Nation.

Finally, this paper has given suggestions on how the church can improve on her status as the Agent of National Development in Nigeria. By Historical principle, the role played by the early church and modern-day church on the building of the Nigerian and global nations, is probably a predictive pointer to the fact that, the church is the hope for the building of the Nigerian nation and the entire world.

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AN APPRAISAL OF POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN THE BAPTIST CONVENTION, NIGERIA

Tiwatola A. FALAYE
Department of Religious Studies
Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye
Ogun State, Nigeria

Abstract:

Over the years,Poverty as remained a dominant feature of the world today, with over a billion people surviving on less than a dollar a day. It is worthy of note that reduction of Poverty in some parts of the world between the 1970s and 1980s has improved; the majority of the people in the developing world, especially Nigeria, still languish in abject poverty. The aim of this research, therefore, is to examine the response of the Nigerian Baptist Convention to poverty alleviation tailored towards understanding the perspective of the Nigerian Baptist Convention on Poverty alleviation, finding out the level of Poverty among the leaders and the members and also ascertaining the factors aiding Poverty spread in Nigeria. In order to achieve these, a descriptive research design was undertaken in the study area using a simple random sampling technique, and data were collected from 1500 respondents. Respondents indicated that the church and religious organizations are fighting Poverty, and also the majority of the respondents stated that the spread of Poverty in Nigeria is as a result of political and socio-cultural factors. It is thus recommended that the Church should focus on activities that can empower people and also the need for the Church to partner with non-governmental organizations that are genuinely involved in the war against Poverty.

Keywords: Church, Poverty Alleviation, Responses

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Poverty is a general phenomenon not only in the Church but also in general as a whole today. Poverty is a menace that affects the lives of the people and which must be done way by a concerted effort of the churches. Poverty is general scarcity or dearth, or the state of one who lacks a certain amount of material possessions or money. [1]. An option for the poor is part of a universal call for all Christians to be involved in matters of development that can improve the welfare of the weak members of society. It is a serious attempt to build a just society where the concentration of wealth is significantly reduced or eliminated from the hands of a few people. Poverty and attempts to alleviate it is an issue that has continued to generate interest in national governments and international agencies and mostly in most developing countries. The Christian Church, despite its central mandate being spiritual evangelism, has continued to participate in the fight against Poverty to accomplish Jesus Christ's mission to serve and minister to all whole-heartedly, both affluent and deprived of the world. [2]

Poverty in the socio-economic circles is viewed as the inability of individuals to meet basic needs. It is associated with characteristics such as landlessness and unemployment, the inability to provide food for oneself and family; the lack of decent housing and the state of not

being able to educate one's children; poor health, and lack of access to medical care. It has also been noted elsewhere in this study that Poverty is a multi-dimensional concept that includes inadequacy of income and deprivation of basic needs and rights, such as denied access to productive assets as well as to social infrastructure. While economists and social scientists write about Poverty in this primary way, the Church insists that Poverty is far more complex. It is 'many-faced,' 'many-layered' and 'multi-dimensional' and cannot be reduced to quantities of goods that are, or instead are not, available. [3] It is, therefore, not possible to consider any single dimension of Poverty in isolation, as this would drastically reduce our understanding of the phenomenon.

In the Bible, Poverty has been referred to as a social phenomenon. Biblical Dictionary Index and Concordance define Poverty as lack, need, and want. It is a state of desperation that culminates in the social suffering of one and family. This sentiment is well captured in the book of Genesis 45:11, which proclaims that: "there will still be five years of famine; and I do not want you, your family; and your livestock to starve." Numerous cases of Poverty cited in the Bible confirm the fact that Poverty is a reality. According to the Genesis story, involuntary Poverty in all its forms and manifestations is a result of the fall of man and its consequences. Jesus Christ himself recognized the fact that the poor will always be there. However, the recognition of Jesus of this fact does not imply that the poor should be ignored but be cared for. Poverty was not part of God's creation, nor will it be part of God's restored creation when Christ returns. [4]. There are indications that God the Creator never willed any human being to be reduced or to be deprived of any basic needs. It is imperative to note that the plight of the poor has both a direct and indirect impact on the rich, whether in developing countries or developed ones. More often than not, the poor are always treated with much suspicion in the event of losses and other crimes-related cases. Due to this attitude towards these lowly placed members of society, the inferior rank the lowest in status almost in every society, and those in positions of leadership only view them as potential voters and people ready for hire by politicians to commit a felony.

Beyond this, the participation of the poor in national issues is not guaranteed because their role is always seen as that aimed at serving the interest of the rich. However, the message of Christ to the poor is that good news will be preached to them for theirs is the Kingdom of God. This is all the reason why the ACK should be ready all the time to give service to humanity, particularly to the poor. Poverty is regarded as a scandalous condition that should never exist in the land because it might force one to steal and bring disgrace to God. The New Testament, however, presents hope and encouragement to the poor despite their tribulations, for they will receive blessings of a new heaven and new earth when Jesus' victory is complete. Assistance to the poor is, therefore, not a new phenomenon to the Church. It is as old as the Bible itself. Both the Old and the New Testaments affirm that the prophets' and Christ intended to remind the rich of their natural responsibility towards the very needy of society. If the war against the oppression of the weak by the powerful was to be met, it had to target all those structures that promote this inhuman treatment. [5] The Law of Moses, for example, safeguarded the interest of the poor by appealing to other members of the community with means to give them a lending hand.

If any of the towns in the land that the Lord your God is giving you there is a fellow Israelite in need, then do not be selfish and refuse to help him. Instead, be generous and lend him

as much as he needs. Do not refuse to lend him something, just because the year when debts are canceled is near. [6]. Furthermore, the considerable debts of the poor were waived in the years of Jubilee. Jubilee was one of the feasts of the Jews, which were to be celebrated once after fifty years. [7] All property would revert to its original holder. It was to be a year of restoration where the poor who had been bought by the rich were to be released to reunite with their families During this period, Israelites were to do three things: One to give the soil a rest and not farm; two to free Israelite slaves, and three to return the land and houses to the first owners or their children. [8] Also, in the Old Testament, if a poor person was hungry, he was permitted to eat in the field or vineyard of another. The prophets denounced the rich because they had neglected or mistreated the poor. In the New Testament, there are similar orders concerning the poor. Jesus witnessed the state of Poverty amongst the people and proclaimed the Gospel of liberation against socio-economic injustices and political oppression, as implied here below. [9] The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty of sight to the captives, to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people. [10]

1.2 The Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the response of the Nigerian Baptist Convention to poverty alleviation, while the specific objective was tailored towards the following:

1) To examine the perspective of the Nigerian Baptist Convention on Poverty alleviation.
2) To find out the level of Poverty among the leaders and the members and
3) To ascertain the factors aiding Poverty spread in Nigeria

1.3 Research Questions

1) What is the perspective of the Nigerian Baptist Convention on Poverty alleviation?
2) What is the level of Poverty among the leaders and the members?
3) What are the factors aiding the spread of Poverty?

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

A research design is the set of methods and procedures used in collecting and analyzing measures of the variables specified in the problem research. The survey research design was adopted. Primary data was collected through the administration of a well-structured questionnaire on the responses of the Nigerian Baptist Convention to poverty alleviation in Nigeria. Simple Random sampling techniques were employed to collect the data.

2.2. Types/Kind of Data

Primary data was collected through the administration of questionnaires and In-depth Interview Guide to the members, clergies, and other top officials in their respective churches at a different location to investigate responses of Nigerian Baptist Convention to poverty alleviation in Nigeria.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The research sample was one thousand and five hundred (1500) clergies, members of Living

Faith Church (Winners Chapel) and simple random, purposive sampling (SRS) was used to administer the questionnaire and also In-depth Interview to the clergies and members of Nigerian Baptist Convention

2.3 Ethical Statement

The rule of ethics was duly observed in the collection of data for the study. When the data collection properly commenced, no respondent was coerced or induced. The voluntary consent of the respondent was sorted before the questionnaire was administered. Also, respondents were free to discontinue at any point during the study.

3.Results

1) What is the perspective of the Nigerian Baptist Convention on Poverty alleviation?

Table 1. *Showing the Perspective of the Nigerian Baptist Convention Towards Poverty Alleviation.*

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	1216	82.44
No	160	10.85
Indifferent	99	6.71
Total	1475	100

The table shows the belief of the respondent about the church or religious organization fighting poverty; 1216 (82.44%) of the respondents said YES, 160 (10.84%) of the respondents said NO, and 99 (6.71%) of the respondents were indifferent. This implies that the majority of the respondents believed church and religious organizations are fighting Poverty.

2) What percentage of your family members would you consider as rich?

Table 2. *Showing The Level of Poverty among leaders and members.*

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
0-20%	894	60.61
21-40%	217	14.71
41-60%	317	21.50
61-100%	47	3.18
Total	1475	100

Table 2 presents the respondent's personal view about the percentage of their family members being rich, 894 (60.61%) of the respondents said 0-20%, 217 (217%) of the respondents said 21-40%, 317 (21.50%) said 41-60% and 47 (3.18%) of the respondents believed 61-100% of their family members are rich. This demonstrates that the majority of the respondents believed that 0-20% of their family members are rich.

3) Which of these do you consider as a factor aiding the spread of Poverty in Nigeria?

Table 3.*shows the factors aiding the spread of Poverty in Nigeria?*

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Natural Factor	365	24.75
Political Factor	402	27.5
Religious Factor	105	7.12
Social-Cultural Factor	396	26.85
Economic Factor	215	14.58

Other Factor	8	0.54

The table above shows that 25% of the respondents believed that natural factors cause spread of Poverty, 27% believe it is political factors, 7% believe it is religious factors, 27% believe it is a socio-cultural factor, 15% believe it is an economic factor while the other factors are 0.54%. However, it could be deduced from their responses that the majority of the respondents believe that the spread of Poverty is a result of political and socio-cultural factors.

3. Discussion

The study examined the response of the Nigerian Baptist Convention to poverty alleviation. This study adopted an exploratory and survey research design. Poverty is a social phenomenon. [11] It is a state of desperation that culminates in the social suffering of one and family. In Nigeria, poverty "successfully" thrives for faulty or lack of national socio-economic planning. [12] This sentiment is well captured in the book of Genesis, which proclaims that: "there will still be five years of famine, and I do not want you, your family; and your livestock to starve." Numerous cases of Poverty cited in the Bible confirm the fact that Poverty is a reality. A look at the 2015 UN report on the state's poverty rate in Nigeria, which featured most of the northern states at the echelon of Poverty in Nigeria. [13]. According to the Genesis story, involuntary Poverty in all its forms and manifestations is a result of the fall of man and its consequences. Jesus Christ himself recognized the fact that the poor will always be there. There is a strong link between what happens in society and the way religion is practiced in any clime. In Nigeria, Christian religion through the proclamation of the Gospel has had its way, hence its present expansion incidence. Religion is the alignment of earthly human concern to that which seems to be spiritual. [14]. From a handful of missionaries who planted the Christian faith in the country, the Church has expanded in so many ways – there are mission Churches, Africa indigenous Churches, and there are many privately owned ones by individuals. These scenarios suggest one fact: the Church is growing, recording an increasing number of adherents. It must be noted that Jesus' mission is directed to the poor who are defined not in subjective, personal, economic, or spiritual terms only, but also in the holistic sense of those who are for any socio-religious reasons relegated to any position outside the boundaries of God's people. By directing His good news to them, Jesus was ignoring and confronting the social boundaries asserting the fact that those outsiders are also the objects of God's Grace. Others might regard them as people beyond the reach of God's mercy, but Jesus opened the way of salvation to them so that they also can become members of God's family; hence religion could help salvage the menace of Poverty. [15].

4. Conclusion

The study concludes that deep concern for the poor in the society must be a priority of any Christian church following the example of Jesus Christ. At a time when the poor are ostracized, neglected, and abused, just like Jesus, the Church, as a matter of urgency, must wake up to her divine responsibility as the friend, voice, defender, and hope of the poor. A fivefold action of the Church against Poverty, namely; identification, solidarity, education, advocacy, and empowerment, is a significant strategy that will reduce Poverty. Poverty must be fought without ulterior motives. The war against poverty must be seen as a divine and social responsibility, not a political, economic, or religious avenue to fulfill a hidden agenda. The Church must note that poverty alleviation is not the same thing as evangelism. Keller pointed out that the modernist Church of the early twentieth century reduced gospel ministry to social ethics and social action.

However, this contradicts the Bible's commands to proclaim the Gospel. It denies the Gospel of Grace through God's saving acts in history and replaces it with good works and moral improvement. In the social gospel, evangelism disappears. In reaction to the Social Gospel Movement, many churches remain deeply suspicious of too much emphasis placed on ministry to the poor.

5. Recommendations

The Nigerian Baptist Convention must publicize the more the activities of her Social Ministry, not necessarily by way of media propaganda but by focusing more on programs and activities that promote the cause of the poor. The Convention, as a matter of importance, needs to increase her budgetary allocation to the Social Ministry Department.

Each local church in the Nigerian Baptist Convention must be encouraged to have a Social Ministry which links up with that of the Association, the Conference, and the Convention. The Social Ministry of the Church must, therefore, be educated that whatever she is doing is on behalf of the Convention. Also, the Social Ministry should be more transparent in the administration of funds and resources for the poor. There should be a distinct way of knowing the poor indeed and ensuring that aids and assistance get to those they are intended for.

The ministry should focus more on activities that empower the poor generally, not just a selected group of people. The ministry should also focus on rural areas rather than urban centers like Lagos, Ogun, Ekiti, and Ibadan, where her activities are mostly felt. The Social Ministry should seek means to partner with non-governmental agencies that are genuinely involved in the war against Poverty. This will bring about the exchange of ideas and resources. The aids and assistance given to the needy must not be bait but a social concern, while evangelism should be done separately without attaching it to an assistance rendered.

