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CONTENTS

THE NIGERIA'S 21ST CENTURY NEO-PENTECOSTALISM AND THE APOSTLE CHIBUZOR GIFT CHINYERE'S "SOCIAL GOSPEL'S" EFFORTS
By

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Abstract

The thrust of this paper is on the Nigeria's 21St Century Neo-Pentecostalism in terms of their "Social Gospels" efforts, using the Apostle Chibuzor Gift Chinyere's Omega Power Ministry (OPM)'s endeavours in this regard as a case study. It is as true to assert that the Christian religion, which started with the mission churches, no doubt, has attained a stronghold in Africa, especially in Nigeria, just as it is true to assert that the Pentecostal/Charismatic movements, right from their "classical" to the "Neo-Pentecostal" versions of Christianity are said to be embraced by over 11% of Africa's population, the predominantly Muslim North inclusive. Hinging on Emile Durkheim's functionalism theory, which posits that all social institutions (the church inclusive), perform certain functions necessary for the survival of the society, and using a combination of methodologies, ranging from oral sources from the membership of this neo-Pentecostal movement and some written materials by them, coupled with scholarly publications, apart from personal observations and impressions of their outside watchers, this study investigated what makes the Neo-Pentecostal movement-unique in the comity of Christian religious strands, especially from the standpoint of Apostle Chibuzor OPM's "Social Gospel" efforts. Notwithstanding their peculiar characteristics, summed up by the belief in the positive transformative influence of the holy spirit in the life of an individual Christian, the church and the society, and their exuberant worship life embedded in subjective religious experiences and spiritual gifts, claims of supernatural miracles, signs and wonders, including language of experiential spirituality rather than of theology, and mystical life in the spirit by which they daily live out their will of God, what did Apostle Chibuzor Gift Chinyere's OPM ministry do differently? What did he achieve in his "social gospel's" efforts, using the church's offerings and tithes at his disposal, unlike some of his contemporaries elsewhere, who rather use theirs on self-serving/glamorous expensive projects like private jets, schools,

universities, etc, projects, most of which are beyond the reach of their less affluent church members? The findings of the study have revealed, however, that this "Social Gospel" medium of Apostle Chibuzor Gift Chinyere, which means, propagating the gospel message that caters for not only the spiritual needs (the soul) of members, but at the same time, taking care of their material needs, especially the vulnerable-helpless group, is indeed the direction the 21st century churches are intensifying efforts; in view of the present socio-economic challenges of Nigeria. Hence, it is strongly recommended that governments of the country should encourage such churches, and indeed any religious group that is towing this line by way of substantial, financial subventions, recognizing their efforts as complementary to whatever governments' social interventions, while more of the neo-Pentecostals movements and indeed every Christian church, should borrow a leaf from the Apostle Chibuzor Gift Chinyere's OPM "Social Gospel" examples, both in theory and practice. This is because these humanitarian and philanthropic values of the "Social Gospel" are the dominant values of a globalized world, which have now been socialized and promoted by this individual Apostle Chibuzor Chinyere and his 21st century Neo-Pentecostal Omega Power Ministry. This is indeed the trajectory that will make Christianity work better in this 21st century or else such churches will be seen to have outlived their usefulness, at least, for now.

Keywords: Pentecostalism, Neo-Pentecostalism, Charismatic Movements, Social Gospel, Christianity, Omega Power Ministry, Apostle Chibuzor Gift Chinyere.

A. Introduction

There is no gainsaying the fact that the Christian religion has gained an undisputed stronghold in Africa, especially in Nigeria. An equally glaring feature of contemporary African Christianity seems the preponderance of the emergence of what may broadly be classified as the New Religious Movements (NRMs), some of which had equally grown from what may be classified as "classical" and the "more modem New Religious Movements". All of these versions lay claim to the utilization of the power of the Holy Spirit of God to "turn things around" for better for an individual Christian, spiritually and materially, and some claiming a moderate or radical departure from the emphasis of what is often called the historic/mission/established/orthodox tradition of the Christian church. It is instructive to note that it was on the mission churches' platform that the Christian religion came to Africa in their variegated denominations of the Roman Catholics, Anglicans (CMS), Methodists, Presbyterians etc., churches starting with the Roman Catholics in Warn as early as the 15th century AD. What is important, however, is that African Christians have accepted the Pentecostal

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movement as an inevitable reality in the history of church development and hence one will agree with John Kwofie (20 14:86) in his view that the geometrical growth of Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in West Africa in such a short time (of their arrival), confirms how receptive Africans are to the Pentecostals. Allan Anderson (2004:3 8) in his overview of African Pentecostalism as recent as the year 2000, says that some of the most prominent expressions of Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa may be called "African Pentecostal churches", adding that an estimated 11% of Africa's total population (including the predominantly Muslim North) was Charismatic.

It is the emphasis of the New Religious Movements (thereafter NRMs') version of Christianity on the influence of the Holy Spirit in line with the events of the Biblical narrative's Pentecost Day (Acts 2:1-end), that such churches are generally referred to as the Pentecostals, or Pentecostal churches, from where the term "The Neo-Pentecostalism" of our focus in this paper is derived; and which characteristics will be made clearer as we progress in this paper. But it must be noted, however, that any Christian church that believes in the events of the Biblical Pentecost Day, and its effects upon the church of God, not only as being the enabling instrument through which the church of Christ spreads to all parts of the world and sustains every individual Christian and church's spirituality in perpetuity can as well go by the name "Pentecostal church", hence we prefer the term "Pentecostal movements" in describing such churches. The difference however is on the emphasis and usage of the Holy Spirit by the individual Christian/church, as we shall establish in this paper. What is certain, however, is that the Pentecostal version of Christianity, whether it is called Pentecostal or Neo-Pentecostal, Charismatic, Zion, Aladura (prayer-healing), African Instituted church, etc., share one thing in common, namely, the belief in the emphasis and reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit of God to positively transform individual Christian lives, churches and even human institutions such as the church for the betterment of human beings and human society. This now brings us to the concept of "SOCIAL GOSPEL" of this paper. What then is "Social Gospel" one may ask? In a nutshell, "Social Gospel" is a gospel message that is spread while taking into consideration the spiritual and material needs of the hearers simultaneously. In other words, anything done in the process of propagating the gospel of Christ that leads to adding values to the lives of human beings, especially the vulnerable and helpless group is what is otherwise referred to as the "Social Gospel" in this paper. It can also be described as "Practical Christianity" or "Holistic Gospel". That is, a gospel that addresses not only the human soul (spiritually), but the totality of the human person materially also. Writing the Foreword to a book entitled Making Christianity Work, by S.C. Anwasia, Wotogbe-Weneka (2018:13-14), remarked thus:

> In addition to preaching the word, Christ's holistic ministry involved seeking for the lost, the rejected, and embracing the underdogs. It also involved a message of total liberation and emancipation of the world from various and variegated social, economic, political and spiritual quagmires the world has ultimately found itself.

Of course, this is what brought about this conference, a conference meant to showcase or appraise how an individual church, the Omega Power Ministry (OPM), led by Apostle Chibuzor Gift Chinyere, had been able to impact humanity, not only his church membership, but also those outside his church membership in this 21 century Nigeria's Neo-Pentecostalism.

B. What is Neo-Pentecostalism?

The popular use of the term "Neo-Pentecostalism" presupposes the existence of the "Classical" Pentecostals, such as the Assemblies of God Church, Christ Apostolic Church and Church of Pentecost, which even though came out from the mission churches, still retain some of the features of those churches and the Neo-Pentecostals. But as we stated earlier, whether the classical or the Neo-Pentecostals, the common denominator of "Pentecostalism" is the emphasis on the power and effect of the Holy Spirit in the affairs of an individual Christian, the church and even human situations and society. In this paper, the term, despite whatever its inadequacies, refer to African churches that emphasize the working of the Holy Spirit in the church, particularly with ecstatic phenomena like speaking in tongues, prophecy, healing and spirit exorcism (Allan Anderson:38).

As A.O. Dada (2010:162) opines, the Holy Spirit occupies a central and unique position in the life and ministry of indigenous Pentecostal churches. The term "African Pentecostals" are said to include two other types of churches, those of "western classical Pentecostal origin and new independent Pentecostal or charismatic movements. The classical Pentecostals are said to have operated in Africa since 1907 with the Assemblies of God church, which as recent as 1994 is said to have an over estimated four (4) million membership.

Teresa Chai (2018:116), is of the view that a very big question and a good starting point for studying Pentecostalism is "who are the Pentecostals"? Using Allan Anderson's (2004:11-15) category, she sees the term "Pentecostal" as the "catch-all term" for four categories of
Pentecostals:
1.   The established Classical Pentecostal denominations e.g. Assemblies of God, Foursquare, Pentecost Holiness Church of God, etc.

2.   The Independent Churches (i.e. newer churches that may claim to be non-denominational but hold to key Pentecostal doctrines and practices).