The Social Ministry should engage more in empowering churches so that they can, in turn, empower the poor in their communities. This should be done by way of regular seminars, training, and writing of resource materials and provision of resource personnel. As a matter of urgency, the curriculum of the Seminaries and Bible Colleges should be updated to include Social Ministry. This will prepare the leaders of the churches as touching what should be their treatment of the poor in their communities. The ministry should engage more in community developmental projects. Churches must also be encouraged to do the same.

The Social Ministry should fix either the Sunday before or the one after October 17 of every year (if it does not fall on a Sunday) as the day of promoting poverty alleviation programs and Social Concern for the poor. The Convention through the Social Ministry should express solidarity with the poor and defend their cause. Advocacy for the poor before the government should be taken seriously. The Convention needs to re-organize the various divisions of the Social Ministry. There is a need for a division for advocacy and poverty alleviation campaigns.

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CHRISTIANS AS SALT OF THE EARTH IN MATTHEW 5:13 AMONG THE YORUBA OF SOUTHWESTERN, NIGERIA

Samuel S. Alamu

Department of Christian Religious Studies and Philosophy

Redeemer's University,

Ede, Osun State, Nigeira

&

Fortunatus G. Alabi

Department of Christian Religious Studies and Philosophy

Redeemer's University

Ede, Osun State, Nigeria

Abstract

One of the most difficult challenges Christians face in the home, in the church, on the job, at the school or in the society is living as the salt of the earth. In this paper, attention is drawn to the church in the pluralistic Nigerian society: Challenges and the way forward focusing on Matthew 5:13 where Jesus speaks metaphorically to his audience, reminding them of their identity in the world. Nigeria is a pluralistic society with many religions, tribes, ethnics, languages and cultures. Jesus reminds Christians that as salt of the earth, they are expected to demonstrate the qualities of salt. This study shows that Christians in Nigeria have fundamental roles to play in order to save the society from the present rots. Using Bible to source primary data and published works and internets to gather secondary data on Christians as salt of the earth, the need for Christians in Nigeria to live as salt of the earth in the society that is battling with the challenges of corruption, immorality, religious fundamentalism, political instability and ethnic differences is hereby examined in the context of Matthew 5:13. The findings of the paper show that although Nigeria may be having so many challenges, it is believed, the trends leading to this situation are not without solutions, if the sermon of Jesus could be adopted by Christians. The implication of this is that Christians in Nigeria have the obligation to live out the qualities of salt as they live in this plurality.

Key words: Salt, Plurality, Nigerian Society, Social, Vices, Matthew 5:13

Introduction

In Matthew 5:13, Jesus compares his disciples to salt and refers to the uselessness of salt that has lost its salinity. The text emphasizes that Jesus' disciples must be a role player. Salt is a symbol of good character and it is an integral part of Christian life. Its relevance in human’s life cannot be over emphasized. Obviously,

> No human life is possible without sodium chloride or salt and salt is the only trace mineral that is found in every cell in the human body. Without it, the organism would cease to function, therefore, salt is a biological necessity. For example, salt contains iodine that prevents hypothyroidism but it also helps bodies retain and balance fluids and without salt, human life could not exist. Salt was once deemed so valuable that it was used as a currency and probably why the saying "He's not worth his salt" made sense. In fact, the word "salary" comes from salt.[1]

The text under study has received diverse interpretations and applications from Biblical perspective regarding the distinct functions of Christians in the society. Salt is an essential commodity in every household. It is a commodity that human beings can hardly do without. Therefore, it is metaphorically used in Matthew 5:13 by Jesus as a symbol to describe the roles and the relevance of church as a community of believers in the society. The role of the Nigerian Christians has often been challenged due to perceived inconsistencies of the Christian living with biblical principles. Thus, the need to conceptualise the substance of salt from the Biblical perspective for a balanced Christian life particularly in Nigeria.

The direct relevance and application of salt to the general behavior of Christians has been established as links to good moral behaviour in the society. Scholars have considered the concept of salt as an indispensable commodity in every home and as the expected moral conduct of Christians in the society. Scholars have conducted study on salt of the earth in relation to Christians, especially in other contexts apart from Nigeria. On the other hand, some scholars have studied Christian life from theoretical, developmental, moral and socio-economic perspectives without relating it to the Biblical template. Hence, the need to interrogate the Christians in relation to their conduct and duties, especially in the context of the Nigerian Christians as salt of the earth.

As a concept, "salt of the earth" is commonly used within symbolic and metaphoric discussions of Christians responsibilities in the society without its clear definition and understanding. Therefore, this paper aims at conceptualizing salt as distinct from a narrow-minded conception. Furthermore, the paper also seeks to highlight the expectations of Jesus for Christians who are truly the salt of the earth with particular reference to Matthew 5:13. The church as part of the large community, remains irrelevant if it doesn't make any positive impact on the society where it exists. It is not more than a mere group of people with no definite purpose in life. This is because, the religion is not concern only about spiritual things, but also about physical and social life of the people in the world by encouraging ethical decisions and actions according to the moral qualities of salt and other moral codes as contained in Matthew 5-7. Which emphasizes the concept of social relevance, human dignity and human rights, necessary for social development, peaceful coexistence and egalitarian society.

Conceptualising Salt

The Bible contains numerous references to salt. In various contexts, it is used metaphorically to signify permanence, loyalty, durability, fidelity, usefulness, value, and purification. The Hebrew word מֶלַח *(melach*) and its Greek equivalent **אλΑ** (*halas*) mean common salt and it is considered by most authorities as an essential ingredient of human food). Thus in biblical times and in many cultures, salt was recognized as a necessity of life. It was, even as now, a necessary part of daily diet. Abimelech sowed the ruins of Shechem with salt to

prevent a new city from arising in its place (Judg 9:45). Lot's wife turned to a pillar of salt (Gen 19:26). Salt could also be a symbol of desolation and barrenness (Deut 29:23; Ps 107:34; Jer 17:6; Zeph 2:9), due to the custom of sowing the earth of a conquered city with salt (Judg 9:45). Such a practice was not limited to the Old Testament world; the Romans also did it when they destroyed Carthage.[2]

A chemical, normally sodium chloride, used in its crystalline form for seasoning and preserving food. In the hot, dry, and windy climate of the Near East, body salts (electrolytes) are quickly lost with perspiration and need to be maintained orally lest dehydration occur.[3] The chloride of sodium of modern chemistry. Indispensable as salt is to ourselves, it was even more so to the Hebrews, being to them not only an appetizing condiment in the food both of man (Job 6:6) and beast (Isa 30:24), and a most valuable antidote to the effects of the heat of the climate on animal food, but also entering largely into their religious services as an accompaniment to the various offerings presented on the altar (Lev 2:13). They possessed an inexhaustible and ready supply of it on the southern shores of the Dead Sea. In the same manner the Arabs of the present day procure their supply of salt from the deposits of the Dead Sea, and carry on a considerable trade in that article throughout Syria. Although sodium chloride is a stable compound that does not disintegrate, it should be noted that the salt from the Dead Sea region was generally contaminated with other minerals; thus the salt could be dissolved out of this mixture, leaving a tasteless substance. It was important to take rock salt from the inner layers of mines, since the outer layers could lose their salinity with exposure. Although its impurity made the salt from the Dead Sea inferior to most sea salts, its accessibility (it could simply be picked up along the shore) made it the main source of salt for Palestine. Salt is also a very common white substance with many uses, especially for flavoring and preserving foods. Salt in a technical sense is a chemical compound formed by the combination of an acid and a base or metal.[4] “Salt of the earth” are the people who have a wholesome influence on society.

According to Patch, salt is emblematic of loyalty and friendship. A person who has once joined in a "salt covenant" with God and then breaks it is fit only to be cast out.[5] Also among the Arabic-speaking people, the custom of pledging friendship or confirming a compact by eating food containing salt is still retained. Scholars have different theories about the meaning of "salt" in the text under consideration. Some think that its whiteness represents the purity of the justified believer. Others say that salt's flavoring properties imply that Christians are to add divine flavor to the world. Still others believe that Christians are to sting the world with rebuke and judgment the way salt stings an open wound. Another group asserts that, as salt, Christians are to create a thirst for Christ.[6] The Arabic word for "salt" and for a "compact" or "treaty" is the same. Once an Arab has received in his tent even his worst enemy and has eaten salt (food) with him, he is bound to protect his guest as long as he remains. According to Leviticus 2:13, Israelites were enjoined to use salt in their offerings to God; for in the first instance it was specifically ordered for the meat offering, which consisted mainly of flour, and therefore was not liable to corruption. This incorruptibility of salt was, however argued by Lyon Playfair[7]based on scientific grounds, that under the generic name of "salt," in certain passages, we are to understand petroleum or its residue asphalt. Thus in Genesis 19:26 he would read "pillar of asphalt;" and in Matthew 5:13, instead of "salt," "petroleum," which loses its essence by exposure, as salt does not, and becomes asphalt, with which pavements were made.

Qualities of Salt

Considering the characteristic nature of salt, the following are some of the qualities that are inherent in this substance and which also have practical applications for Christians particularly in Nigeria. These are perhaps, the reason why Jesus uses it in this context.

Symbol of hospitality:

Because salt was a necessary ingredient in any meal, it could symbolize the hospitality that cemented friendships. Hence, the Arab expression, "there is salt between us." To eat salt with one is to partake of his hospitality, to derive subsistence from him; and hence he who did so was bound to look after his host's interests.[8]

Therapeutic agent:

In ancient times, salt was used as a cleansing agent for wounds and today, many medicines still contain salt compounds in them and the old home remedy of gargling with warm salt water can get rid of sore throats and can also help tooth aches by cleansing and killing the germs and bacterial when a tooth becomes infected. Apart from this, Elisha is said to have healed the waters of Jericho by casting a cruse of salt into the spring (2 Kings 2:20, 21). He threw salt in the water and healed it of death and miscarriage. The purifying property of salt, as opposed to corruption, led to its selection as the outward sign in Elisha's miracle (2 Kings 2:20,21), and is also developed in the New Test (Matt 5:13; Col 4:6).[9]

Preservative means:

Salt was and still is used as a preserving agent for foods and inhibits and prevents spoilage.

Because of the lack of refrigeration, in the Middle East of the first century, salt was used to preserve food, especially meat, which would quickly spoil in the desert environment.[10]The disciples of Jesus too would have been intimately familiar with this function of salt. Without refrigeration, the fish that they caught would quickly spoil and rot unless they were packed in salt. Once salted, the fish could be safely stored and then used when needed.[11]

Antiseptic quality:

The Arabs of the desert consider it so necessary, that in the absence of salt they bathed their infants in camels' urine.[12] The normal procedures for childbirth in biblical times apparently included rubbing the newborn with salt as well as cutting the umbilical cord, washing with water, and wrapping in blankets (Ezek 16:4). In this way, salt was used as an antiseptic in medicine. This custom of rubbing infants with salt originated in sanitary considerations, but received also a symbolical meaning.[13]

Food seasoning

According to Patch, salt was used as a flavor enhancer in the Middle East of the first century and most people intentionally season their cooking with more or less salt for the sake of palatability.[14] Others depend upon the small quantities which naturally exist in water and many foods to furnish the necessary amount of salt for the body. Either too much salt or the lack of it creates undesirable disturbance in the animal system. Human beings and animals alike instinctively seek for this substance to supplement or improve their regular diet.

Furthermore, Melissa Tumino[15] identifies other incredible abilities of natural salt. These are highlighted as follow. It can stop and inhibit the growth of harmful mold and bacteria by absorbing moisture. It has been used for centuries as a means to preserve cure and save food. Another incredible fact about salt is that it is an element that human beings cannot live without. Salt keeps our electrolytes in balance and helps regulate insulin and blood pressure.

The State of the South West Nigeria

Oduduwa who is generally believed to be the great ancestor of the Yoruba race. According to Yoruba mythology, he settled in Ile Ife in the present day Osun state, Nigeria. Ile Ife, as the cradle of the human life, is credited to be the original homestead of the Yoruba people."[16]

The Yoruba people primarily occupy the south-western part of Nigeria, that is Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Ekiti. Lagos and Ondo states. This is apart from those found in parts of Kogi and Kwara states of Nigeria. Their language is called Yoruba, a Niger-Congo language. As distinct people, Yoruba people of the south west are predominantly town dwellers who practice hoe agriculture and are well known as traders and for their crafts. Yoruba people are an ethnic group with rich culture and tradition. Like their counterparts in Kwara, Kogi states they can be identified by the manner of their greetings such as *e ku*. They are therefore referred to as the *Ekus*.According to Oke,"the early missionaries and traders refer to Yoruba generally as the *Akus*."[17]For instance, most greetings in Yoruba begin with *E ku*. Thus, *E k'aaro* means good morning; E *k'asan* means good afternoon; and *E k'ale* means good evening *etc*.[18]

Yoruba people, mostly in the south west Nigeria, first had contact with the Christian gospel and early western education. The first church ever in Nigeria is located in Ake area of Abeokuta, Ogun state. Ever since the establishment of Christianity in Nigeria and particularly in the south west Nigeria, the religion has continued to grow at quite alarming rate. Although, it is difficult to determine the exact number of Christians in Nigeria, the religion is well embraced in the region and the entire southern Nigeria. Early western education and general social development are some of the impacts of Christianity in this region. This has given the people of the region an edge over their counterparts in other regions of the nation particularly in the area of human development.

However, the present security challenges in the northern part of the country (Nigeria) has escalated and become a national problem. The entire nation is currently facing many distinct security threats, mainly from the rise of radical religious and increased political extremists. Much of this is deep-rooted, rather than due to deficiencies that could readily be addressed. Radical Islam is a global phenomenon, generated by the uncontrolled dissemination of extremist ideology. It poses a distinctive threat to Nigeria partly because many cities in the region have substantial Muslim populations.

It seems, Nigerian security forces are ill-equipped to meet these threats. As such, the governors in all the six states in the south west geopolitical zone of Nigeria recently met in Ibadan, the Oyo State capital on January 9, 2020 and launched the western Nigeria security network called "Operation Amotekun" which they said the rising insecurity in the region is the major reason for the birth of the security outfit. However, the Federal government described it as illegal.[19] Therefore, the situation can hardly be described as peace- friendly despite the advantage of early western education in the south west and all the efforts put in place by successive Nigerian governments to arrest the insecurity situation in the land.