3.   The Charismatic Movements (i.e. that are part of mainline churches such as Anglican, Catholic, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian and Reformed but as churches or sub-groups in the church who affirm many key Pentecostal doctrines and practices).

4.   The Independent Mega Churches (i.e. huge churches in terms of membership or attendance that deserve their own category because of their international spread and influence). This is where we can classify churches like the Omega Power Ministry (OPM) of our focus in this paper. The Deeper Christian Life Church, The Redeemed Christian Church of God, The Winner's Chapel, The Christ Embassy, The Kingsway International Christian Centre (KICC), etc.

It is in the context of this international spread of such churches that Peter Beyer (2013:1), in a recent work, described such churches as "the Religion of the globalized world", hence he reminds us that religion and globalization are historically, conceptually and institutionally related. And so according to P. Beyer, in this category of Neo-Pentecostalism, therefore, religion appears as both a "contingency expression of the historical process of globalization" and "one of the outcomes of the successive transformations and developments that have brought about contemporary global society".

Ben-Willie Kwaku Gob (2014:201), while informing us that the Pentecostal and charismatic Christians of Ghana alone constitute about 28.3% of Ghana's population, describes the Pentecostal churches of Ghana as churches that have radically redefined the gospel message and the task and mission of evangelism as a core part of their activities in response to the great commission of the Gospel according to St. Matthew chapter 28:19-20. Quoting E.K. Lard (2001), he says that these churches are best described as churches that emerged in the aftermath of the evangelical and charismatic renewals of the 1 960s and I 970s within the social and economic difficulties that faced Ghana at the time, with their message reflecting the situation of the time. This factor is crucial in the next section of this paper, which surveys the history behind the emergence of the Neo-Pentecostal movement in contemporary Africa.

C. The History of Pentecostalism and Charismatism

Various reasons have been advanced as to the emergence of the Pentecostal or charismatic movements of Christianity in Nigeria at the time they emerged, of which the three reasons which summarized their emergence were circumstantial, namely (1) the need for spiritual satisfaction, (2) as a solution to the socio-economic difficulties of African societies and (3) on issues bordering on doctrinal differences or disagreements. A revered church historian, Professor Godwin O.M. Tasie, is of the view that their

emergence represents a reaction to the waning zeal of the organized mission churches in evangelism. Said he,

> The 20th century missionaries had abandoned the traditional direct public preaching for indirect alternative of using social institutions like schools, hospitals and orphanages, leaving a vacuum in the spiritual need of the people.

O.A. Dada (2004:96), attributed their emergence to a means of responding to the social maladies that are affecting the Nigerian and other African nations, namely, poverty, diseases, violence, corruption, etc that have become ever present realities in these nations. Samuel Abogunrin (1986:14), like Godwin Tasie, attributes their emergence in Nigerian context as a means of filling the lacuna in the missionary churches' understanding of salvation, adding that a gospel that seems holistic in character will definitely attract the attention of the people. As he (Abogunrin) put it,

> The salvation of the soul as preached by the missionaries is important, but salvation limited to the soul will be meaningless in the African context. Salvation must be related to man's body, health, victory over demonic powers and continuous protection from these powers. Provision of daily needs, the security of the society in which he lives and man's total wellbeing.

It is in the light of the above that he summarizes the reasons for the popularity and spread of what is now called the prosperity gospel churches as (1) unfavourable socio-economic conditions (2) the long rule of the military (which stipples socio-economic development) and (3) the other missionary churches undue emphasis on "the other worldly" aspect of faith as against "this worldly" aspect".

On the whole, the Pentecostal/charismatic movements in Nigeria, reports C.S. Ndubuisi (1997:28), can be traced back from the antecedents of a Liberian, William Wades Harris in 1914, and the Kalabari born, Garrick Idaketima Braide (from Bakana, Rivers State) in 1918. However, the Neo-Pentecostalism proper according to Ruth Marshall (1995) is said to have found its way in the mid-sixties through the activities of some American Faith Healers and tel-evangelists like Kenneth Hagin, Oral Roberts, Kenneth Coopland, John Avazini, T.I. Oshborne and others.

Teresa Chai (2018:128) informs us that following the granting of independence to many African nations in the 1960s, a parallel development was in the planting of a number of what is now called African Initiated Churches (AIC) in London, largely by African students, diplomats and migrants wherever they were in Europe, due largely to exclusion of Africans from local churches, as well as genuine quest for mission. It was through this process that by the 1990s the next batch of church plantings of what is rightly termed the African Initiated Churches (AIC) have grown to mega churches with international connections and spread across the globe. This is how to explain the mega churches of the Neo-Pentecostals of Matthew Ashimolowo's Kingsway

International Christian Centre (KICC) planted in London in 1992, the Omega Power Ministry of Chibazor Gift Chinyere (OPM), The Embassy of God in Kiev Ukraine by Sunday Adelaja in 1994, The Deeper Christian Life of Williams Kumuyi, T.B. Joshua's Church of All Nations, etc. It is said that one of the fastest growing churches today in Britain is the Redeemed Christian Church of God of Pastor Enoch Adeboye with over 296 new churches in several parts of Britain. It will be recalled that this church was founded in 1952 by Josiah Akindayomi as part of Pentecostal movement. By 1970, he was succeeded by the current General Overseer, Enoch Adeboye through whose leadership and "Holiness lifestyle" emphasis has led this church to grow at such a very rapid rate that it has grown today.

A.O. Dada (2004:97) is of the view that the emergence of dynamic and charismatic NeoPentecostalism preachers in Nigeria properly speaking, started in 1968 by the now late Archbishop Benson Idahosa, who established his Church of God Mission in Benin-City in 1968, and hence he is today being regarded as the father of Neo-Pentecostalism in Nigeria. The 1 980s, however, witnessed an unprecedented upsurge of the Neo-Pentecostal movements in Nigeria, springing up in major cities and towns, with some key neo-Pentecostal leaders such as now late Apostle G.D. Numbere of Greater Evangelism World Crusade Church, David Oyedapo of Living Faith (Winners) Chapel, Francis Wale Oke of The Sword of Spirit Ministries (Christ Life Church), Simeon Okah of Christ Flock World Convention, Ayo Oritsejefor of the Word of Life Bible Church, Dr. Sam Amaga of Foundation Faith Church, Bishop Mike Okonkwo of Christian Charismatic Mission, Apostle Zilly Aggrey of the Royal House of Grace, Pastor Chris Oyakhilome of Christ Embassy Church, David Ibiyeomie of Salvation Ministries and Rev. Dr. Uma Ukpai of Uma Ukpai Evangelistic Association, etc. In all these, one striking fact about the leaders and founders of these new Pentecostal movements is that they all belonged to one of the historic mission churches before they left such churches to find/establish their own neoPentecostal movements due to a number of reasons some of which we had identified earlier in this write-up. Let us at

this juncture examine some of the salient characteristic features of these neo-Pentecostal churches.

D. Characteristics of the Neo-Pentecostal Movements

Central to all the neo-Pentecostal churches is the belief in the transformative power and ability of the Holy Spirit of God in the affairs of an individual, the church and even in all human institutions, and hence Allan Anderson (2004:39) advocates that understanding the pneumatology of these movements is crucial in appraising these "churches of the spirit". The Pentecostals believe that all Christians can experience the same empowerment of the Holy Spirit if the Christian creates the required atmosphere for the Holy Spirit to come in. Next is what John Kwofie (20 14:86) describes as "exuberant worship life" when he declares:

> An emphasis on subjective religious experiences
> and spiritual gifts, claims of supernatural
> miracles, signs and wonders, including language
> of experiential spirituality rather than of theology
> and a mystical life in the spirit, by which they
> daily live out their will of God.

They place emphasis on the purpose of the church as a place of total salvation/deliverance from sin, from sickness, enemies bondages and all known physical and spiritual inhibitions in life. In the opinion of these churches, material poverty is a type of disease from which Christians should endeavour to be healed completely. This is because Christ they claim became poor so that his followers might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9). Hence in their pragmatic sermons/messages, (which applies/interprets Bible passages to suit socio-economic realities of man), success is emphasized as part of God's heritage for his people and members are encouraged to be enterprising and successful as a proof of God's faithfulness and blessings. This is why some describe such pastors as 'prosperity preachers'. In their penetrating study, D. Hunt and T.A. Mc Malon aver that as far as the Pentecostals are concerned,

> Success is the name of the game, not only out
> there in the world, but inside the church as well...
> Not just individual Christians, but churches also
> now pursue success and the larger the church, the
> more successful it is considered to be. Christian
> colleges, seminaries, missions and religious
> organizations are also in the success game and
> most of them look to the techniques of big

> business for running their own affairs. If it works
> for the University of California, why not for a
> Christian college?If it works for General Motors,
> why not for Christian relief organizations?