Moral instruction among the Yoruba which serves as the foundation of education itself became unpopular.[20] Perhaps, the prevalence of corruption, insecurity and many other social vices in the society can be traced back to moral training which has drastically gone low and the failure of Christians to live as "salt of the earth." This situation has reached alarming state in Nigeria and some other parts of the world. Cases of killings, kidnapping, corruption, dishonesty, insurgence, disobedience to parents and constituted authority, truancy, examination malpractices, cheating, nudity and other antisocial behaviours are common in the Nigerian society particularly among the youths. Christians therefore, more than ever before, are expected to become increasingly involved in moral development by living as salt of the earth. What perhaps exists in homes and the society today is high moral decadence as a result of the collapse of moral standard. Unless, these moral values are built, life in the society will only be a mirage. To do these, Christians must live and influence the society where they live.

The Roles of Christians as the Salt of the Earth in the Nigerian Society

While the universal importance of salt is not as readily apparent in our modern world, the mandate that Jesus gave to his first disciples is still relevant and applicable to His followers today in a number of ways.

Seasoning agent: Nigerian Christians, as salt, can bring flavor and meaning to the society just as salt brings out the taste in food. In this pleasure-crazed Nigerian culture, people are finding life dull and boring. No worldly pleasure can satisfy. Christians reveal to the society that life without salt is tasteless and unsatisfying.

Cleaning agent: Salt in Old Testament times was used or a cleansing agent. Apparently newborn infants were washed in brine. Therefore, Christians have a cleansing effect on the society as they wash the society of the rots through their lifestyle.

Healing agent: As salt has the potency to heal wounds and, when applied, Christians, by their attitudes, can bring healing to the society that is battling with social, economic and political sickness.

Preservativeagent: The Nigerian society, because of social vices that have bewildered it, can be best described as decaying. It seems, the only antidote is for Christians to act and preserve it from getting out of hand. The presence of Christians in the Nigerian society should hold back the natural decay process of corruption and other vices. Christians are preservatives to the environment, preserving it from corruption, decadence and other social vices inherent in the society. This agrees with the Biblical injunction in 2 Chronicles 7:14 which says,

> If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land, (2 Chronicles 7:14, RSV).

Christians in Nigeria are to serve as preservatives, stopping the moral decay that are rampart in the society. They are to be a moral disinfectant in the society where moral standards are low, constantly changing, or non-existent.

Neutralizer: It is interesting to also note that salt was employed in Biblical times as a neutralizer in the soil. Farmers cast salt on the ground to stimulate growth. This is perhaps, in context, what our Lord is referring to. Therefore, Christians are neutralizers against evils in the society by being salt of the earth.

Salty Christians Bring Flavor

Just as salt has the ability to enhance flavor, this translates to Humanity that when the society has nothing to offer and the bitterness of insecurity, corruption, killings, and insurgents will take its toll in the society. Christians are expected to bring something flavorful to the plate.

Salty Christians Preserve

Christians as salt, has an ability to preserve. It stops the growth of harmful bacteria and mold. It is used for food and if anyone has a wound it will prevent infection from taking place. Therefore, Christians are called to preserve and stop the growth of corruption, examination malpractices, killings, kidnapping and evil perpetration in the society.

Salty Christians Helps Build a Healthy Society

Salt can keep the human body healthy. If a man or a woman has no more salt, he or she will not be healthy.[21] Therefore, for the society to remain healthy, Christians fulfill their roles as salt of the earth. Just like salt keeps the body healthy. Christians are helping the world become *healthy* and *whole* by being the salt of the earth. When Jesus told his disciples that they were "the salt of the earth", as recorded in Matthew 5:13, they understood the metaphor. Christians have been given a wonderful privilege to be the salt of the earth. However, the second part of the verse is a warning to them. The second half of Matthew 5:13 states: "But if salt loses its taste, how would its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trodden underfoot by men". When salt is contaminated it becomes corrosive and poisonous. Contaminated salt cannot even be used for fertilizer on the field, so it has to be thrown on the road.[22]In the same way that salt enhances the flavor of the food it seasons, the followers of Christ stand out as those who “enhance” the flavor of life in the society.

Christians will inevitably influence the world for good, as salt has a positive influence on the flavor of the food it seasons. Where there is strife and riot, they are to be peacemakers; where there is sorrow, they are to be encouragers, binding up wounds, and where there is hatred, they are to exemplify the love of God, returning good for evil. Christians in Nigeria should realize they are called to be people who inhibit the growth of immorality and other social vices in the society. The integrity, otherwise called moral health and strength of the Christians in Nigeria, is to counteract the corruption that is in the society.

Recommendation:

The following recommendations are put forward based on biblical teaching on Christians as the salt of the earth as encapsulated in Matthew 5:13.

1. Christians should not live a double standard life. Their lives in the church must be the same as in their homes and offices.
2. Christians should actively participate in governance in the society, from ward level up to the federal level.
3. Christians must learn and live by the message of Jesus daily.
4. Christian parents must be role models for their children because they are the future leaders in the society.

Conclusion

The charge of Jesus in Matthew 5:13 is part of his general and popular Sermon on the Mount which is contained in chapters 5-7. The summary of his sermon is life style gospel. The world of the apostles then was decaying and so the only antidote given by Jesus is for the disciples to live up to their calling, that is, salt of the earth. In the same manner, the Nigerian society has gone and it is still going through many challenges ranging from insecurity, corruption, dishonesty, and so forth. Christians are called to salt the earth. It is believed that these problems that seem unsurmountable will be brought under control if this sermon of Jesus is given the needed attention and followed.

End Notes

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AN ASSESSMENT OF TITHING IN THE CONTEXT OF NIGERIAN CHRISTIANITY

Godspower, Chris Nwagurum
Methodist Theological Institute
Sagamu- Ogun State, Nigeria

Abstract

In recent times, there have been a great controversy and various teachings on the concept of Tithing. The move has created a kind of uproar and confusion within the Nigerian Christians community and led to different reactions from many renowned Nigerian pastors and preachers. Some view tithes as an Old Testament practice which should be considered archaic in the contemporary age, while other tenaciously holds on to it as the command of Yahweh, not only to the Israelites but also to humanity. Others view tithes from their Pentecostal traditions and experiences. It is discovered that the concept of tithing is currently becoming an important religious phenomenon in the Nigerian religious landscape leading people to wonder of its actual meaning and interpretation. This article employs phenomenological and expository approaches in its studies. Thus, this write up aims to address the reflection of Tithes within the paradigm of the Old and New Testament; definition and etymology of Tithes; purposes, abuses and benefits of Tithing? All these issues will be discussed according to the Bible and Christian experience.

Keywords: Tithes, Tithing, Nigerian, Christianity

Introduction

Christianity is a religion that based her teachings on the principles of the Holy Bible. Christianity is also a religion that has several obligations and responsibilities. Christians generally observe these religious rites dutifully as demonstration of their faith in God as well as to satisfy their individual aspirations. Christians are taught through biblical principles that God's blessings can be accessed through various means. In Nigeria today, the subject of prosperity seems to be a pivotal point which is being promoted almost to the total neglect of other scriptural themes. Prosperity theology is gaining ground and more pronounced within the Pentecostals setting than the Mainline Churches. This paper therefore attempts to unravel the facts behind this recent development in Nigeria and the understanding of the concept of tithing in relation to biblical interpretation. The paper defines the concept of Tithing, traces the biblical, historical and contemporary origin of tithing in Christendom. It analyses the benefits and consequences of tithing in relation to Nigerian Christianity.

Tithes/Tithing as a Concept

Some scholars have pondered whether the use of Tithe or tenth was literal or symbolic. Etymologically, the word tithe is derived from the Hebrew word *asar* and in Greek transliteration *apodekateo* which means "to tithe" or *apodekateuo* which means "to give thanks" with the connotation of a tenth. According to Vine complete Expository Dictionary, it means *dekatoo* from *dekatos* (tenth) in the active voice denotes "to take tithes of ".[47] Tithe is a tenth part of one's income, especially when donated to the Church. John Davis states that Tithe is one tenth

[47] W.E. Vine, 1996. *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary.* Nashville: Thomas Nelson Dictionary, 1284, 204.

part of one's income consecrated to God.[48] Tithe is one part of something, paid as a contribution to a religious organisation.[49] Jared Brian in his perspective of tithing advanced that Tithe means a tenth of one's increase (Deut 14:22).[50] Oyedepo opines that tithing is a systematic release of a tenth of all your increase to God. He reiterates that tithe is a special portion of your increase which God has reserved for Himself.[51] Tithing is further defined as the practice of giving one-tenth of one's income to God.[52] In conclusion, tithing honours the scriptural principles of generously providing for religious leaders, giving to those in need, and laying up treasures in heaven.[53]

Tithing in the Ancient Near East

The world of the Old Testament included Egypt, Mesopotamia, Syria-Palestine and South Arabia. The custom and the traditions of the aforementioned offer some insights in understanding the concept of tithing in the Old Testament.[54] Tithing was an ancient and widespread practice; it was not peculiar to the Hebrews but is found in religions and cultures other than those of Israel or Semitic people.[55] Prior to the emergence of the Hebrews in the Ancient Near East, paying of Tithe had been a religions and cultures of people from Egypt, Mesopotamia, Ugarit and other Semitic people that constituted the Ancient Near East in biblical era.[56] The ancient people practiced tithing (ten percent) of their incomes as a source of revenue for their temples and community development. An instance is an Ugarit where tithe was collected as a royal tax to maintain the palace and the village officials.[57] Tithe was also offered to Baal to repel an enemy's attack and to heroic ancestors with the king as the chief celebrant. In Egypt, the Pharaoh as a son of the god, as the sole priest and the mediator who appointed priests and the temple officials.[58] In Old Babylonians, tithe was called *eshru* which means was an annual tithe collected and stored in the temple's treasuries which could be borrowed and returned with interest the following harvest.[59] Bromiley contends that throughout the Ancient Near East, all kinds of objects have been found designated as subject to the tithe which are wool, cloth, wood,

[48] John D. Davis (ed). *Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 9.
[49]Bartholomew Jared, 2008. *Tithe definition in Tithing*. Retrieved October 23, 2019. http://www.tithing.com/blog/tithe-definition/.
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[56] Ndubuwa Ohaeri, 2018. Theological Significance of Tithing for the Growth of Methodist Church Nigeria. In *Mellor Magazine* of Methodist Theological Institute Sagamu, 27-30.
[57] L. Morets. 2005. *Tithing: An evaluation of the Biblical Background*. School of Biblical Sciences & Ancient Languages. North West University, 59.
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[59] Olofinsua Samuel, 2019. *The Significance of Tithing in the growth of Methodist Church Nigeria: Diocese of Lagos North.* Methodist Theological Institute Project, 22-26.

weapons, gold, silver, donkeys etc.[60]In general, the Israelites had to tithe all the wealth of the land that Yahweh gave to them (cf. Deut. 8:18).

Tithing in the Old Testament

Tithing in the Old Testament, was an acknowledgement that God (Yahweh) is the chief owner of everything on earth including the property of every man while human beings are just stewards. The Tithe (one-tenth) is a token for honouring God and recognizing His ownership of all income, proceeds or harvests.[61] Tithing was first mentioned in the Old Testament in the Patriarchal era when Abraham, a Hebrew and elected father of faith gave Melchizedek one tenth of all the plunders got from *Chedorlamer*. Melchizedek was a Canaanite priest and king of Salem. He blessed Abraham in the name of "*Elyon*" (God Most High). The act showed by Abraham (a Hebrew) paying Tithe to a Canaanite priest suggests that tithing was a prevalent custom. According to the history of the people called Israel, there was no recorded instruction of God to Abraham on payment of Tithe. Abraham simply observe this custom of tithing in appreciation to God (*El-Elyon*) who gives him victories over his enemies (Genesis 14:20, Hebrews 7:4-10).[62] In Mosaic era, when Israel had become a covenantal nation as elected people, God gave a covenant code and legislations additional to the Decalogue to regulate the worship life of the Israelites. One of the major legislations given by God after the institution of Sabbath, pilgrimage, festivals and priesthood was the method of giving offerings to God. These offerings basically include first fruits which is one fiftieth of the produce, tithe (one tenth) and other offerings (cereal, sin, guilt etc- Exo.23:19, Deut 26:1ff).[63]

Genesis 28:22- recorded that Jacob vowed to give a tenth of his possession to God in appreciation for journey mercies, divine protection and providence. Sehling asserts that the Tithe is mentioned in the Old Testament as a secular tax (Gen 47:24), a double tenth for Pharaoh; 1 Sam 87:15, 17 and Amos 7:1 imply a tax on first fruits. It was originally levied for the king and only later for the deity (a god).[64] God declared in Leviticus 27:30-33 that a tenth part of both seed from the ground, fruit from the tree, herd, and flock are holy to the Lord. Number 18; 21-32 records direct instructions from God to Aaron (as in Leviticus 10:8) over against the norms of God's instructions transmitted to him through Moses (e.g. Number 6:23, 8:2), the instruction was to have the priests and Levites share the responsibility for the custody of the Tabernacle. The commandment in the Old Testament emphasize the quality (one tenth) of the gift. In this, lies the belief that God is entitled to share directly in the grain, wine, and oil that humans are permitted to produce. Flocks and herds had to be tithed as well. The Old Testament emphasizes tithe that is giving one tenth as a principle.[65]

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[60]G.W. Bromiley, 1988. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*. Vol. 4: Q-Z. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans: 861-864.

[61] L. Epstein. 1986. *Social Justice in the Ancient Near East and the people of the Bible*. London: SCM, 92.

[62] Y. Kaufmann, 1972. *The Religion of Israel: From its beginning to the Babylonians Exile*. New York: Schocken Books, 68.