It is also on the same reasoning that most of the neo-Pentecostals allow their pastors to be meaningfully engaged in money-yielding ventures such as in civil or public service, business ventures that are godly. This they believe will make them not to be a burden to the church of their pastorate but rather as a solution to the church's burdens.

A very important characteristic of note today is the phenomenal growth of the Pentecostal churches. This they do through their aggressive evangelism policy, some of which result from what it often called "sheep-stealing" from membership of older Christian mission churches or even from the weaker Pentecostal movements themselves. In the words of Omenyo (2008:43-44),

> …the explosion, subsequent growth and
> expression of the Pentecostal movements are
> increasingly making Pentecostalism the
> predominant characteristic form of Christianity
> on the African continent. Indeed, African
> Pentecostalism is fast gaining the reputation as
> the most significant development that has taken
> place on the African religious landscape.

The Pentecostals are "praying people", thus relying on the power of the Holy Spirit of God to guide and direct them on what to do, when to do it and, how to do it. Even in matters of evangelism, they pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead them on whom to speak to about the lord, what they should say that will have an effect on the persons and even after the time with them, where to locate the church, etc.

A more recent characteristic of Neo- Pentecostalism is their zeal for what is today known as "reverse mission", the quest for the African preachers and evangelists to now carry the gospel message to Europe and America, who initially were those that brought to Africans the gospel of Christ. The mission now appears "Reversed" as it seems the western world had lost the original gospel they introduced to Africans and hence the mission now has to be "reversed" as demonstrated by the barrage of evangelistic efforts and planting of those Neo- Pentecostal movements in Europe and America as the current trend in these churches. It is also on this basis that these churches have now been described as "globalized Christianity".

Some of the neo- Pentecostals in their quest at contextualization are said and seen to be linked with the traditional religious past of the Africans in what appears to be religious practices associated with African divinatory practices, ancestral rituals and other such African ritualistic contexts. This is more in the African Initiated/Instituted churches of the Aladura (praying churches), Celestial Church of Christ, the Brotherhood of the Cross and Star and the Odozi Obodo type of churches. It is in this context too that one can better understand and appreciate the symbolism and usage of the coconut in the OPM church. That is why in making a two broad classification of churches in Africa, W.L. Avery (1982:84) summarizes African churches into the mainline denominations and the African independent churches. According to W.L. Avery, while in the mainline churches, almost everything about church polity, liturgy, even some personnel, were imported from the west of which they separate it from the indigenous religious life, in the second category, the African Independent Churches, they make adaptations their indigenous religious practices as part of their Christian denominations in the areas of magic and medicine, sacrifices, ancestor-worship, ethics of sexuality, morality, marriages, divination and prophecy, prayer life that are "this worldly"/materialistic.

E. The Church and the "Social Gospel" Phenomenon
Realistically speaking, the question of what we call the "social gospel" need not be a matter of debate, let alone what a church should be reminded of. This is because that is the essence of the whole Christian religion, nay any sincere religion if that religion is not to be perceived to have outlived its usefulness. In fact, Jesus Christ Mission Statement, otherwise called his "manifesto", forecloses his purpose on earth, when the scriptures declare the words of Christ, the owner of the religion thus,

> The spirit of the lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed to proclaim the acceptable year of the lord (Luke 4:18-19).

The Epistle of St. James put it this way:

> If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them. "Go in peace, be warned and filled" without giving them the things needed for the body. What does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no work is dead. (James 2:15-17).

Again, Christ declares copiously,

> When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed-thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me. Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will, answer, Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.' And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matthew 25:31 -46).

From the three biblical passages just cited, it is obvious that Christ and his Christian religion advocate "social gospel". That is, a gospel that takes into consideration the total wellbeing of an individual, the suffering, oppressed, enslaved, helpless, etc., not only the soul (spiritually), but the physical, social and material as well, hence those

who have addressed these social inhibitions by embarking on whatever efforts geared towards liberating humans from the multifaceted problems beclouding humans, especially in our contemporary Nigerian society that is full of sufferings in the midst of plenty are those who can truly be called Christians or pastors. In other words, serving humans who we can see immersed in these multifaceted social problems tantamount to serving Christ/God whom we cannot see. This "social gospel" is also called "practical Christianity". Hence, S.C. Anwasia (2018:17) in his penetrating study in the book, *Making Christianity Work,* had stated the obvious when he remarked,

> With the changing social needs and spiritual challenges of the times, the church is faced with heavier responsibilities in her strive to fulfill her mission and be relevant in the new age. The problem of meeting spiritual, economic and social needs of members and those outside the church remain an arduous task, and call on the church to reconsider its evangelistic strategy and vision with regard to fulfilling the great commission. It requires that the church has to get practical in ministry which of course includes preaching, social actions and reforms.

The import of this will be clearer as we progress in this paper in what Apostle Chibuzor Gift Chinyere's OPM church has been able to achieve.

J. Enuwosa (1998:25) reminds us that in the beginning, churches in Nigeria were not witnessing poverty in the sense of destitution as it appears these days. He attributed this to the fact that the churches incomes then were used to take care of the needs of those less affluent members, but all these changed by the time the church leaders created a class structure that segregates the less affluent members from the bourgeois class, who now personalized the church's income and eroded the near communal life the early Christians were living.

This was why E.A. Odumuyiwa (2007:8) saw the evangelistic strategies of the early Christian mission as social issues, when the problem of church members were addressed as the missionaries provided education, hospitals/clinics, moral upbringing, pastoral visitations to converts, graduates of the mission schools provided with job opportunities to teach in mission schools and colleges, some clerical works, all improving their standard of living and high morality/fear of God instilled in them as a way of offering care for the converts. Visitation to the prisoners in the prisons is a social gospel of the church, which is also biblical as noted in the Matthwean gospel text cited above. One then wonders why any church that is worth its salt should neglect this scriptural mandate, which apart from offering the prisoners some assistance,

would provide the platform for evangelizing to this group of the society thereby contributing to their reformatory processes while in the prison confinement and hence Deji Adegboyi (1997- 130) would say, "through friendly visits on prisoners, prisons' chaplaincies were said to relieve prisoners and endeavoured to put the gospel into practice.

Historically, the inattentiveness of most of the Christian churches to social problems/issues had been attributed to such churches wrong notion of not seeing the world as a corporate whole, but rather arbitrarily splitting the world into the natural and supernatural. In other words, such churches are more concerned with the human souls while neglecting the social needs of man that are equally important to make a total human. Preaching gospel to an empty stomach or internally displaced person without shelter and food will achieve nothing, whereas the provision of food and shelter for such victims would have preached a million sermons at that point in time. This is the point any Christian church of this 2ls century need to factor as part of their evangelistic effort or else they will soon outlive their usefulness. This is the context in which we can evaluate and perhaps, appreciate the magnitude of "social gospel" preached by Apostle Chibuzor Gift Chinyere's Omega Power Ministry (OPM) church of our focus in this paper, as we shall soon reveal.

Time is rife for the churches in Nigeria, rather than to remain aloof or preach only the gospel should be concerned about the social issues affecting humanity, including Christians. Issues bordering on ecological degradation/its sustainability, the poor economy, unemployment, kidnapping, armed robbery and armed banditry, hunger, destitution, corruption and all forms of social maladies of the 2lst century, especially as they affect Nigerians should be of concern to the 21st century churches. It is only in being involved that their gospel messages can make sense to the 21st century humans.

F. Apostle Chibuzor Gift Chinyere's Quest for the Church's "Social Gospel" Efforts

It is not in doubt that various levels of governments of Nigeria had been doing quite a lot in addressing the social issues related challenges confronting the nation over the years. They do this by way of injecting money, supplying of material needs of the citizens concerned at some moments of emergency and perhaps, passing of laws to sustain whatever governments do in this regard, as the case may be. The obvious fact remains that these governmental interventions are not sustainable. A typical example is what happens in all the camps of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), where there are constantly reported cases of neglect and abandonment to the extent that the victims are said to be starving. Besides, the governments are only concerned with the "temporal needs" of the people and not the "spiritual". This gap makes it mandatory for a concerned body such as the church to intervene to fill both the social and spiritual

needs of many socially deprived citizens in their areas of influence. For example, about the year 1850 in New York (USA), reports Amdris (20 10:624), immigrants were said to be flooding the city of New York and no one had the time or money to look after the streets orphans among them, except a 26 year old pastor by name, Charles Loving Brace. He was said to have organized a unique solution by floating what he called "The orphan train". That is, he packed hundreds of orphans on a train heading west of the New York City, and announced to towns along the way that anyone could claim a new son or daughter at any station the orphan train stopped over. By the time the last orphan train steamed west of New York in 1929, about 100,000 children had found new homes and new lives, thus relieving the government of the day of the problem it had no solution to. It is even on record that 2 of such orphans later became American State Governors, 1 served as a US Congressman and 1, a court justice.

It is therefore, in this context that we can better appreciate what Apostle Chibuzor Gift Chinyere's OPM church is doing at this stage of the 21St century neo-Pentecostalism in Nigeria. While criticizing the mission churches of Nigeria for not addressing adequately the social needs of her members in this regard, S.O. Abogunrin (1997:130) remarks that a salvation which does not cover the total man and his needs cannot be meaningful in the African context. He added that salvation must be related to man's body, health, victory over demonic powers, provision of daily needs, the security and the total wellbeing of the society in which he lives.

M.M. Eboh (2011:69) is not mincing words when he asserts that the church cannot remain complacent in the presence of great poverty ravaging African nations. Apostle Gift Chibuzor Chinyere adequately understands and appreciates the magnitude of poverty ravaging many Nigerians and hence he decided to take the bull by the horn and invest the resources his church generates in order to help government solve the hydra-headed social problems of this country. Again, in view of the fact that members of his church and even those outside his fold, including non-Christians and non-Nigerians seeing and appreciating what he is investing the resources accruing to the church on; they have no option than to key in to his social gospel agenda.

The Omega Power Ministry (OPM) of Apostle Chinyere is certainly one of the mega neoPentecostals that has assumed a globalized context and as such, is conversant with global expectations of the citizens upon the church and her leadership in the 21st century Christianity without which the church becomes a write-off. This is against the background that with her global connections, it has the wherewithal to attract the goodwill of some international charity organizations, so long as their aids or magnanimity will be guaranteed and utilized for the purpose they are donated, rather

than for self-aggrandizement. They will be willing to partner with such forward-looking churches in any part of the world, Nigeria inclusive.

Another remarkable factor necessitating the social gospel mandate of Apostle Chibuzor Gift Chinyere is the fact that many of those who flock the Apostle Chinyere's OPM church are those who belong to other Christian denominations, no doubt, but felt that their financial investments in such churches are either not visibly or properly utilized or even appreciated and perhaps, those who leave or quit their churches on account of what they termed undue insistence, rigidity, conservatism and dogmatism, especially among the mission churches. Perhaps, unknown to such churches, most religious people, including those in Christian congregations adopt utilitarian attitude to religion/church, and hence such members are very ready to dump any religious organizations that fail to give them what utilitarian value they expect from it and embrace any other one, no matter what name it goes by in order to satisfy their spiritual and material values in life. Apostle Chibuzor Gift Chinyere's OPM church thus becomes a handy alternative to such worshippers. Just as I had observed elsewhere at my Inaugural Lecture some years ago, (Wotogbe-Weneka, 20 12:69) "And so, it is not about religion, per see, but doing (even if unconsciously), what religion requires that matter".

Below are the summary of what Apostle Chibuzor Gift Chinyere's OPM church had been able to accomplish in the church's quest to be faithful to the divine "social gospel" mandate in barely less than fourteen years of the existence of this church as obtained from the Media Department of the church, which we state verbatim as follows:

1. OPM Free Specialist Hospital
The kind hearted man of God shook the media and blew the minds of the people by launching the first free world class hospital targeted at pregnant women so that the alarming rate of maternal mortality can be reduced. The hospital wards are built in suites, personal toilets and bathrooms with TVs and air conditioners so that the patients are comfortable.

It has a serene environment, a standby generator, free kitchen services, state of art equipments, brilliant ambulances, qualified health practitioners, a standard pharmacy with a professional pharmacist, multiple delivery wards, world class imported equipments, etc. Just like the free school is free, the specialist hospital is also open to every less privileged pregnant woman. Drugs, antenatal care, post natal care, delivery bags and clothings are free in the hospital. Religion (Islam /Christianity) and church denomination isn't a disqualifying factor as the church is void of any form of discrimination. Even though the hospital is world class, it is exclusive to the less privileged.

2. OPM Free Schools
The church operates free schools where children from the underprivileged homes, orphans and widows irrespective of religion, tribe or cultural background are giving quality education for free. As at February 2019, the church operates ten of such schools spread across the following states.
1. Abia State (Ohanku)
2. Rivers State (Elikpokwuodu, Eleme, Etche, Isiokpo, Borokiri, Oyigbo and Victoria Town)
3. Bayelsa State (Yenagoa)
4. Akwa Ibom State (Ikpe in Essien Udim L.G.A)

In the words of Apostle Chibuzor, Church schools must be free in line with how the early missionaries brought education to us. In fact, he believes it is wickedness for a church to open a school and put the school fees very expensive that children of worshipers who contribute the tithe and offering cannot afford it. He in 2015 sponsored pupils from OPM Free School to Paris France on an all expenses paid excursion trip. Everything for quality learning is free at these schools like free 4 sets of uniforms, free shoes and sandals, free lunch, free books etc. and the teachers are top notch. It must be noted that this is in addition to a lot of scholarship funding the church is providing to the indigent children across other schools from kindergarten to universities. During his 45th birthday in October 2018, he launched Operation 45,000 children must be taken out of the street and taken to school. He recently rejected a Rolls Royce birthday gift preferring the money be channeled into opening more OPM Free Schools. Little wonder why he won the Timeless' Best Pastor of the year 2018 and now known as the Icon of Free Education.

3. OPM Foundation Free Skill Acquisition Training Center (FOSATC):
Situated at 62 Circular Road Elekahia Housing Estate Port Harcourt, FOSATC is a center that targets to empower humanity by providing opportunity of free skills learning especially in a society where white collar jobs have remained a mirage thereby reducing the vices that an unemployed youth population can cause on the society. The FOSATC has been accredited by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity and most of their products now either gainfully employed or self-employed.

The following courses with their duration of training are currently available at FOSATC

1. Oil Rig and Operations (4 Months)
2. Oil Well Drilling, Completion and Productions Technology (1 year)
3. Furniture Making (6 months)
4. Marine Engineering (1 year 3 months)
5. Health, Safety and Environment HSE 1,2, and 3 (4 months)
6. Computer Software and Engineering (4 months)
7. Pipeline Welding (1 year)
8. Electrical/Mechanical Engineering (1 year)
9. Tailoring (1 year)
10. Driving (4 months)
11. Paint manufacturing (4 months)
12. Scaffolding (4 months)

For Apostle Chibuzor and OPM, all the above skills are fully funded from the church tithe and offering and the beneficiaries bear no financial cost.

Other Humanitarian Activities (Social Gospel in our context):
4. OPM Free Restaurant: Located opposite SARS Rumuaghalu, hungry members of the public walk in and eat for free irrespective of religion, tribe or culture. The church recently renamed it the Leah Sharibu Free Restaurant in honour of Leah Sharibu, the prisoner of faith who has been under the captivity of Boko Haram in the Northern Nigeria for refusing to give up on her Christian faith

5. OPM Free Estates: Located across different areas in Port Harcourt (Aluu, Rumuigbo, Rumuokwurushi) they provide free housing to the homeless.

6. OPM Divine Market: Located within Doctor Jesus City, it is a stretch of stalls where selling and buying activities take place without paying a dime to the church. Over 80% of traders at this market were given start-up capital from the tithe and offering.

7. OPM Free Farm: The church earmarked 100 plots of land within AluulRukpokwu axis and allotted them for free to indigent members of the public for farming while also providing money to them to buy improved seedlings.

8. Rehabilitation of repentant cultists, armed robbers, kidnappers, prostitutes etc:
The church has stood out in this area thereby reducing crime rate in the society by providing means of livelihood to them and through prayers they have renounced their old habits and reintegrated into the society. The Diobu invasion in 2016 where prostitutes were dragged out from brothels was a hit and most of them now married

9. Rehabilitation of prospective baby selling syndicate: In 2018, the then Commissioner of Police Rivers State and his team bursted into some baby factories where pregnant ladies hoping to deliver and sell off their babies were arrested and they were brought to OPM for rehabilitation. Fifteen of such ladies were accommodated in an estate, seen through their deliveries with promise of empowerment after that.

10. OPM free transport, free boutique and free food.
11. On Monday 29, July, 2019, this Apostle Chibuzor Gift Chinyere commissioned an apartment of more than 50 self-contained rooms and flats as free estate at Aluu for homeless destitute under the bridge, pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers picked up by the Police and handed over to the OPM, the born-throw away babies and their mothers picked up from the dustbins, pregnant mothers and mothers with their sucklings under the bridge, and many orphans, all to be housed in this free estate he just commissioned.

In the next section of this paper, we shall appraise/assess Apostle Chibuzor Gift Chinyere's "social gospel" projects.