[63] Olofinsua Samuel, 2019. *The Significance of Tithing in the growth of Methodist Church Nigeria: Diocese of Lagos North.* Methodist Theological Institute Project, 22-26

[64]E. Sehling. 1953. Tithes. In Jackson S.M, *The New Schaff Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*. Vol. 2. Grand Rapids: Baker, 435.

[65]L. Morets. 2005. *Tithing: An evaluation of the Biblical Background*. School of Biblical Sciences & Ancient Languages. North West University, POTCHEFSTROOM, 397-411.

Purpose of Tithing

- **Worship and Gratification to God**: The major purpose of tithing is to acknowledge God's supremacy and ownership of all creatures. It is an expression of worship to please and appreciate Yahweh. The earth is of the Lord's and all that is in it (Psalm 24:1). Tithing is a display of gratitude to God for His generosity and providence. Tithe is holy to God; therefore it is an act of worship (Lev 27:30) and an important offering with blessings. Brown suggested that the Lord wanted His people to know that the Lord derived much pleasure from the assurance that the servants were provided with life's necessities.[66] So, to give a tenth was to acknowledge in a tangible way the Lord's ownership of the land and its practice. It was an expression of gratitude or worship for God's generosity. This concept demanded the obedience of the people who should trust God's provision rather than the ownership of the land.
- **Maintenance of the Priest and Levites**: In Numbers 18: 21-24, God instructed Moses to inform the Israelites that the Tithes in Israel as inheritance for their liturgical and religious functions in the Tabernacle. They were not to be allotted land in Israel since all offerings to God belongs to them. However, the Levites, assistants of the Aaronide priests, were obliged to pay Tithes to the high priest and his descendants. Malgrom opines that tithes were the Levites' wages or reward for their life – threatening risks in protecting the sanctuary against encroachment. They were receiving wages commensurate with their precarious service, not gifts for fulfilling covenantal obligations.[67] This means that a tithe was to be paid to Aaron as the Lord's portion from the tithes collected (Num 18:25-29).
- **Stewardship and Service**: Tithes were wages meant for the Levites and the priests for their risky and tedious duty of protecting the sanctuary against encroachment. Their services to God and Israel demanded diligence and accountability; therefore, tithes were to be given to them as rewards. Their faithfulness would maintain the monotheistic nature of Israel's faith and prevent them from idol worship, so they deserved that compensation as a way of encouragement.
- **Welfare to the Less Privileged**: Tithe's law in Deuteronomy extended to the caring of the orphans, aliens, widows and even the payers in additions to the priest and the Levites (Deut 14:26, 29:26:13). The socio cultural setting of Deuteronomy paved way for the relationship between the sanctuary functionaries and the laity especially the less privileged. The law of giving was an additional way to support the poor or needy (Deut 24; 19-20, Lev 19: 9-10). Tithing provides enough food in God's house or store. Food must not lack in the house of God (Malachi 3:10).

Divisions/Kinds of Tithes

1. Tithe of tithe was to be paid by Levites to the Priests

2. Festival tithe was one-tenth of the nine-tenth which should be taken to Jerusalem to be eaten as sacred meal, both the Levites on duty and the household of the person that offered the

[66] R. Brown, 2002. *The Message of Numbers: Journey to the Promised Land*. Leicester: Intervarsity, 157.
[67] J. Milgrom, 2001. *Leviticus 23-27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (The Anchor Bible*). New York: Doubleday, 2433.

tithe. This could be exchanged for money or food or offerings due to long distance to Jerusalem (Deut. 26:12-15, 14:28-29).[68]

Tithing in the New Testament

There is no specific law in the New Testament concerning payment of tithe since the Levitical law was fulfilled in Christ- the Messiah. However, Christ did not cancel or condemn payment of Tithe instead he alluded to it as a major regulation that should not be neglected, just as fasting remains an important practice for Christians bequeathed from the Old Testament (Luke 18:21). In the New Testament, the words tithe and tithing appears only eight times (Matthew 23:23, Luke 11:42, 18:12, Hebrews 7:5-6, 8-9. All of these passages refer to Old Testament usage and to current Jewish practice. Jesus Christ supported tithing in Matthew 23:23 while rebuking the Pharisees and the teachers of the law by advising them to practice justice, mercy and faithfulness without neglecting the payment of tithe. The above statement entails that our obedience to God should be complete without reservations. As we pay our tithes we should as well uphold justice, mercy and faithfulness, as the main essence of the tithe in the Old Testament, is expression of worship and help to the needy and less privileged. Jesus rebuked and condemn the outward appearance of tithing which is hypocritical act of worship devoid of God's love (Luke 11:42). Nowhere does the New Testament expressly command Christians to tithe. However, as believers we are to be generous in sharing our material possessions with the poor and for the support of Christian's ministry. Christ is our model in giving. Giving should be voluntarily, willfully and given in the light of our accountability to God. Giving should be systematic and by no means limited to a tithe of our incomes.[69]

Tithing in the Early Church

In the Early Church, tithe was not mentioned rather cheerful giving for the support of the poor, needy and the preachers was emphasized. It was not the one tenth that was practiced but giving was necessitated by God's provisions which reflected new theological and social realities.[70] The Early Church members did not lack because those who had land and houses sold them and wholeheartedly brought the money at the feet of the Apostles and distribution was made to everyone according to their needs (Acts 4:34-37); here freewill offerings were emphasized and practiced in love.[71] This freewill offering did not in any way cancel the original method of giving; neither did it abrogate the command of God on tithing. Pauline theology on giving is in support of the teaching that material gifts should be willingly given to teachers for good work and spiritual feeding of the flocks (Gal 6:6). For Paul, preachers of the gospel should live of the gospel (I Cor. 9:14). By implication, preachers of the gospel should be maintained by the tithes and offerings given to God. Just as there were other offerings aside the tithe in the Old Testament, such as freewill, donations, offerings and contributions. They are for supporting human resources and building of the Tabernacle/Church. It is God that supplies all our needs for us to give a token in appreciation to His love and work (Phil. 4:15-19).[72]

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[68]G.A Anderson, 1987. *Sacrifices and Offerings in ancient Israel: Studies in their social and political importance*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 38.

[69] http:www.*Tithe verses and New Testament and giving.org*. (accessed 5th November, 2019).

[70]L.O Richards, 1985. *Expository Dictionary of Bible words*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 308.

[71] E. Sehling. 1953. Tithes. In Jackson S.M, *The New Schaff Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*. Vol. 2. Grand Rapids: Baker, 435-456.

The teaching of Apostle Paul in the New Testament shows more on a societal concern. Christians should share with others who because of natural disaster and otherwise cannot survive without help. It presents tithe as systematic giving. Instead of suggesting tithe as a measure, Apostle Paul (2 Cor.8-9) provides several principles as guidance: Giving as an expression of love. It should be prompted by inner concern for others that cannot be commanded, but must be free and spontaneous act (2 Cor. 8:8).[73] Giving should be a balanced response measuring what a person has against the current need of others (2 Cor. 8:12-15). Giving meets the needs of brothers and sisters and stimulates praise to the Lord. It also stimulates prayer both for the giver and the receiver (2 Cor. 9:11-14). Giving follows the example of Jesus. Giving is an appropriate way to express our appreciation to God for His own indescribable gift (2 Cor. 9:15).[74] The New Testament teaching especially in the Early Church does not mention 10% probably because the office of the priest was not pronounced since Christ is presented as the best high priest who made atonement for humanity once and for all. Therefore, cheerful giving was emphasized because God loves a cheerful giver. This cheerful giving does not condemn tithing but explains the expected mood of tithing or giving. Tithe should not be given grudgingly but cheerfully.[75]

Benefits of Tithing

Since Tithing is absolute obedience to God's instruction and command of giving one tenth of one's income in terms of finance, farm produce & proceeds of any kind and time to God, all these attracts the following reward as an act of obedience. (Mal 3:10-11). Hagin asserts that Tithing remains Gods method of blessing His people.[76] Prince, supporting Hagin opines that Tithing is not for God's benefit but for our own benefit. To him, God is not asking us to give so that He can have; but he is asking us to give so that we can have. He maintains that through tithes and offerings, God releases wealth to His people.[77]

- Tithing releases a miraculous flow of God's blessings upon tithe payers (Malachi 3:10)
- Tithe payment brings abundance, and outpouring of all needed blessings on payers
- Divine Favour and Open Heaven (Luke 6:38)
- Aversion of Devourers
- National Economic Prosperity
- Abundance of food in God's house/store (Proverbs 3:9-10)
- Tithing removes curses, calamities and hazards
- Divine Protection (Malachi 3:11)
- Fruitfulness etc

Abuses of Tithes and its Consequences

[72] A.D. Croteau, 2005. *A Biblical and Theological Analysis of Tithing: Toward a Theology of giving in the new Covenant era*. PhD Dissertation of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, North Carolina, 268-270.
[73]L. Morets. 2005. *Tithing: An evaluation of the Biblical Background*. School of Biblical Sciences & Ancient Languages. North West University, POTCHEFSTROOM, 405.
[74]L. Morets. 2005. *Tithing: An evaluation of the Biblical Background*. School of Biblical Sciences & Ancient Languages. North West University, POTCHEFSTROOM, 406.
[75]M.E. Tate. 2001. *Tithing Illegalism or Benchmark? Review and Expositor*, 70 (2), 153-161.
[76] K.E. Hagin. 1995. *Biblical Keys to Financial Prosperity*. Tulsa: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 25.
[77] D. Prince. 1986. *God's Plan for your Money*. Charlotte: Derek Prince Ministries, 78-79.

Tithe is abused by negligence to pay it or to be faithful in giving to God one tenth of our income both in monetary standard or agricultural proceeds. Abuse of tithe stipulates stealing from God, act of disobedience to His instruction, greed, covetousness and ingratitude to God, His servants and the needy. The consequences of abusing tithe includes poverty of various levels, scarcity and lack in the Church, the wrath of God, great loss and regrets, infertility in the nation and the family, set back in business, vulnerability to destroyers and devourers etc. Judges 17:7-10, 18:18-20 shows that negligence in Tithing leads to Idolatrous practices and other vices as in the case of Israel as a nation.[78]

Evaluation of Tithing in Nigerian Christianity

In the present day Nigerian Christianity where the opinions of tithing vary; while some think that the Tithe system is no longer applicable today, others argue that the principle is a basic guide for Christian stewardship of all times. Our main aim in this section is to see tithe from the understanding of Nigerian Christianity. The Nigerian Pentecostal prosperity preachers teach that the promise of prosperity from God to the nation of Israel in the Old Testament applies to all Christians in the New Covenant.[79] They believed in the concept of tithing which brings divine blessings, good health and wealth. Adeyemi in his argument objected that Tithing as a requirement for Christians to allow God's regulation has expired and no Christian should feel guilty for not paying tithes.[80] Adeboye, one of the Pentecostal Preachers argued that Tithing is a command from God to all mankind and anyone who does not pay tithe will not make heaven.[81] Oyedepo believes that payment of Tithes is a command from God that carries supernatural blessings and window of heaven will be shut on those who don't pay tithe.[82]. Daddy Freeze[83] has a different opinion and ideology to the concept of tithing in which he believes that many Nigerian preachers are using this concept to enrich themselves. He further accepts that paying tithe is idolatry and harlotry, it's the worship of Demon, the veneration of Mammon and the hero worship of Satan who according to 2 Cor. 4:4 is the God of this world.[84] There is no doubt about Pentecostalism's great influence in every sphere of life in Nigeria through its theology of materialism. But this work wonders if some of the churches that preach prosperity have not drifted away from their ascetic focus and are now becoming more materialistic in practice. The research understand that tithing has a lot of spiritual implications and interpretations which a carnally minded person will forfeit its understanding.

Orthodox churches in Nigeria like Methodist, Anglican Communion, Presbyterian and others believe that God deserves the one tenth of our income as a token to express appreciation to His providence. They also see it as a major income of the Church especially where members pay faithfully or in their maximum capabilities. In some areas tithe could be paid with agriculture proceeds and later changed in to money for the Church. The Tithe cards help for accountability and encouragement to the payer. They also serve as evidence of payment and commitment in

[78] Olofinsua Samuel, 2019. *The Significance of Tithing in the growth of Methodist Church Nigeria: Diocese of Lagos North*. Methodist Theological Institute Project, 22-26.
[79] G.D. Pam, 2012. *A Compendium of Theology*, Jos: Sele Printing and Publishing House.
[80] Leonard Blair, 2008. No Christian should be made to feel guilty for not paying Tithes. *In Christian Post Reporter*, March 2.
[81] Sunday Iwalaiye, 2018. Nigeria debaters giving 10% of their income to the Church. *In BBC News*, 18th April
[82] David O. Oyedepo, 2007. Vanguard Online Community. Retrieved November 15
[83] Daddy Freeze is the leader of the Free Sheeple Movement which is anti- tithing
[84] http://www.*Christiandevotiona*l.com

rendering financial support to the Church. Tithe is very imperative because it helps the financial growth, workers stipends and infrastructural development of such an Assembly. The concept of tithing in the Old Testament in its adaptation in different traditions poses a reflection for the Churches in Nigeria because the concept of self -support through local resources can be adapted to the different contexts in which Churches in Nigeria can emulate. Nigerian Christianity must understand that the payment of Tithes was founded in the belief that God is the maker of the heavens and the earth and controller of its affairs. Nigerian Christianity should see tithing as a means of our Christian stewardship.[85]

The tithe system should not be understood as a manipulation of God or a magic wand to invoke God's blessings. Our empirical survey revealed that a good number of people in discomfort zones give tithes because they expect God's blessings. If that is the only motivation then the tithe system must have been misunderstood.[86] The blessing associated with tithing is the effect of obedience, which is measured not by the amount of material possession one has, but by the level of a person's understanding of God's grace and dealings in one's life. The "get rich quick" mentality has become the theology of many African Church leaders in which some learnt it from European counterparts.[87] The proliferation of churches in the continent can be traced to the idea that it's the shortest way to freedom from poverty and lack, and thus some leaders can manipulate the members for their personal benefits.[88] The Churches and preachers in Nigeria should realize that the call to tithe is not for the enrichment of the pastors or church leaders. It is for the support of the propagation of the gospel, and the care of the less privileged in the believing community. Tithing in a hermeneutical interpretation revealed basically the Old Testament concept which had variant nuances in its adaptation in different contexts and traditions.[89] This holds much promise for the Church in Nigeria because the same concept of self- support through local resources can be adapted to the different contexts in which the Churches in Nigeria find themselves. The tithe system is a valuable lesson for Christians in Nigeria, not an imposition of a Jewish custom but as a guide in Christian stewardship.

Conclusion

The Old Testament contains laws pertaining to tithing, sacrifices and offerings, as well as everyday living. The Old Testament pattern of giving was an integral part of the social system that was established in the Mosaic Law. The people practiced the giving of one tenth. One significant factor with regard to giving is that it was done in proportion to what one had.[90]Tithing in the New Testament is not as formal as in the Old Testament. The New Testament stresses giving in response to God's love. Christians in Nigeria need to pay serious attention to its

[85] R.E. Clements. 1989. *Deuteronomy*. Sheffield: JSOT, 15.

[86] L.H. Moretsi, 2004. *Anexegetical Study of Malachi 3:6-12 with Special Reference to Tithing*. Master's Thesis, North West University, Potchefstroom, 47.

[87]Ajah Miracle. 2013. The Significance of Pentateuch Tithing as a Legal Instruction for the 21st Century Reader. *In Asbury Theological Journa*l, 68, 106-119.

[88]Ajah Miracle. 2013. The Significance of Pentateuch Tithing as a Legal Instruction for the 21st Century Reader. *In Asbury Theological Journa*l, 68, 106-119.

[89] Ajah Miracle. 2006. *Theological Perspectives on Tithing in the Old Testament and their implications for believing Communities in Africa.* PhD. Dissertation, University of Stellenbosch.

[90]L. Moretsi. 2009. Tithing*: An evaluation of the Biblical Background. School of Biblical Sciences & Ancient Languages*, North West University, POTCHEFSTROOM, 397-411.

practice and in my conviction that if the principle of constant giving or tithing can be implemented, the financial situation of these Churches will change for the better. It is now time for Nigerian Churches to pay serious attention to stewardship, discipleship and encourage Godly way of giving. The law demands a tithe, but as steward, man with all that he has belongs to God. Tithing is biblical and a command from God. Its theological significance cannot be over emphasized as it supersedes any contemporary argument, interpretations designed to discourage and deprive people of divine blessing. Faithfulness in payment of Tithes aids in the financial development of the Church, rendering assistance to the poor, payment of workers Stipends and attracts numerous blessings from God. It is discovered that there is at present, a paradigm shift in the usage of tithe proceeds from the old system of channeling it to taking care of only the priests to the modern multi-purpose usage. Unlike before, the modern day preachers are in the perpetual habit of scheming to get money out of people under different named offerings by hypnotizing them.[91] Nevertheless, faithfulness in payment of Tithes aids in the financial development of the Church, payment of workers Stipends and attracts numerous blessings from God. Tithing is obedience to God's command and obedience to God is better than sacrifice.

[91]L.M. Ugwueye. 2002. "Religiosity without Religion: A Survey of the Decay in God's House Today" In Ugwu, C.O.T. (ed.). *Corruption in Nigeria: Critical Perspezctives*, Nsukka: Chuka Educational Publishers, 221-229.

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ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM OF INDECENT DRESSING IN EVANGELICAL CHURCH WINNING ALL (ECWA)

Ifabiyi, Alaba Bukola, Ph.D
Philosophy of Religion and Theology of Crowther Graduate Theological Seminary, Abeokuta, Ogun - State Nigeria

Abstract

One moral virtue that is held in high esteem in the Church, especially the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) is decent dressing. However, in recent times indecent dressing has become the bane in the ECWA denomination. This study therefore examined the issue of indecent dressing in the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), using the Lagos Zone as a case study. The study employed ethical, sociological, and historical approaches. Ethical approaches were used to analysis immoral act in the denomination. The sociological approach involved the administration of copies of a questionnaire on the clergy and members of Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) Lagos Zone. Oral interviews were also conducted on the clergy and members of the Lagos Zone. The historical approach was used to trace the historical development of moral values in Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), Lagos Zone. Information gathered were subjected to descriptive analysis. Findings reveal that there is a decline in moral values in Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), Lagos Zone as a result indecent dressing. Furthermore, it was discovered that disciplinary measure to check mate indecent dressing is weak as a result of lack of moral teaching. Also, the study discovered that some of the leaders do not display enough boldness to enforce the rules and regulations of ECWA, Lagos Zone. Conclusively, moral values are nose-diving in ECWA, Lagos Zone. The study concluded that the ECWA, Lagos Zone should seriously address the decline in moral values among its members. Furthermore, the leadership of the church should always promote Christian moral values, and exercise their God given authority as Christian leaders. Also, rules and regulations of the church should be enforced without compromise.

Key Words: Morality, Immoral Act, Indecent Dressing, Evangelical Church Winning All, Lagos Zone

Introduction

Morality can be defined as the differentiation of intension and action between those that are “right” or acceptable and “wrong” or unacceptable. Morality is from the latin word “moralitas” meaning good behaviour, character and manner. Morality is seen in many quarters as a product of religion. This is because moral laws are written in the human conscience by the Ultimate Reality or the Deity. Reverend Kolawole Verralls, said “the assertion is valid in the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), Lagos Zone. Moral nature of every man and woman imposes on him or her, a significant degree of responsibility and limitations. Immoral acts exist among members of Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), Lagos zone.” Godly ethics should serve as a code of conduct or a set of rules that ought to govern the lives, self-interest, attitudes, and values of Christians.The rate at which immorality tends to be on the increase despite the vast spread of religion in the society is high. The church is supposed to set good examples for the society, but immorality has also crept into the church. The church leadership

does not query ill-gotten wealth. It was sometimes reported in the newsprint of Ozubulu killing on August 6, 2017, where over 12 people in a church service were massacred with many injured and some hospitalize to Nnamdi Azikiwe University Teaching Hospital, Nnewi (Vanguard News Paper). It was alleged that the individual that built the church was a drug baron. The story pointed clearly to the failure of the church and her leadership. Many churches are in the same mess because they have failed to ask the members the source of their huge donations, what they are after is the money. Achievements of awards and excellence are based on academic performance and certificates only and not on moral behaviours. The issue of decent dressing is very important in our society and mostly among the Yoruba's. The outfit of a child that project Yoruba culture and covers the nakedness of the body is that which Yoruba called "Omoluabi" so moral behaviour without good and decent dressing in Yoruba society is nothing. It is clear that the church and the society need the Bible as a guide for moral standard and moral compass. There is need for proper teaching of moral values through the word to fight against indecent dressing in the church.

Indecent Dressing as an Act of Immorality

There has been a public outcry about immoral acts in churches and the society. Immoral acts starts from home, and then is aggravated to the church and society. Our society today has experienced a good number of irregular and antisocial behaviour. Negative vices such as indecent dressing, drug abuse, secret cult activities, armed robbery, indiscipline, poor leadership style, injustice and materialism are mounting a roadblock towards effective development of desirable morals in the church and society at large.

It is believed that "charity begins at home" parents must instill good morals to their children before sending them to school. That is why Proverbs chapter (22:6) has called on parents to train their children in good morals why they are young so that when they become old; they may not depart from what they have been taught. It implies that, parents and the church must make use of the formative years of the children by instilling desirable moral patterns for them to imbibe.

The term indecent dressing has become a household word in the church and also in the society. If you don't want them doing something, you shouldn't be doing it either. But this is a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the entire fabric of the society resulting in simple failure and decay within every aspect of the land. Immoral act of indecent dressing as the case maybe is evident in our academic environment, public institutions, business outfits, and even within the religious establishments. The preaching of indecent fashion and style are not taking serious and the dressings of these youth are questionable most especially their appearance in the church does not speak of them to be child of God while some of them are even church workers. There is hardly any face of the society that is not hurt with the evil of indecent dressing to seduce the opposite sex. The failure to discipline the looseness of indecent fashion in our church and the society as destroyed the moral standard of the church.

The purpose of a dress is to cover the body properly. It is true that different occasions require different dresses or styles. But this focus seems to be lost as reflected in the society. Universities, offices and worship centers, the society are full of naked people. Dressing shows authority, power and confidence. To dress in unacceptable ways could result to disrespect, loss of

confidence and authority. Many of the parents encourage their children to wear the co-call fashions and styles to social functions and even to the church while some women are also fashion crazy. For the society to develop the concept of morality is important, they must be taught good moral values by the church.

Do you dress decently or indecently to the church? I so much believed that dressing half-naked to the church will do no good to the Church and our society at large. This work is on the indecency or indecent dressing in the church Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), Lagos Zone. The paper went further to discuss the perpetrators, causes, effects and suggested solutions of indecency in the church of Christ. If you are a lady, do not show us that inner part of your chest irrespective of your beauty or who you think you are, kindly preserve it and make it private.

The Perpetrators of Indecent Dressing

To improve the quality of the life of the church members and the church there is need to improve the administrative system of that church. To share Christ messages for the growth of the church and the society, the disciplinary measure of the church must be given urgent attention. To co-ordinate and supervise ECWA teaching the perpetrators of every immoral acts must be identify so that there will be proper moral values. Below are the perpetrators indecent dressings.

Foremost, immoral act of indecent dressing is found among the church leaders, ask me how? Some pastors, elders and the fellowship leaders compromised the standard of the church system as a result of their self- interest and tribalism. The people don't want to take anything that's hard to swallow. They generally want what's easy and sweet word or approach towards them. The gospel gets watered down because the church leaders want to be popular to have more members and some money, some want to draw more members after themselves for power and influence. The Biblical principles and moral standards of decent dressing became weak and unacceptable among them. They used the word of God to cover-up their failure and irresponsibility in the church and family. They failed to monitor the children of the rich people in the church most especially during their wedding many of them are almost half naked with the kind of wedding gown they wore.

Furthermore, in ECWA men, women and some church leaders care and concerns are to satisfy the needs of their family, so they are not concerned about what their children and what they wear instead they get involved in receiving help and support to care for the physical need of the family. The youth are more concerned about social engagement than the service of God they love to expose the nakedness of their body which led many of them to have carnal knowledge of each other before marriage. They have little or no regard for God, most especially the youth, they find it difficult to obey the church orders on the indecent dressing.

Indecent dressing in the church cut across every member of the church and many are guilt of this act in one way or the other. The children, youth, women, men, and the church leaders are all involved. The leadership of the church also violated the order from above in order to protect their personal interest.

The Causes of Indecent Dressing

A good number of reasons or factors can be given as the causes of indecent dressing in the church and the society. Explanations could be given as to why the morality of our society has been battered.

First and foremost, parents' lukewarm attitude to the moral upbringing of their children is one of the causes of immorality in the church and society. Some Nigerian parents neglected their role of supervising their children. These children are left alone to do as they wish, some parents feels that hence we are practicing democracy as at now, the children should be given a wide range of freedom to operate on their own. To such parents, antisocial behaviours are not punished at all. They prefer to spare the child and save the rod. When parents neglect or pay no attention to their responsibilities and duties of their children, the children will tarnish their image, destroy the family name and bring shame to them.

Lack of moral teachings in schools, some children who are "raised right" but still manage to become immoral through social contacts in school. The church, parents, teachers, and counsellors need to rise to their responsibilities and proffer solutions to indecent dressing in our churches and society. The children in the schools indulge in other acts of immorality such as secret cult activities, examination malpractice, drug abuse, and another antisocial behaviour because the school has failed in teaching morals. The teaching of moral values by the school should be given the necessary attention to control the act of indecent dressing in the church and the society.

Indiscipline can be seen everywhere, both the elderly ones and the children lack discipline and did not fear the pastors, parents are silent when it comes to child discipline while the society pretend as if nothing is happening. It is hard to obey simple instructions at home, school, or the church. This factor has seriously contributed to the immoral act of indecent dressing. They therefore blame teachers solely for the undesirable attitudes that are exhibited by the students. While the parents even fight the teachers for disciplining their children.

Fashion and styles is an antisocial behaviour and negative values that has been a public outcry about the immoral act of indecent dressing. Schools and the church are now indulging in fashion parade activities both among the children and the youth. The attainment of fashion has become the order of the day.

The fear of losing church members have destroyed the standard of the teaching and preaching of the men of God. The church leaders cannot preach the true word of God because preaching and teaching against sins can make them to lose members so therefore, their messages are that of peace, joy, money wealth, and many others. Many of the church leaders have lost focus and this is affecting the growth of the church spiritually. Truly the church population is on the increase but their spiritual lives are not being revived. The interest of the leaders is tithes, offerings and pledges. Some dressed half naked to the church and some of these pastors did not see anything bad in it and the concerns is to allowed them so that they will not go to another church.

The church and the society have failed the people, so some of these youth in ECWA need proper teaching of the word of God to control the immoral acts in the church. Several other antisocial behaviours among ECWA youth include hate speech, fighting, stealing and

alcoholism. There is need for parents, teachers, counselors and church to find end to such immoral acts and proffer solutions by improving the economy of the nation and justice.

The Effects of Indecent Dressing

Indecent dressing in the midst of the church worshipers has numerous adverse effects on the entire society we live today. It is important to know the effects of indecent dressing vary from person to person, church to church because people see indecent dressing in the church differently. Immoral acts pollution has saturated every aspect of the church to the extent that many members, including pastors are not morally inclined. This aspect focused on the effect of immoral acts. There are evidences concerning the decline and its effect on moral values of ECWA today and on the ECWA members. The effects of indecency or indecent dressing in the church are:

Faintness in faith: There is a high decrease in the number of non-Christians that go to church because they see no different between them and the so-called Christians. Many have said that they do not need to go to church again since the church members which supposed to be their standard and examples are worldly in fashion and styles, and the church that supposes to be a place to go and get spiritually training and enrichment is now a place to go and get seduced. For this reason, several have decided to stay in their homes and serve their God rather than going to church for weekly or on Sundays.