G. An Appraisal of Apostle Chibuzor Gift Chinyere's "Social Gospel" Projects
One of the negative criticisms often leveled against the Pentecostal movements, including the 21st century neo-Pentecostals is that these are churches whose leaders' utmost purpose is to amass wealth to themselves, families and their cronies while their numerous clienteles wallow in abject poverty. This is corroborated by the fact that many of the leaders (G.Os) of such churches, own their private jets, while some have established private universities that expand their material coasts in the midst of their many suffering members. This phenomenon is thus justifying Karl Marx's critique of religion when he held the view that "religion is the opium of the masses", used by the bourgeois class to suppress or delude the proletariat, with the illusory promise to them of a better place in heaven. I want to believe that were Karl Marx alive today, he and his modem denigrators of religion would have rescinded their earlier negative notion of religion on seeing what some religious leaders like Apostle Chibuzor Gift Chinyere are doing with the church's resources at their disposal in championing the course of the ordinary and vulnerable members of their churches and the society at large in this 21st century. And so, an assessment/appraisal of the social gospel of this Apostle Chibuzor Gift Chinyere OPM church will certainly debunk the views expressed by scholars like 0. Igwara (1995:327-353) that "religions of all faiths are above all big business and that the proliferation of churches primarily serves the interests of their leaders".

It thus remains unimaginable that some of the churches who have the wherewithal to generate income would be ignorant of the suffering of members of their respective churches. In Apostle Chibuzor's case, his magnanimity knows no religious, ethnic or

parochial limitations and hence you find non-Christians as beneficiaries of his "social gospel", so long as one belongs to this targeted vulnerable! helpless category of the society. Again, while in some other neoPentecostals, they use their own resources in embarking on white elephant/glamorous projects and even schools and universities beyond the reach of their vulnerable church members whose elementary/basic needs they even neglect, Apostle Chibuzor utilizes his own in taking care of the needier members of his church and societies in order to impact positively on people's lives. Apostle Chibuzor by his magnanimity thus agrees with Amba Oduyoye (1977:70) in his view that "the church that proclaims the command clothe the naked, feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, must aiso do something to supply such to her needier members. This is the condition A. Dzurgba (1987:42) refers to when he says that the kingdom of God which Christ proclaims is a kingdom in which the people will live in love and fellowship with one another, and humans will be willing to share their possession, the hungry fed, the thirty given water, the naked clothed, the homeless sheltered, the captives released, the oppressed liberated, the poor cared for and the sick healed.

The Nigerian nation today is in great need for prudence, transparency and accountability in the use of resources entrusted to persons in position of authority and churches and religious leaders are naturally expected to lead the way. Apostle Chibuzor Gift Chinyere by his proven examples has demonstrated that the church and her leaders by their character can indeed play a leading role in the struggle for prudence, transparency and accountability. As J.U. Idialu (2005:60) would say, "those in position of leadership in the church should lead by example".

By establishing those free schools where the almost forgotten would have opportunity to acquire skillful education, the graduates of such schools will eventually become useful to themselves, useful to their families, the church and society at large and in the process, become employers of labour rather than seeking for the almost absent white collar jobs of the present Nigerian society. It is in this light that I recommend that governments of the day should see Apostle Chibuzor Gift Chinyere and his church as partners in progress and grant them substantial financial subventions and to any other church that is doing what this church is doing. In fact, by his social gospel that are visibly acknowledged by beneficiaries and admirers, Apostle Chibuzor Gift Chinyere has popularized and brought to the fore the utility and functional values of religion such that today, rather than write-off religion as a useless and dependable variable of Karl Marx and his fellow notorious religious denigrators. Religion is today seen and accepted as an independent variable which makes very important social contributions to justify its existence in this 2l' century churches, which includes the neo-

Pentecostals. And this is the social function of a social institution of Emile Durkheim and his fellow functionalist theorists.

H. Some Final Remarks

There is no denying the fact that the neo-Pentecostal movements and the understanding of what Christianity is all about as demonstrated by the Apostle Chibuzor's OPM church have become a reality in this 2ls century. It is also a fact that their rapid expansion could be attributed to this their understanding of the social gospel emphasis in view of the prevailing socio-economic challenges facing the country. There is also no doubt that their methodological approaches have influenced the older mission churches, in fact, causing some ripples in some of such churches as some members of the mission churches drift to the Pentecostals in today's Nigeria. Most of these older mission churches have now remembered once again the "social gospel" on which they started their evangelization of the country in the early 19th and 20th centuries Nigerian Christianity. It goes without doubting that so long as the current social malaise of the country lasts, more of such concerned churches will-emerge, just as G.A. Oshitelu (200 1:94) notes that "as poverty increases, there is noticeable phenomenal increase in the establishment of churches".

The neo-Pentecostals as demonstrated by the activities of the Omega Power Ministry of Apostle Chibuzor Gift Chinyere has made the world to realize that religion, nay the church is an important and useful social institution contrary to the earlier public opinion on the church. For example, some of the courses taught by the University of Port Harcourt's Department of Religious and Cultural Studies today are courses meant to see how religion is affecting and influencing or contributing to other aspects of social institutions other than itself e.g. in RCS 902.1 "Contemporary Themes in Comparative Religion", the following themes are analysed as how the various religious traditions of mankind are grappling with them, namely, Religion & Globalization, Religion & Economy, Religion & Ecological degradation/sustainability, Religion & Poverty Alleviation, Religion and Disease Control, Religion & Bio-Ethical Issues, Religion and the Mass Media, Religion and Gender issues, Religion and Secularism etc.

The neo-Pentecostals by their activities in the "social gospel", which are the dominant humanitarian and philanthropic values of a globalized world, have thus promoted and socialized these values. But there is need for partnership/collaborative efforts among these churches for a more effective impact on the activities of the "social gospel" in the society. It is recommended that more neo-Pentecostals, indeed all Christian churches should borrow a leaf from the Apostle Chibuzor Gift Chinyere's OPM

example in the "social gospel" crusade. For sure, more will be achieved and the society at large will be better for it.

I. Conclusion

At this concluding stage, there is need to reiterate some of the salient points made earlier in this paper. That the 2l century neo-Pentecostal churches have made tremendous impact in the spiritual and physical development of the country as epitomized in the activities of Apostle Chibuzor Gift Chinyere's Omega Power Ministry. One thing is certain here, that while trusting in the ability of God to intervene in the affairs of humans, by depending on Him completely is necessary, doing something practically to actualize this is equally important and will receive the blessing of God as even enjoined in the Christian scriptures that "if anyone will not work, let him not eat..." (2 Thessalonians 3:10-13).

Secondly, that Christians in Nigeria, whether as pastors/priests or members, must realize that "social gospel" mandate is the purpose for which Christ died on the cross for ultimately Christianity is a religion of salvation, liberation, deliverance as well as social impact, for just as Wotogbe-Weneka (2011:224) reminds us "reducing the sufferings of the poor is one of the ways whereby Christians in Nigeria can demonstrate the love of Christ among their people". While appreciating the Apostle Chibuzor Gift Chinyere's OPM church in the good works he is doing as evidently noticed, and urging him to continue, let me also caution that more other churches, not only of the neo-Pentecostals, who may want to join in this worthy "social gospel" mandate after this paper presentation should equally borrow a leaf from his pattern of prudence, accountability and transparency. There should be no manipulating of the members, otherwise it will make nonsense of the entire phenomenon.

Finally, all Christians, irrespective of denominations, should realize that time has come for them to come together than ever before in prayer and "social gospel" actions, like in the case of the OPM church, so as to confront their common enemies of this 2l century, namely, secularism (and its effects on the church), and the Boko Haram religious insurgency. This should be "a food for thought" for the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), and its ancillary families at the moment, not denominational rivalries and bickering as it is currently the case.

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) AND THE PARADOX OF HUMAN EXISTENCE: A RELIGIO-PHILOSOPHICAL EVALUATION

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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as one of the most transformative technologies of our time, promising ground breaking advancements in various domains, from healthcare to transportation. While most scientists concur that artificial intelligence (AI) technology has provided excellent platforms for developing tools that will improve human quality of life on earth, there are a number of others who have identified existential and ontological risks connected with the proliferation of AIs. As AI systems become increasingly integrated into our lives, they also raise complex religio-philosophical questions that demand careful consideration. The conundrum of human existence in the age of artificial intelligence (AI) was investigated in this study in light of the potentials, ramifications, and fears of AI, as well as the question of whether machines are capable of thinking, achieving consciousness, free will, sensations, or emotions, or bearing the likeness of God. Using philosophical method, the paper argued that despite the fact that technology improvements make people happy, one should not undervalue or ignore the effects and difficulties they may bring.