Fall in Moral Practices: For the reason that people go to the church naked imagining they are putting on wears, it has completely make several none Christians to see indecency as a welcomed idea in the church today. Moral decline in the homes and the society can be traced to indecent dressing going on in various churches.

Poor Representation of the Church: It is a pity today that the worth, pride, and the level of respect that is offered to the church have declined. It is different from the past when people respect the church very well. The respect is still there however not as it was in the past. The respect paid to the modern church now is not as it was in the past time because several churches have lost their representations. Some of the churches have lost their respect is as result of the indecency in the church. According to 1 Corinthians 6:19 “Do you not know that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;” the declined in dressing as made the church to lose some value which need to be brought back for the growth of the church.

Ungodliness: As a result of indecent dressing ungodliness have crept into the church and the church have become something else such that many forms of sins have enter the church through this indecent dressing such as: fornication, adultery, fighting, stealing, hate speech, fraud and many others, they have the form of godliness but deny the power of God and this have led to poor spiritual growth of the church. The members are more concerned about social engagement than the service of God. Many will not even come if they don’t have matching shoes and bags; this is the extent that immorality has eaten deep to the church system.

Premarital Sex: Many of the youth are engaged in premarital sex, which include the practice of kissing, petting, lapping, fondling of breast and many others. It's forbidden but they engage in it because they exposed their bodies and some get pregnant while some contacted venereal disease. In many of the youth conferences it is reported that many of the youths are into premarital sex with the kind of things they do and things they saw on their cell phones. The Bible clearly tells us God's view on premarital sex and other forms of sexual intimacy. As a result of immorality, can we say the Scripture is becoming out dated and old in light of today's cultural views concerning premarital sex? Teenagers who feel incomplete, inadequate and unappreciated are more likely to seek comfort in a sexual relationship. Therefore, the parents in ECWA must rise to save the children from premarital sex.

Lack of Respect: The stakeholders have also failed to speak the truth and checkmate the activities of the church members. ECWA members were trained to be an effective, honest, respectful and transparent anywhere they find themselves. But it is a different issue now as a result of indecent dressing in the church. There is this saying that "You will be addressed by the way you dress". Your dressing will speak of the kind of person you are, many have lost their integrity and respect because of the way they dress. The world is so competitive that some people will lie, cheat, and bribe to get what they want, either for themselves or their children. Indecent dressing is the order of the day even among the married women which make them to loss their respect in the society. Leaders, executive, and members must accept that they are held to a higher standard of respect than others.

Abortion: It is the secondary effect of immoral sexual relationships especially among the youths. It is no longer a secret to hear that their parents are even involved. They do this so that their children will have church wedding or they will not be put to shame and their children will not be put under church discipline. Indecent dressing leads to premarital sex which leads to pregnancy and can later result to abortion to cover up their shames. Some of these youth committed abortion so that they can cover up their sins or not to disgrace their families. As a result of these abortions, some wombs have been damaged while some die in the process. Many are married and they have no children as a result of the abortion.

Lack of discipline: Lack of discipline is another effect of indecent dressing in ECWA, some members are morally indiscipline and disobedient to the extent of flouting the rules and regulations of the church as church choir, ushers and security unit. ECWA moral disciplinary measures are weak because of indiscipline and offenders are not duly punished because the rules are selective to some individual status. They deliberately go out of the rules and instructions given to them. Most especially the youth, they find it difficult to obey the church orders and find it easy to disobey the policy of the church. For example some of them have choir robe, usher polo and security jack but they failed to wear it because they want to show up their clothes and style. They believe that church leaders are invading to their privacies when they are corrected. And feel their service is unto God and no one should teach them how to go about it to the extent of comparing ECWA with other denominations.

Suggested Solutions on Indecent Dressing

To ensure the fulfillment and implementation of ECWA immorality there is need to build effective moral standard in ECWA, every member must go through counseling, bible teaching

and discipleship. ECWA must teach moral values to her members and help them to treasure the moral values. ECWA core values will be of help to develop the Church and promote decent dressing.

ECWA Core Values:

1. **Integrity:** The quality of being honest and having strong moral principles that you refuse to change. ECWA members will be prepare and train to provide an effective, honest, and transparent anywhere they find themselves.
2. **Accountability:** All funds and ECWA properties must be used widely and properly accounted for as good towards the work of God.
3. **Self-Control:** It is not possible to have effective prayer without a clear mind and a self-controlled life" For every members of ECWA prayer is very important and to achieve this, members must be self-controlled.
4. **Love and Care for One Another:** The Church ECWA should be stimulated towards genuine love and ones this is lacking the church cannot stand.
5. **Godliness:** The call to godliness is to be observant to all the teaching, practicing virtue and avoiding sin.
6. **Humility and Service:** God's work must be done with humility and honour. And the service of God is a privilege for everyone in God's service.
7. **Justices and Fairness:** All members, groups and bodies within ECWA shall be subject to disciplinary measures as contained in the Holy Bible. ECWA Bye-laws, Ministers' Handbook, ECWA Conditions of service, for the growth of the church and the society.
8. **Orderliness in Worship:** The minister must guard against elaborate and repetitions programme. The early Church employed simple methods of worship in the form of hymns, scripture readings, prayers, and fellowship."
9. **Inspiring Leadership:** It is very important to stimulate the leadership of ECWA at all levels so that they will be able to work effectively for the development of the church members. Also the church leadership must also follow guideline on leadership.
10. **Sound Doctrine:** Is the singular goal of ECWA to glorify God, preach and teach the Bible, the inspired and infallible "word of God." And also it is clear that the Bible is the final authority that shows the mind of God.
11. **Sanctity of Life:** The call to be holy should not be taken lightly. God has called us primarily to be holy as He is holy. The art of been set apart for God and unto God in our day to day life is our calling as Christians so as to shine as light to the world.
12. **Holistic Ministry:** To promote the evangelistic, educational, medical and welfare work of the Church.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the issue of morality has been stressed as an essential element that can help to produce people that will have respect for constituted authority, respect, truth, honesty and good norms of the society. The paper has been able to establish the fact that, ECWA core values are the solutions for the growth of the members and the development of the church to fight against indecent dressing.

Recommendations

1. That there is need for ECWA ministers and leaders to speak on various contemporary issues during Convention, Conferences and Retreat it will help members to be better informed on some of the moral issues and challenges in the society.

2. That more counsellors should be trained in ECWA churches and schools to control the occurrence of indecent dressing among her members.
3. That Counselling programmes aimed at instilling appropriate moral values should be featured prominently on social media.
4. That the church should exhibit discipline, discipleship and desirable moral patterns to be emulated by her members.
5. The Church must improve her teaching on concept of good and bad behaviour, prayer and sin.

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ASSESSING THE UNIVERSAL REFORMED CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

Comfort Kamimi Gemade Ph.D
Department of Religion and Cultural Studies
Benue State University,
Makurdi, Nigeria

Abstract

Benue State is one of the north-central States of Nigeria that was created over four decades ago from the old Benue-Plateau States. Within the context of development which presupposes a process, the State in comparison with other States and expectations from all indications is walking on its knees despite being endowed with numerous natural resources. Sequel to the above reality, the paper seeks to unveil the problem of sustained development of religious institutions in relation to its contribution to the growth of Benue State, with particular reference to the Universal Reformed Christian Church (URCC) in Benue State, past and present. The Universal Reformed Christian Church (URCC), formally referred to as The Church of Christ in Sudan among Tiv (NKST) was introduced into Benue State by the Sudan United Mission (SUM) through Dutch Reformed Church Mission (DRCM) from South Africa as early as 1911. A cursory look at activities of the church reveal that after over a century of the existence of the church in Benue State, the church has contributed in the development of the State in such areas as education at all levels, both formal and informal education scattered all over the state, health care, agriculture, economy amongst others in the past and indeed presently. However, this paper seeks to investigate the current status of her contributions to the development of Benue State as well as URCC can do to sustain the development of state in the future. To achieve this aim, this paper employs historical method, using both primary and secondary sources of data collections with emphasis on documented literature. The paper found that despite the contributions of the Universal Reformed Church of Christ to the development of Benue State past and present, there is a dearth of sustained development of the church in areas of training of her workers in specialized areas to effectively man the numerous projects. The paper recommends the setting up of more small and medium scale cottage industries in partnership with government through the Women Fellowship, Youth Fellowship, active engagement of the "NKST League" and active participation of her members in partisan politics in the state. The above, without doubt will further lead to the development of Benue State in a manner that is both enduring and sustainable.

Keywords: URCC, Church, Development, Benue.

Introduction

The first impression created by outsiders about the continent of Africa as the habitat of animals, made it difficult to believe, thus negating the fact that human beings ever lived there. Thus, when eventually human beings were said to have been "discovered", their humanity was first of all negated and denied (Ekwuru 75). Hence, the Africans were historically saddled with the burden of their proof of human identity and the problem of development. The opening up of Africa to forces of change by the four Cs by the introduction or the imposition of the so called legitimate Commerce and Christianity as a key to civilization and eventual Colonization was seen by most abolitionists, humanitarians, philanthropists and missionariesas the only remedy (Vilhanova 249).

While the above summation is debatable and is refuted by some scholars on the basis that Africa would have developed at its time, makes sense to argue that colonialism, as it were, was not zero sum game. Although the Europeans got the better part of the deal, records have shown that their presence was also a spring board of some sort, to Africa's self-realisation and development. The presence of the Christian missionaries, the educational and health care institutions they built, as well as the agricultural services they provided, served as a spring board for the development of human capacity and reasonability.

The above holds true for Benue state which, as it stands, have benefited from the activities of the early missionaries which arrived Tiv land in early 1911. The Universal Reformed Christian Church, formerly known as *Nongu U Kristu u ken Sudan hen Tiv* (NKST) was a creation of the South African branch of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission (DRCM) and the Sudan United Mission (SUM). The presence of the NKST in Tiv land and the Benue valley precedes the Roman Catholic Mission (RCM) and the Catholic Church. The then NKST church now, Universal Reformed Christian Church as a faith based organisation has contributed immensely to the development of Benue State through the provision of social amenities like hospitals, schools, agriculture, and the building of rural roads amongst others.

This paper seeks to appraise the Universal Reformed Christian Church (URCC), also known as the *Nongu U Kristu u I Ser u sha Tar* (NKST) and the development question in Benue state, North Central Nigeria in retrospection of the past and an advancement of new frontiers.

Making Sense of URCC and Development

URCC

URCC is the acronym for the Universal reformed Church of Christ. The history of the Universal Reformed Christian Church which hitherto was known as the Church of Christ in Sudan among the Tiv started when the Dutch Reformed Church Mission in South Africa established the church at Sai in 1911. The church later became an indigenous church in 1957, known as NKST (Gemade 64). However, by 2012 the name of the church was changed from Church of Christ in Sudan among the Tiv to Universal Reformed Christian Church with the statistics of 4,132 preaching centers. By 2018 Sunday Worship Attendance stands at 1,286,320. The organized consistories are 402, with 867 ordained pastors. The church has seven (7) tertiary institutions, 31 dispensaries, 28 First Aids and one Health Centre (*NKST General Secretary's Annual Report* 66 – 78).

Development

According to Hundley, development is "a state or condition or as a process or course of dynamic change. For him, development is not purely an economic phenomenon but rather a multi-dimensional process involving reorganization and reorientation of entire economic and social system". Development is the process of improving the quality of all human lives with three equally important aspects. These are raising peoples' living condition, creating conditions conducive to the growth of peoples' self-esteem through the establishment of social, political and economic systems and institutions**,** which promote human dignity and respect and increasing peoples' freedom to choose by enlarging the range of their choice variables (22). Development is "a sequence of continuous changes eventuating in some outcome" (15). Seer prefers to ask the questions of development rather than defining development and these questions includes "What has been happening to poverty, what has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all these three have become less severe, then beyond doubt, this has been a period of development for the country's concerned" (3). In his analysis, "if one or two of these central problems have been getting worse, especially if three have, it will be strange to call the result "development", even if per capita income has soared" (3-4). Used in this context**,** the development of Benue is in tune with the vision and mission of URCC from its inception and the prospects of advancing new areas of influence for the development of the community.

Reminiscence the History of URCC and the Development of Benue State

The Universal Reformed Christian Church (URCC) was until recently known as the Church of Christ in Sudan among the Tiv (*Nongu U Kristu u Ken Sudan hen Tiv* (NKST)). This church was a creation of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission (DRCM). According to Aboho, the reformed churches after the protestant reformation were established in Holland and South Africa. The NKST church was the creation of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission (DRCM) which was established in Tivland in 1911. He explains further that the DRCM was the first Christian organisation to venture into Tivland. Prior to 1911, the Tiv people (who are the major ethnic group in the present Benue State of North Central Nigeria) practiced their traditional religion (9). Shii further intimated that the work of NKST came largely as a resultant effect of the activities of the Reformed Church established in South Africa and not the ones established in Holland (40).

Historically, the DRCM had earlier read about the need for missionary work in the geographical region south of the Sahara from a track written by Herman Karl WelbelmKumm whose energetic activities had given birth in England to the Sudan United Mission on June 15, 1904. An immediate response to this tract was the invitation of Kumm to visit and speak to churches in South Africa. During his visit in June, 1907, he emphasized the absolute necessity of bringing the gospel to northern Nigeria. Shii stated that, in responses thus:

> The South African branch of the Sudan United Mission (SUM) which took charge of Tiv land was started. The SUM Missionaries set out on their long journey to the Sudan on the 10th of October 1908 from Liverpool, England on the Falaba for Nigeria. Eight missionaries with Dr. Karl Kumm as leader formed the group. They include Rev. George Botha and Mr. Hosking from South Africa. The journey took them three weeks before they reached the estuary of the Niger from where started using riverboats…. Dr. Kumm's initial plan was to open the first mission centre in Udei, a village on the River Benue in the most westerly part of

> Tiv land, but it turned out that the west of Tiv land became the last to be evangelised (Shii 41 – 42).