Key Words: Artificial Intelligence, Human, Philosophy, Robots

Introduction

The questions about what it means to be human are perennial and persist from generation to generation. We have seen how these questions have occupied both the Western Judaeo-Christian religious tradition, and much of Western philosophy. Today, however, while we remain biologically the same, our social and technological circumstances are strikingly different to that experience by figures such as Aristotle. Today, the human is becoming ever more involuted with the technology it has invented. As robotics, AI and transhumanism continue to integrate with our lives there has been continual growth in questions about the nature and future of the human. With its iteration, humans continue to confront the search for what we are and how we experience life. Technology has revolutionised what we do in many aspects of our lives and is indubitably a wonderful tool and resource. It is vital in many different situations, from advances such as nanomedicine used to diagnose various diseases (Ghosh 2019), to simpler tasks, for example almost anything can be delivered to one's house, from luxury goods and homewares to weekly groceries.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a field of study among contemporary scientists, is founded on the supposition that the feature of 'Intelligence'- a feature initially believed to be typical and solely associated with beings known as *Homo sapiens* alone - is today, also possible to simulate and duplicate in non-living things such as artefacts and machines.The acceptance of this notion among scientists and scholars of AI research from the beginning of this dispensation has raised philosophical, ontological and existential questions about the nature of the mind in individuals who are perceived as the only class of beings capable of partaking in the feature of 'intelligence'. This reality for scholars like McCorduck, raises vital questions about the bounds of scientific proclamations and endeavours, which have been exemplified, discussed and presented in scientific fictions, mythologies, and in philosophical debates for decades now (McCorduck, 2004).

Today, however, the argument has gone beyond whether machines possess a mind of their own or whether they can indeed think for themselves. The real challenge for scholars seems to be that these machines are developing to the point of acquiring super-intelligent capabilities in the nearest future, to the disadvantage of human. Scholars like Fallenstein, Benya in his work, corroborate this when he noted that:

> …intelligent machines have transformed and are presently at the verge of acquiring super-intelligent capabilities, a scenario feared would grant machines the domineering advantage with which to relegate its human counterpart to unimaginable conditions and situations, a scenario feared would take place earlier than was initially expected (Marquart, 2017:25).

Are humans and machine really in competition with each other? The history of work — particularly since the Industrial Revolution — is the history of people outsourcing their labor to machines. While that began with rote, repetitive physical tasks like weaving, machines have evolved to the point where they can now do what we might think of as complex cognitive work, such as math equations, recognizing language and speech, and writing. Machines thus seem ready to replicate the work of our minds, and not just our bodies. In the 21st century, AI is evolving to be superior to humans in many tasks, which makes that we seem ready to outsource our intelligence to technology. With this latest trend, it seems like there's nothing that cannot soon be automated, meaning that no job is safe from being offloaded to machines. This vision of the future of work has taken the shape of a zero-sum game, in which there can only be one winner.

This has dictated the necessity of the question; is there another mind like mine? This study examined the paradox of human existence in the age of Artificial Intelligence (AI); and further investigates if machine can think; achieve consciousness, freewill, feelings or emotions, and the image of God.

What is Artificial Intelligence (AI)?

John McCarthy first used the term Artificial Intelligence (AI) in 1956 when he hosted the first academic conference on the topic. However, there is no single, accepted definition of AI; it is more commonly thought of as a field of study with the objective of comprehending and creating intelligent entities that fall under the categories of thinking, acting humanely, and behaving rationally. To put it another way, it is the science of programming machines to perform tasks that require intellect from a human (Minskey, 2007). These intelligent systems' and programmes' goal is to imitate human consciousness and carry out human-like functions. According to Russell and Norvig (2010), the following categories can be used to classify AI:

1. Systems that Think Like Humans: These involve thinking processes like decision-making, problem-solving, and learning, among others.
2. Systems that Think Rationally: Computational models are used to examine mental capabilities. They are able to perceive reason and take action as a result.
3. Human-like Systems: These machines carry out tasks that would require intelligence from a human.
4. Systems that Operate Rationally: These devices feature intelligent agent-like designs.

Artificial intelligence refers to software emulating the functionality of human intelligence. It is a form of intelligence used widely in many forms of technology, and industry, such as computers, machinery, factory processes and robotics. It has many applications in society today. For example, it is currently used in the medical field for diagnosis, predicting diseases, and assisting with clinical decision making. The military uses it in various applications for security and surveillance. It is used in farming and agriculture. We use AI to run autonomous vehicles such as driverless trains on London's Docklands Light Rail, self-driving cars and aeroplanes; and it is used in facial and speech recognition. Then there are the everyday uses of AI that are found in chatbots, often used in the replacement of humans in customer service roles. AI is the tool used to filter spam in your email. If you have a social media account you are using AI, Banking apps, Netflix, Google maps and web searches are all powered by AI. The scope of applications is impressive as to how multifaceted AI is, there is no doubt that AI has already affected how we work, live, and entertain ourselves.

Types of Artificial Intelligence
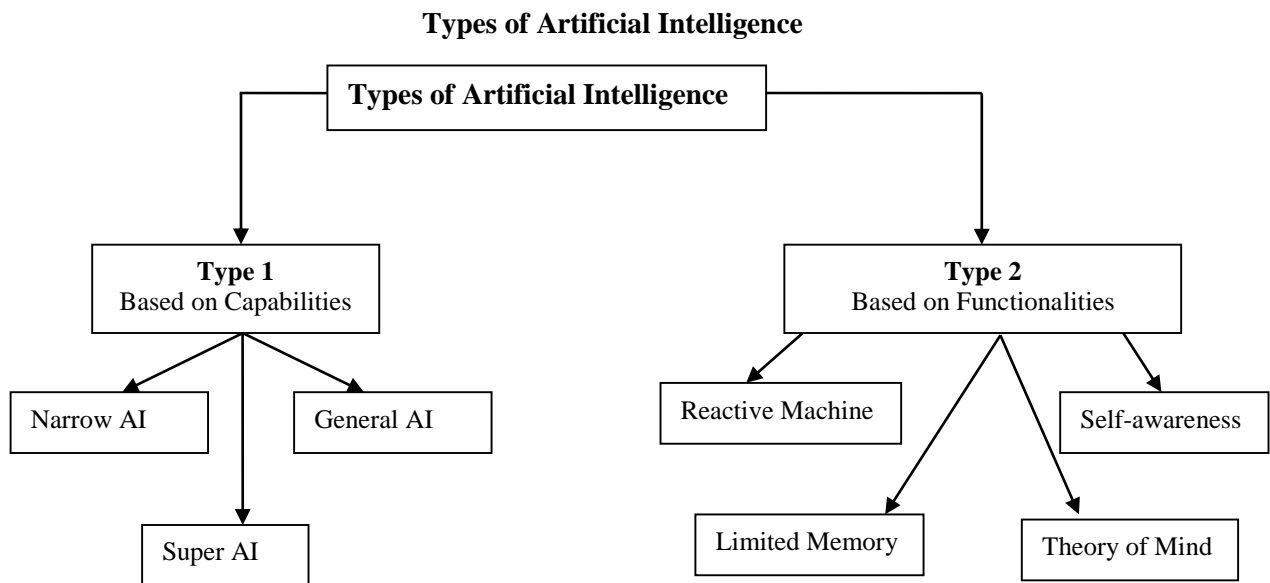
Fig. 1 Types of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Type 1 (Based on Capabilities)

(1) The Artificial Narrow Intelligence (ANI) or Weak AI: It is a form of AI system that has been developed and trained for a particular task. Examples of poor AI include IBM Watson, Siri, and Alexa. Unsupervised programming is used to perform this categorisation.

(2) Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) or strong AI or Human – Level AI: It can carry out commands and execute unfamiliar activities thanks to its cognitive ability. It goes beyond a pre-programmed algorithm and can solve problems. For instance, visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and language translation

(3) Artificial Super Intelligence (ASI): This is a level of intelligence that is considerably above that of humans. According to Bostom (2004), ASI is "any intellect that greatly exceeds the cognitive performance of humans in practically all domains of interest." The worry is that, in the event that computers were to seize control of numerous crucial systems, the outcome may be chaos, with humans losing control of their fate at best and annihilation at worst.

Type 2 (Based on Functionalities)

(i) **Reactive Machine AI:** Reactive machines are simple in that they don't keep "memories" or base their decisions on the past. They merely take in the environment and respond to it. The chess grandmaster Kasporov was defeated by IBM's Deep Blue, a reactive computer that can perceive the pieces on the board and respond to them. It is unable to draw on any of its prior knowledge and cannot get better with practise.

(ii) **Limited Memory AI:** Machines with limited memory can only save data for a brief amount of time. They are permitted to utilise this information for a limited time, but they are not permitted to contribute it to a collection of their experiences. Many self-driving cars have limited memory technology, which allows them to store data like the speed of surrounding cars recently, their distance from them, the posted speed limit, and other road-navigational information.

(iii) **Theory of Mind AI:** According to psychology, people's actions are influenced by their thoughts, feelings, memories, and mental models. By creating representations of the environment and of other agents and entities in it, Theory of Mind researchers aim to create computers that mimic human mental models. One objective of these researchers is to create computers that can relate to people, understand human intelligence, and recognise how

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situations and the environment affect people's emotions. Although many computers employ models, there is currently no such thing as a computer that has a "mind." C-3PO, R2-D2, and Sonny from the 2004 film I, Robot are a few examples.