However, the South African branch of SUM missionaries thought of beginning work in the Yola area as Tiv area (the present Benue state) was removed from the plans, as earlier thought by the missionaries. After a lot of roaming about and seeking the Lord's will in prayer, they were led back to the Tivland where they had originally planned to start their mission work when they left South Africa. Rev Botha went to Rumasha to assist in the building of a home for the freed slave children and Mr. Hosking went to Ibi to help with medical services for the time being.

According to Aboho, after the survey of Sai by Rev. Botha, he wrote to Rev. Zimmermann to take over the new station at Sai. Rev. Zimmermann was happy to receive this letter. On the 16th April, 1911, Zimmermann left Waka for Sai along with three Mbula people who accompanied him namely: Danstoho and his wife Fantha along with Jaddih (10). On the 17th of April, Rev. Zimmermann and his company reached Sai at about 10am. A few days later, Rev. Zimmermann embarked on the construction of residential accommodation (huts). On the completion of the living accommodation, Rev. Zimmermann left Sai with 30 able bodied men to convey his properties from Ibi. When he returned and settled down, Sai permitted his son Akiga to become the house boy of Rev. Zimmermann. Zimmermann embarked on the missionary work of preaching the good news of salvation along with medical care. He treated eye problems, dressed wounds and gave medicines for the cure of headache and stomach ache. This was the beginning of the communication of the Good news in Tivland which later became part of the present Benue State (10).

The missionary work in Tiv land grew in leaps and bounds with the establishment of schools and hospitals as well as the development of human capacity for the missionary work and service to humanity. However, with the apartheid policy of the South African Government, the Nigerian government became uncomfortable with the DRCM, and the issuance of visa to the Dutch workers became a problem. The DRCM, therefore, sought the cooperation of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) who was in other tribes of the Sudan (Jukuns, Kutebs and others) to take over the mission work in Tivland. In 1961, the DRCM formally handed over to the SUM/CRC" (11). This formal hand over, as it were, led to the beginning of the process of the disengagement of the DRCM from Tivland. In this regard, Annger further intimated that:

In 1957, the Church of Christ amongst the Tiv (Translated in Tiv as *Nongu U Kristu u ken Sudan Hen* Tiv-NKST) was established. The main objective of the establishment of the church was a process of indigenisation of the mission work. The missionary work and the institutions established by the DRCM, (later SUM/CRC) were to be gradually handed over to the NKST. The indigenisation work which was begun in the fifties was completed in 1985 with the handing and taking over of the Benue Leprosy Settlement and the Rehabilitation Hospital in Mkar (11).

The early developmental strides were in the area of education where Mr Judd who was nicknamed "OrteseBato" wrote the first reader in Tiv, *"Zua u Tiv,"* (Tiv Language) in 1914 and translated some hymns in Tiv as he was also learning the language (Gyanggyang 23).

The missionaries of the DRCM had continued with intensive evangelism in Tivland as they moved southwards and soon reached and established their second Station at Zaki-Biam. In 1916, Rev. Strydom started the translation of the Bible into Tiv language. He started with the gospel according to St. Mark. In 1931, the first girls' school was opened in Sevav when the DRCM realized the need of a girls' school which took off with 12 girls drawn from all parts of Tivland. In 1936, a Bible School was started at Sai village (Shii 120). They also set up schools in Katsina-Ala and Mkar, amongst others. The primary school at Mkar was a co-educational boarding school, the first of its kind in Tivland (Gyangyang 28).

The first station to be opened on the western side of the river Katsina-Ala was Mkar in 1923 with AJ Brink as the first Resident Missionary. This station was developed rapidly to function as the mission headquarters. It was here that the four legendary mission boxes were fully opened and full supportive services implementation commenced. The main box contained the Holy Bible representing Evangelism, the second box contained medicines representing Health Services, the third box contained Writing Materials representing Education and the last one containing seeds representing Agriculture (Avav 12). Symbolically, Education, Health and Agriculture were to support Evangelism. The first major church building was located here and was completed in 1946. The central location of Mkar in Tivland and the cordiality of its people encouraged rapid development of facilities. From this central location satellite mission stations were very soon opened at Adikpo, Kunav (at Mbaakon), Turan (at Jato Aka), Shangev-Tiev (at Mbaakpur, later Uavande), Makurdi and Apir.

Another feat was achieved in the area of social works. The first orphanage home was built by the Missionaries at Sevav in 1940. This orphanage was later transferred to Mkar in 1953. It is pertinent to note that the Women's Fellowship of the Church had now been established and undertook to pay the salary of the first indigenous staff of the orphanage.

The contribution of URCC to the development of the state in the area of education transcend the state alone as these institutions have contributed to the training and retraining of human capital for various states of the federation. Products of these institutions are engaged in all works of life, both public and private are now members of parliament (with a serving member of the Nigerian eight senate as a products of NKST schools and other members of the House of Representatives), permanent secretaries, directors and heads of establishments (private and public) in the nation (Gerna 25).

Education as a supporting service to Evangelism helped in no small measure in ensuring the sustainability of evangelism. It was aimed at the youths and has continued to be so. By the time the Mission headquarters was being consolidated, the boarding primary school had already taken roots and many future leaders were being trained. Several primary and secondary schools were continually opened as the mission stations were being established. The URCC has in no small measure, contributed to the development of the state through human capacity building and education.

The URCC today boasts of its own university, the University of Mkar, Mkar. Other tertiary institutions include: Reformed Theological Seminary, Mkar; College of Health Technology, Mkar; Schools of Nursing and Midwery, Mkar; Lens Gabriel School of Laboratory

Science,Mkar and the Reformed Bible College, Harga (*NKST General Secretary's Annual Report* 78).

Of crucial importance for the development of the church and society is the department of Health. But whereas Education has been fairly catered for by the training of teachers and education administrators, and the establishment of several primary, secondary and tertiary institutions, Health has not been so lucky. Although the missionaries designed and implemented the ideal health delivery system, this has not been sustained by the URCC. The said ideal system is made up of many primary health centers clustered in communities to be serviced by fewer secondary (General) hospitals that are expected to refer cases to the tertiary (Teaching) hospitals. The Missionaries designed the health system such that two hospitals (Mkar and Mbaakon) were to function as Tertiary Hospitals and were already functional. Four hospitals (Anyiin, Zaki-Biam, Adikpo and Apir were to function as secondary (general) hospitals and the many health centers scattered throughout Tivland would form the bedrock of URCC health delivery system. This system was already functional by 1985 at the time of final handover to URCC by the SUM/CRC Mission (*SUM/CRC Handover Notes* 133).

In 1986, former Minister of Health Rasome Kuti, on a visit to URCC Hospitals, commended the church's well-articulated health delivery system and called on other health care providers to emulate the URCC system (*SUM/CRC Handover Notes* 133). Apart from the curable ailments that were treatable in the conventional hospitals, there were other sicknesses like leprosy and small pox which were deadly and not easily curable. Whereas small pox killed its patients within a short duration of contact, leprosy was disabling but not life- threatening. The Benue Leprosy Settlement and rehabilitation center was set up in 1930 to offer hope for a hopeless group of people in Tivland. The idea was to rehabilitee patients well enough for them to be accepted again and integrated in the society, and also to be trained with some useful hand crafts to help them live and fend for themselves. Many of the patients learnt crafts at the centre, like carpentry, building, gardening and citrus farming. They carried this knowledge back to their villages, thus spreading the agricultural knowledge to many people (Gyangyang 63).

In the area of agriculture which was under the purview of the humanitarian services, the missionaries gave members of the church improved seeds and trained them on improved farming techniques to help them get better yields (63). Members who were taught different and appropriate farm techniques. A clear differentiation was made between seeds and grains and farmers were encouraged to plant only seeds and to either eat or sell grains. The church championed the introduction of different crops, economic fruit trees, cash crops and vegetables. Organic fertilizer production techniques were taught to members and church demonstration farms were set up. All these practices died with the advent of oil boom leaving the rudiment of church farms only for the upkeep of Pastors! It was this practice of the URCC among the dominant Tiv ethnic group that earned Benue State the status of "The Food Basket of the Nation". The URCC has since witnessed expansion within and outside the Tivland, Benue and Nigeria at large.

In the health sector, the URCC can boast of nine (9) state of the art hospitals, 150 health centers of varying degrees. These health centers and facilities have helped to meet the health care needs of the people of Benue state and its environs especially in view of the exorbitant cost of health care services in private hospitals and in times when the state government owned hospitals

are striking (Gyangyang 55). Suffice to reminiscence on the contributions of the church to the development of Benue state. However, the discourse of the paper is to provide the latitude to engage on the new frontiers with the intent of further contributing to the development of Benue state in the 21st century.

Recommendations towards the Advancement of New Frontiers in the Development of Benue State

Technology has affected the way the church is involved in the development of society in the 21st century. There is need for the church to take a leading role in the provision of both the spiritual and physical needs of the society. Over the years the URCC has maintained the policy of appointing ordained pastors to oversee its departments. These reverend gentlemen are not in any way knowledgeable in those fields nor do they possess special administrative abilities to coordinate work processes in such units. The result of this policy has been the evidential collapse of almost all service departments that were meant to form the basis of evangelism for the church. The URCC, therefore, has to train its workers in specialised areas to head the various departments of Education, Health, Agriculture, Orphanage, Mass Media, Youths, Choir, Evangelism, Literature, Printing, Bookshops among many others, towards the advancement of the welfare of her members who are by extension members of the society. There is need for the training of leaders and, indeed, all workers in all specialized departments of the church. The present dearth of trained workers in these departments has led to the non-viability of hitherto very economically viable departments of the church.

The leadership of URCC needs to emulate her Catholic Church counterpart. As a matter of policy the training of Catholic Priests includes specialised training in various fields to cater for the leadership needs of the church for effective manning of the various departments for optimum results. Although the Catholic Church has also adopted the general policy of posting the clergy to head church departments, such catholic priests are specially trained in their additional fields of calling. The difference lies in the fact that the URCC pastors are hardly trained in other areas other than Evangelism (Azua, personal interview).

The revitalization of the URCC departments of Agriculture and Health which the missionaries' setup is necessary for the development of Benue State. It is common knowledge today that most large orchards in Benue State are owned by URCC members and are contributing to the development of agriculture in the State. There is need today, more than ever, for the church to reactivate the Department of Agriculture to be headed by a qualified agriculturist and to also corroborate with the State and Federal Ministries of Agriculture to access improved seeds to be distributed to members of the church.

Politicians and the clergy have similar roles in society for the good of the community. Every responsibility of politicians for the physical welfare of the society is also the responsibility of the church, be it housing, food, shelter, clothing, roads, and justice, among many others. The church, however, goes beyond the physical welfare to the spiritual welfare of the society in the life hereafter. The church should encourage its members to engage in active politics to display one of its core values of honesty as they hold political offices.

For the church to compete favorably with her sister institutions there is need to actively engage members of "NKST LEAGUE" who are lay members of the church to advance the

infrastructural development of the church. They are made up of professionals in different fields who would provide the needed professional skills to various departments of the church. The thought of Gyanggyang on the role the leadership of URCC needs to play in order for the church to be relevant in the 21st century is apt. To quote him,

> There is lack of dedication in the leadership of the NKST at many levels. The laudable ideals on which the church has been founded are sometimes pushed aside and many other interests pushed to the fore when wrong people are placed in positions of authority (223).

There is urgent need by the leadership of the church to show dedication and place qualified and honest people in leadership positions to head various departments for optimum service delivery.

Conclusion

There is a strong relationship that exists between the church and the state over the years. The salvation of the body of Christ does not negate the role of the church to provide or cater for the wellbeing of her members here on earth. It is a fact that the state cannot provide everything social services needed by the people; therefore the church has complemented this in several ways and geographical locations. The Universal Reformed Church of Christ is not an inception in the area of enabling developmental progress to the Benue community. This paper discussed the services rendered for the wellbeing of humanity, ranging from education, health care, agriculture etc. the paper further advocated for ways such as training and retraining of personnel to manage these services and agencies for a better and optimal performance the work further encouraged members to go into partisan politics to enable them influence governmental policies, for a greater development.

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THE CHALLENGES OF GAY MARRIAGE ON THE CHURCH IN NIGERIA

Rimamsikwe Habila Kitause, Ph.D
Department of Christian Religious Studies,
Taraba State University, Jalingo, Nigeria

Abstract

One of the most disheartening moral challenges confronting the Nigerian Church in this 21st Century is the question of gay marriage. This phenomenon of gayism is starring the church at the face which seems insurmountable. Some Christians from the different blocs of Christendom have come out from their closet to add voices to those demanding for the legislation of gay marriage in Nigeria amidst agitations for its being outlawed by the populace. The paper is put together using historical and descriptive approaches in its studies. It has unraveled that gay marriage has a long history in Nigeria with many motivating factors to it. Gayism is a practice which is no longer hidden but is gradually coming to the fore and steadily witnessing an upsurge in people's quest for its proper adoption in Nigeria despite its prohibition act signed by the former administration of President Goodluck Ebelle Jonathan. The analysis in this study shows that gay marriage has come to stay in Nigeria. This of course signaled the degree to which morality has decayed in the Nigerian society. The paper submits that it is high time the Nigerian Church maintains her firm stand on gayism and prevails on the Nigerian government to allow the culprits of gay marriage to face the full wrath of the law so that it can be better for the country.

Keywords: Gay, Marriage, Homosexuality, Lesbianism, Morality, Church, Nigeria

Introduction

Gay marriage is one of the most contentious issues and is currently posing a serious threat to Christendom globally with its spillover effects in the Nigerian society. Gayism is gradually eating deeper into the fabric of the society with real damaging effects on Christianity as a global institution even though its prevalence seems hidden. This has caused great concern to the ranks and files of the Christian faith as well as to the world of the academics across cultures. The likely reasons behind the sudden upsurge of this ugly trend at the time when it is hoped that Christianity is fast making some head ways in Nigeria is what this paper seeks to unravel. Is homosexuality and same sex marriage alien to the Nigerian culture and tradition or is it something that originated here in Africa? What are the different reactions and responses to this social malady? This paper is an attempt to carefully examine the phenomenon of gayism and its undesirable effects on the Nigerian Church in a country where religiosity is high and ranked uppermost with a view to finding lasting solutions to the emerging challenges gay marriage poses on the Nigerian society. The paper is crafted under the following sub-headings:

Clarification of Concepts

Gay Marriage is a kind of sexual relationship between people of same sex. This is the practice where people of the same sex suddenly fall in love with each other and consummated

same by having a carnal knowledge of each other. This signifies a man having an affair with his fellow man and a woman having an affair with her fellow woman in the name of making love. Gay marriage is also known as same-sex marriage. Homosexual is a situation where a man is sexually attracted to other men. Lesbian refers to a woman who is sexually attracted to other women. Lesbianism according to Philip Ostien is committed by a woman who engages another woman in carnal intercourse through her sexual organ or by means of stimulation or sexual excitement of one another[1]. It is said to be an offence committed by the unnatural fusion of the female sexual organs and/or by the use of natural or artificial means to stimulate or attain sexual satisfaction or excitement.

Origin of Gay Marriage

Records have shown that gay marriage has a very long history across cultures in the globe. Same-sex marriage is being practiced in almost all the countries of the world whether it was official or unofficial. It is held that various types of same-sex unions have existed, ranging from informal, unsanctioned, and temporary relationships to highly ritualized unions that have included marriage[2]. It is documented that same-sex marriage has been the experience of some early Western societies like ancient Greece and Rome, ancient Mesopotamia, some regions of China, such as Fujian province, and certain ancient European countries[3]. The first ever recorded same-sex marriage was in the 1st century by Emperor Nero. However, since there was no legal provision for the practice in the Roman Laws it was eventually outlawed on December 16, 342 AD by the Christian emperors Constantius II and Constans. The annulment of this social malaise occurred in the fourth century.

During the Middle Ages and early modern period, the ban on same-sex marriage was still enforced. Nevertheless, in the 20th and 21st centuries, various types of same-sex unions have come to be legalized. Since January 2019 up to date, more than thirty European countries alone have officially recognized gay marriage alongside other countries of the world. The story is not different in America. As early as July 20, 2005, Canada became the fourth country in the world and the first country in the Americas to legalize same-sex marriage nationwide with the enactment of the Civil Marriage Act which provided a gender-neutral marriage definition[4]. To make it more a public knowledge, it is reported that Rev. Troy Perry performed the first public gay wedding in the United States in 1969, but it was not legally recognized, and in 1970, Metropolitan Community Church filed the first-ever lawsuit seeking legal recognition of same-sex marriages[5]. Today, gay marriage is no longer news as the practice is gaining momentum by the day everywhere in the globe.

Gay Marriage on the Nigerian Soil

Opinions are divided as to whether gay marriage is part and parcel of the African life or it is something that is foreign and alien to the Africans. According to Leo Igwe homosexuals have always existed in Africa[6]. He maintains that gay sex is as old as Nigerian in Africa, and predates the contact with Arab and Western Cultures, but as in other cultures, gays in Africa have until recently been in the closet, expressing their emotions and orientation in private, with heterosexuality as the norm[7].

It is averred that homosexuals in Nigeria contract heterosexual relationship to bear children and to live 'normal lives'. By this revelation, it may be said that the mystery behind the gays in Nigeria is that they owe children by means of contract. It could also be by adopting children. Naturally, gays should not have had children in view of their lifestyles of homosexuality. That children are being born and raised by gays in Nigeria is a cover up to deceive outsiders that Nigerians are innocent of gay practice. As a matter of facts, it is not known precisely when the practice of homosexuality began in Nigeria; but going by Igwe's postulation that gay sex predates the advent of the Arabs and the western culture; it can easily be discerned that gayism has been in existence for a very long time in Nigeria. It is probably older than the oldest man in Nigeria today going by Leo Igwe position.

Conversely, many Nigerians seem not to have subscribed to the facts that gay originated here in Africa. This position is taken based on the facts of African concept of marriage. In Africa, marriage is not just limited to a man and a woman; it is the fusion of two families or tribes coming together. This is what William Abraham meant when he asserted that "Marriage in African tradition is the joining of two families through the union of one man and one woman"[8]. So in Africa, marriage cannot be said to have taken place between a man and man or a woman and a woman. Marriage in Africa is primarily for procreation. Any union therefore that does not lead to bearing of children in Africa cannot be taken to be marriage. Gay marriage cannot fit African system of marriage which Nigeria belongs to. On this light, Africans see homosexuality as a taboo, evil, unnatural, and unrelated to African culture and psyche. Kehinde Emmanuel Obasola &Omomia O. Austin rightly opine that same-sex marriage "does not originate from Africa, it is Satanic and controlled by the evil spirit"[9].

For the singular facts that many are silent about gay marriage in Nigeria does not validate the acceptance of the act. Also, that the practice is being condemned openly does not make people not to go on with it in their own way. It is believed that many Nigerians are secretly indulging in homosexuality and hiding themselves not to be noticed. It is not possible for this paper to give estimate in number of those involved in gay sex currently in Nigeria. It becomes more difficult to do so because of gays' unwillingness to expose themselves occasioned by the sanction placed on it by the Gay Marriage Prohibition ACT signed by the former administration of President Goodluck Ebelle Jonathan. In spite of this obstacle on the side of gays in Nigeria, many of them are coming out from their closets to demand for what they felt is their right.

Causes and Motivation for Gay Marriage

It is being speculated that gays and lesbians are on the rise in Nigeria and other parts of the globe. If this is so, it is incumbent upon this paper to investigate the reason why homosexuality and lesbianism is so enticing? What is behind this current pull towards gay marriage? According to Anna BrownMasciand Jocelyn Kiley, the first and most important reason why two people usually get attracted to each other is nothing other than love[10]. Love naturally brings people together no matter their differences, colour, background and attainment. Like the heterosexual relationship, love is powerful and is probably the reasons behind gayism. It seems strange that people of same sex could be aroused sexually for each other nowadays. It sounds ridiculous. It sounds ethically impossible. Believe it or not, that is the strange occurrence in this generation. People seem to be trying out and experimenting with everything including

immoral behaviour like gay marriage. True to it, it appears that the gays are succeeding by wooing and getting more people to get involved in the dirty game.

Close to this reason is the reason for companionship too like the non-gay. People marry to share their lives together. It is said that human beings are social animals who associate. This association can come in different forms and by way of marriage. When this association occurs, and both parties derived some satisfactions from such union, it is said to have helped an individual escaped being a lone ranger. So, socially speaking, gay marriage serves some useful purpose in the society to some extent.

In the same token, when interviewed, most LGBT tend to cite legal rights and benefits as a very important reason for getting married as gays[11]. This attraction so to speak has lured quite a good number of persons to embrace same-sex marriage. Expatiating on this, Robert Mauterstocktestifies that:

> Married same-sex couples with retirement accounts have significant advantages over non-married couples**.** When one of them dies the surviving spouse can combine their deceased spouse's retirement benefits with their own through a tax free rollover. Non-married domestic partners can be beneficiaries of their partner's benefits[12].

As captivating as this may appears, there are the other sides of each of the reasons given above. What if the other partner in the same sex-marriage falls sick with terminal diseases? Or he or she encounters a serious mishap needing a large chunk of money to be expended? The reverse will indeed always be the case. So in every benefit, there is a minus. People should not simply be tempted and be carried away with enticing prospects of a thing without weighing the implication of it.

In a related development, it is being reasoned that homosexuality is nobody's culture. Hence, it may be safe to say that gay marriage as a new orientation has been imported or borrowed from another culture from around the world. It is being blown like the wind is driven everywhere. To many minds, homosexuality grew out of a series of decisions in response to life development process. As held by Leo Igwe, as urbanization, education, international travel and the internet spread into Nigeria, it is inevitable that certain of our moral structure may be affected[13]. It seems convincing therefore to say that since change is something which is permanent, it cannot be denied completely that modernization is not among the factor that engendered homosexuality in Nigeria.

Challenges of Gay Marriage

The challenge of gay marriage in Nigeria is ethical. Ethics has to do with the conduct, character and values of Nigerians. It seems morally wrong for sensible matured Nigerians to see their fellow men or women as life partners. In African culture, it is a taboo to see fellow man and man or fellow woman and woman cohabiting as life partners. This being allowed to take place means that the African traditional concept of marriage is seriously under attack by gays and lesbians. By demanding for legal recognition of same-sex couples shows how weak Nigerians

moral conscience has deteriorated in Nigeria at the moment. This is a shift in our thought system as Africans.

Socially, same-sex marriage probably triggers up social and gender confusion in Nigeria. The confusion emanates when determining the authentic head of the family. Whose responsibility is it to cater for same-sex family or who should be in charge of domestic chores in the same-sex marriage? This is an important issue especially here in Africa where the role of each partner has already been spelt out based on the sex of the parties involved in the heterosexual marriages. Equally, there seems to be a kind of stigma associated with same-sex couples in Nigeria. People would naturally avoid being associated with known gays and lesbians for fear of being named gay or lesbian too. This is because the African society detests and frowns at homosexuality and lesbianism. So, for fear of being stigmatized and discriminated, people keep distance with gays and lesbians in the society.

Church Position on Gay Marriage in Nigeria

Same-sex marriage (SSM) is a controversial social phenomenon in the globe. It is probably a perversion and distortion of the marriage institution which God himself ordained in the beginning. The church in Nigeria sees this phenomenon as a worrisome development because of its moral implications on Christians today. The practice of gay marriage is shaking the foundation of sexuality morality and family. Sex and family life is a serious matter in God's perspective. It is something which is supposed to be approached and handled with dignity and respect. This is owing to the fact that sexual intimacy within marriage was created by God and is fundamentally good. The Holy Scriptures say "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and the adulterers God will judge"[14]. There are sanctions God places on marital and sexual relationship. God intends that people handle sexual matters with care and sanctity. This is for the purpose of avoiding conflict and to ensure harmony in the family. This is the reasons why there are certain restrictions pertaining to divorce, adultery, fornication and marriage among others.

The Church defines marriage based on God's definition of it. God sees marriage as a union between a man and a woman. This kind of relationship is meant to fulfilled God own grand plan for marriage which is procreation. And procreation is only possible between a man and a woman within marriage. Without procreation, there will be no perpetuation of human race. Gay marriage is a sterile union which cannot create a family. In the opinion of Rimamsikwe Habila Kitause and Abigail M. Embwa "Marriage union is a kind of double-barrelled relationship where couples share their lifetime together as companions and procreate for the sustenance of that society"[15]. Any marriage relationship therefore that violates God purpose of marriage of raising children attracts God's judgment instead of blessings. The church of God in Nigeria represents God and speaks for God here on earth. It declares God's mind to our present world that is corrupted by sin. The church detests gay marriage in its totality. It condemns the act because it is evil in the sight of God. Gay marriage is man's invention after the imagination of his evil thoughts. Gay marriage is an unholy practice before God. The church of God is holy and encourages holy living. For this reason, the church forbids her members to indulge in homosexuality and lesbianism.

Recommendations

The cankerworm of gay marriage is gradually eroding the good moral behaviour of some Christians in Nigeria. It is silently penetrating and corrupting many Nigerians making them not to comply with God's will in marriage. Almost unbelievable, many Christians are becoming gays and lesbians. Unless something is done very quickly to dissuade people from indulging in the act, the most teeming parishioners in Nigeria will soon be overtaken by the ugly game. Based on this:

i. Christians in Nigeria should be taught sound doctrines to be able to understand God's purpose in marriage.
ii. The church should teach biblical ethics and emphasize virtues that have to do with sexuality and human relationship.
iii. It is not enough for the church to teach sexual morality, but also to emphasize sincerity, honesty, truth and love for one another.
iv. These moral instructions should go alongside strong advocacy campaigns against gayism in Nigeria knowing that the church has always been the conscience of the society.
v. The church has a transforming power through her moral teachings. Biblical homily can go a long way in evolving a morally sound society capable of creating moral sensitivity among the people of Nigeria.
vi. Apart from what the church can do, government at all levels should join hands in the battle against homosexuality in Nigeria. Government should through the legislators do more in putting in place appropriate laws that will be used to prosecute gays and lesbians in Nigeria.
vii. It should charge the Judiciary who is saddled with the responsibility of implementing the law to be faithful in executing them. Government should intensify efforts in promoting enlightenment campaigns to rid the society of social disease like gayism.
viii. They should try to involve all Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), especially all Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) to be proactive in disseminating information about same-sex marriage in Nigeria.
ix. Individuals and local communities should be encouraged to be on the watch out to fishing out those who are secretly practicing same-sex marriage in their community. For us to win the war against this evil practice in Nigeria, all hands must be on deck.

Conclusion

Same-sex marriage has been and is currently exists in Nigeria. Unlike the heterosexual marriage which is greatly being publicized and celebrated openly, gayism is restricted which makes it unpopular. There are indications that gays and lesbians are all around us, but the unfortunate thing is that they are not easily being noticed due to their clandestine activities. As discovered, these individuals tend to operate seek and hid game due to various sanctions placed on it by the government of Nigeria. It has equally been unravel that the moral consequence of gay marriage is a major source of worries to every serious minded Christians in Nigeria. This is because the phenomenon of same-sex relationship is currently challenging the very foundation of our moral lives and Christian faith at the moment. If allowed to continue, sooner or later the Nigerian gays and lesbians will converts more innocent citizenry into the evil act and that will have severe telling effects on Nigerian Christians. The paper submits that it is high time the Nigerian Church maintain her firm stand on gayism and prevail on the government to allow the culprits of gay marriage to face the full wrath of the law, the better for the country.

End notes

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