(iv) **Self-Aware AI:** Although many AI enthusiasts consider self-aware machines to be the ultimate objective of AI development, they are still the stuff of science fiction. Even if a machine can perform human-like functions like self-preservation, anticipating needs and wants, and treating others equally, the question of whether a machine may develop true self-awareness or "consciousness" is better left to philosophers. Examples include Eva from the 2015 film Ex Machina and Synths from the 2015 television programme Humans.

In other words, while Strong AI is a theoretical model of machine intelligence that takes it to be comparable to human intelligence, meaning that AI has to ability to learn, reason, make judgements, solve puzzles and problems, and communicate (Bartneck et al. 2020, 10). Some experts believe that Strong AI is capable of displaying behaviours that we would normally associate with human intelligence; in fact, some believe that AI will be able to surpass all forms of human abilities and that Strong AI will eventually have the ability to act with generalised rationality, be able to reason, show consciousness and empathy and be self-aware as an autonomous mind (Bartneck et al. 2020, 10).

Human versus Artificial Intelligence

Usually, when artificial intelligence (AI) is compared to human intelligence, it is done in predominantly, if not exclusively, 'quantitative' terms; that is, along lines which 'measure' AI's capacity for abstract 'reasoning', such as calculation. This is intuitively the case, judging by numerous conversations ordinary people have about AI in various forms, most often that of the computer, where it is usually discussed in terms of its powerful calculating abilities. This section will examine whether machine can think and achieve consciousness, freewill, feelings or emotions and soul.

Can a Computer be Intelligent?

Turing wanted to answer the question, "Can a computer be intelligent?" He created a hypothetical test to detect artificial intelligence: the idea was to see if a person could differentiate or not between a computer and a human by asking both a set of questions via a text-only channel. If the outcome is that more often than not people could not distinguish the difference between a computer and a human, the hypothesis was that intelligence the same as human intelligence should be ascribed to the computer (Oppy 2019). There are 50 years of objections to Turing's test.

Searle's 1980 Chinese Room Argument (Cole, 2020) is an attempt to critique the idea that passing the Turing Test merits being called intelligent. Searle argues that programs like the Turing Test are only based on a set of instructions and that merely being able to follow instructions mechanically does not equal being intelligent or thinking; he reinforces this by a thought experiment called The Chinese Room Argument (Cole, 2020). In this thought experiment, a person is left alone in a room and are given messages in Chinese which they do not understand, with a manual to identifying these. They then are given messages in Chinese from someone in another room. Using the manual, the person can respond appropriately leaving the person in the other room to believe they are chatting to someone who understands Chinese. Searle argues that a computer is the same, taking this to mean that the program does not understand anything nor have any intelligence, it merely simulates it, responsive only to the shapes of the signs and not to meaning (Funke, 2017). In conclusion, Searle postulates that programs/algorithms can only follow rules as interpreted in the way they are specific to interpret them. A computer can appear intelligent but that is not *real* understanding. It is not sensitive to things like semantics and meaning based on its functioning (Cole, 2020). Therefore, there is no real-world understanding, not true cognition; no true human intelligence can be found in AI. The programme that passes the Turing Test can put things in an order being sensitive to formal properties like shape and order of occurrence, but it does not know what each word or any string of signs means, and this is essential for intelligence.

Another problem with Alan Turing's work is that he does not provide us with a substantial definition of what intelligence is. He only provides an operational test: this is a kind of definition of a theoretical concept: intelligence as whatever it is causally enabling certain kinds of behaviour. Computer scientist and philosopher Selmer Bringsjord is one of many who elaborate inadequacies with Turing's conception of intelligence as a theoretical concept. Firstly, Bringsjord espouses that AI will never accomplish true human intelligence (Pearson, 2014). He has, however, helped refine the issue that arises around if a computer can be creative, as one of the creators of the Lovelace Test, named after Lord Byron's daughter Ada Lovelace, who worked on Charles Babbage's Analytical Engine. This test is a more sophisticated assessment that detects a computer's ability to create art or be creative (Rield, 2014). It focuses more on autonomous intelligence, where the outcome is to show whether a program can create something original. To date, no computer has been able to pass this test (News, 2020). This test argues intelligence sits with the programmer and not the computer program; programs are unable to be authentically original in whatever intelligence they have (Rield, 2014). This means that whatever intelligence these systems contain is a

kind of courtesy in the way we treat them, not something they have of themselves. So, computers are 'educated' (or conditioned) by their programming.

Another example of good old-fashioned Artificial Intelligence (GOFAI) or (symbolic AI) is Deep Blue, a purpose-built computer that defeated chess grandmaster Garry Kasparov in 1997 (Campbell, Hoane and Hsu, 2002). Developed by IBM and known for being the first AI system, starting in 1985, this was 50 years in the making (Campbell, Hoane and Hsu, 2002). The idea behind the program was to measure the ability of Artificial Intelligence versus human intelligence. Chess was considered a good case study for the future of what AI versus humanity might look like. Of course, the reality is that it is merely an exhaustive database containing every chess move made in every recorded game. What made it able to 'defeat' Garry Kasparov was a retrieval/ search function far faster than a human. Clearly, human intelligence is more involved than the Deep Blue system's search/retrieval routines (Campbell, Hoane and Hsu, 2002).

It is interesting to think that some believe algorithms and robotics can replace us as humans, with so many examples of failures and limitations within what AI can do. Surely, our reasons for confidence that they could replace human beings in our brain functions, or our most important relationships have to diminish in the light of these failures and limitations. As Searle states, "How did we get into this mess? How could anyone suppose that a computer simulation of a mental process must be the real thing? After all, the whole point of models is that they contain only certain features of the modelled domain and leave out the rest (Searle, 1990). He concludes that the human brain, its 'mental phenomena 'is singular, not something that can be recreated in a system (Searle, 1990). It is fair to conclude that AI and intelligent technologies have many advantages; it can do certain tasks faster and more accurately than most humans can. It does, at times, make life easier. Indeed, the computational possibilities are hard to imagine. But it does not consist, and we do not know how to make it so, of the complexities or configuration of the human. And without it being able to do so, it will not be able to maintain friendships and relationships in the same way a human to human can.

Can Machine think like Human?

Thinking, believing, laughing and feeling are humanly activities. A robot's having humanly feelings means it's being a human, as Hamilton says (Hamilton, 2021). In his 1950 article, *Computing Machinery and Intelligence,* the famous Alan Turing wrote of the future of computing. When asked "can machines think?" he replies, "I believe it is too meaningless to deserve discussion. Nevertheless, I believe that at the end of the century the use of words and general educated opinion will have

altered so much that one will be able to speak of machines thinking without expecting to be contradicted" (Turing, 1950). Turing's foresightedness certainly deserves appreciation. Although it is possible for computers to speak, this can only be within "the instructed" framework. Otherwise, this means getting out of the program imposed on them. In many homes and pockets today is a technology that comes close to fulfilling Turing's prediction. Whether using Siri, Cortana, Alexa, or Google Assistant nearly anyone is able to ask a question and get a human-like response in real time. Even though some responses fail, one is not likely to be discouraged in imagining that in the near future a pocket assistant will appear able to imitate human interaction. What does this mean for intelligence in general, the human mind, and the human person?

Thinking is an essential property of the mind. Even though Descartes' argument that the mind is distinct from the body fails, the general point that Descartes wants to make remains a challenge. It is that if the mind has essential properties that are not shared by the body, then it must be distinct from the body. The principle he uses is: *If X has at least one property which Y cannot have, then X and Y are not identical.* In fact, if X has a property which nothing else has, then that property is the essential property of X. That is it is the property which makes X what it is and makes X distinct from all the other things.

Thus when Socrates asks Euthyphro to give a single definite characteristic that makes piety what it is, he is asking Euthyphro to tell him the essential property of piety. An example is Aristotle's definition of man (human beings) which is: Man is a rational animal. What he meant is that humans are a kind of animals, but they share a characteristic which marks them off from all the other animals which is the characteristic of being rational or having reason. No other animals have this property, thus being rational is the essential property of human beings. (Aristotle has been proved wrong, but what really matters is that the idea of an essential property is illuminated by his definition). Descartes wants to point out that the property of indubitability is the essential property of the mind. In other places, he lists other essential properties that the mind has but the body does not have. The issue is whether these so-called essential properties of the mind can be explained in terms of physicality. If they can, then they are not essential properties of the mind at all, but are properties that some physical things also have; and thus the mind is not distinct from the body.

Thinking is an essential property of the mind and upon an attempt to invalidate the claim. The reason why I will do this is because Descartes gives prominence to it in his argument and this leads people who argue against his thesis to do the same. But

thinking is only one mental state among many, the question thus must be asked why Descartes should focus upon it. It is clear that Descartes believes that thinking is something unique to the mind, and that the thinking mind is unique to humans. He believes that animals and machines built to be like humans do not have reason. They therefore do not have a mind. His assumptions can be put in the following way:

> For a thing to have a mind it must have reason.
>
> For a thing to have reason it must be able to think.

His argument is that there are two tests whether these non-humans have reason or not and they fail the test. The first test is that anything that has reason must be able to use language. Both animals and machines fail the test. Animals can only imitate words and sentences uttered by us; machines can only put words into particular sequences as programed by us. Both cannot put those words into various sentences to express different things. To be able to do that requires the use of reason and thus failure to do so shows that animals and machines do not have reason. The second test is a generalization of the first. Animals and machines might be able to perform certain tasks far better than us, but they cannot invent new tasks apart from those determined by nature or by human artifice. This shows that they do not have reason. In the case of machines, to make a machine perform a different task than what it is designed to do requires putting in another set of parts to perform another task. To keep on adding parts so they can perform like humans is improbable. Humans can use reason to think of ways to do various tasks. In short, Descartes assumes that reason is inventive; in other words, reason is free to go beyond instinct. To prove that machines can think, one has to prove that a machine can pass the tests. (Can you think of other criterions different from the ones Descartes uses? Tell me what you think.)

In other words, God has given an immortal soul to every man and woman, but not to any other animal or to machines. Hence no animal or machine can think. I am unable to accept any part of this, but will attempt to reply in theological terms. I should find the argument more convincing if animals were classed with men, for there is a greater difference, to my mind, between the typical animate and the inanimate than there is between man and the other animals. As the saying goes, imitation is the most sincere form of flattery, yet very few assume imitation to be equivalence. An original masterpiece may be worth millions while a copy, no matter how exact the resemblance, would yield just a fraction of the price. I propose that there is more to thought than a machine will ever be capable of. The imitation game, while reproducing an imitation that is something like human thinking and interaction, will never achieve that same unique mode of thinking we experience as human species.

Can Machine Achieve Consciousness?

The topic of consciousness is addressed within the wider framework of questioning human nature and human distinctiveness. It is frequently considered as the pinnacle of the brain, and something that is impossible to confer to machines. However, discussion on what constitutes consciousness can be traced back in history to philosophers such as René Descartes (1596-1650) who formulated that only humans can experience consciousness and that consciousness was a state of mind. Anything else, such as animals, he classified as unthinking automata (Frith & Rees, 2017).

Artificial intelligence explains the concept of consciousness is very mechanical and artificial way. It explains consciousness in terms of the computational functions of the brain, and so it fails to account for the creative features of consciousness. Consciousness, along with its semantic properties, remains autonomous so far as the ontology of the mental is concerned. Cognitivists' explanation of the inner eliminates the very notion of consciousness and its semantic features. It fails to see the significance of the notion of human consciousness and its semantic features.

Besides, AI removes the explanatory gap between mind and body, because according to it, there is no distinction between mind and between the mental activities and the mechanical functions of brain. In other words, consciousness makes the mind-body problem really intractable. The reductionists deny that, there is a mind-body problem at all. For them, there is no explanatory gap between mind and body, because there is no distinction between mind and body. Mind can be explained in terms of body, and there is nothing called the mind, since the mind itself is a part of the body. Therefore, for them, the mind is reductively explainable in terms of body. On the other hand, many philosophers hold that mental states are not reducible to any physical state(s). That is, the mental states are not reductively explainable. That is to say that that no reductive explanation of consciousness can succeed, because there is subjective quality of experience. Therefore, he argues that this quality of consciousness makes it different from all other properties, including emergent biological properties such as life. The essence of body is spatial extension, the essence of mind is thought. Thought is taken to be the defining attribute of mind, which is an incorporeal substance, a substance that is non-spatial in nature. Chalmers writes, 'By the term 'thought', I understand everything, which we are aware of as happening within us, in so far as we have awareness of it' (Chalmers, 1997). What follows from Descartes' view is that consciousness is essentially a first-person; subjective phenomena and conscious states cannot be reduced or eliminated into third-person. Therefore, it is consciousness, which makes the explanatory gap between the first-person and third-person perspective. According to the Cartesian conception, we have access to the contents of

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our own minds in a way denied to us in respect to matter. There is something special about our own knowledge of our own minds that naturally goes with the Cartesian view.

The 'hard' problem of consciousness, as Chalmers has shown, is the problem of experience, especially, to first-person character, which cannot be explained within a scientific framework. Cognitive science can explain a system's functions in terms of its internal mechanism. But it is not possible to explain what it is to have subjective experiences, because it is not a problem about the performance of functions. As Nagel argued, 'Conscious experience is a widespread phenomenon fundamentally, an organism has conscious mental states if and only if there is something that it is like to be that organism—something it is like for the organism' (Nagel, 1998). In recent times, all sorts of mental phenomena have yielded to scientific explanation, but consciousness has stubbornly resisted this explanation. Many philosophers and scientists have tried to explain it, but the explanations always seem to fall short of the target. Now the question is: why is it so difficult to explain?

The mental life with its qualia cannot be nomologically determined by the physical conditions of the universe. The following are the reasons for the thesis that the mental life is independent of the physical body, though they co-exist: '(a) The qualia of the mental states cannot be reproduced in an artificial machine like a robot or a machines table; they are unique to the person concerned. (b) The qualia are the essence of consciousness and so must be intrinsic to the conscious subjects.' As such, the intelligibility gap between the qualia and the physical world remains, as the qualia are understood widely as belonging to conscious subjects. As we have seen in this that subjectivity cannot be explained reductively. Again, as Nagel argues, 'It is not analyzable in terms of any explanatory system of functional states, or intentional states, since they could be ascribed to robots or automata that behaved like people though, they experienced nothing' (Nagel, 1998).

There is a subjective feeling attached to our conscious experience, because subjective feelings are the outcome of our conscious experience. That is, consciousness itself cannot be established simply on the basis of what we observe about the brain and its physical effects. We cannot explain which property of the brain accounts for consciousness. Distinct cognitive properties, namely perception and introspection, necessarily mediate our relationships with the brain and with consciousness. We cannot understand how the subjective aspects of experience depend upon the brain that is really the problem. Consciousness, according to Searle, is essentially subjective. This is not a mechanical state, as many philosophers believe. Some of these biological systems are conscious and that consciousness is essentially subjective. The term 'pain' is subjective as it is not accessible to any observer, because

it is a first-person experience. For example, I have a pain in my leg. In this case, the statement is completely subjective. The pain itself has a subjective mode of existence. As Searle puts it, 'Conscious states exist only when they are experienced by some human or animal subject. In that sense, they are essentially subjective.

The composition of consciousness, therefore, does not seem to be purely mechanical or chemical. We cannot even understand our mind and intelligence completely, what to speak of understanding our consciousness. Had it been composed of matter only, it could be simulated by networks of electronic circuits or by some other engineering means. If, however, it is not just matter, but something beyond matter, which it seems it is, then there is no hope for artificial consciousness. No matter how hard we try, perhaps consciousness will always remain transcendental to human knowledge. The very source of Logic is consciousness itself. Thus, it is impossible to understand consciousness by applying Logic. How can anybody understand the source by a product of the source? Maybe one can understand to some extent, but not completely.

Can Machine Achieve Freewill, Feelings or Emotions?

Free will is a strange concept. In philosophy, it is possible to discuss the human mind in all kinds of ways, but when one touches the question whether we are free in our decisions, the discussion becomes dangerous. We are so familiar with thinking in terms of will, decisions and actions that we most of the time do not even want to consider the possibility that we are not free in our choices. But there is more. What if I, in such a discussion, make the statement that human free will does not exist? If it is not true, I am wrong, and if it is true, the whole remark is meaningless because I could not have done anything else than saying this. Denial of free will is a pragmatic contradiction. One cannot deny human free will without making this denial meaningless.

Famously Spinoza wrote that "Men believe themselves to be free, because they are conscious of their own actions and are ignorant of the causes by which they are determined" (Spinoza 1664/2009). Yet if freedom were a matter of pure ignorance, it would be too easy to succeed in replicating it into a machine. According to such a definition, most available artificial agents would indeed be free since they act without the slightest knowledge of the causes of their actions. Obviously something else must be added. When do we consider an agent to be free? A simple and still inadequate answer is that an agent is free if it is able to satisfy its goals. Yet this is only an apparent freedom. Here, the issue at stake runs much deeper. Is the agent able to choose its goals if its behavior is constrained by previous factors such as

programming, environmental stimuli, upbringing, genetic blueprint, and such? According to the philosopher Immanuel Kant, someone's actions are not free if they are determined by something or someone else. An agent is taken to be free when it seems able to be the only and ultimate cause of its behavior. It is up to the agent whether to do something. Or, at least, this is what it seems. As we have seen, this is not necessarily the case. It could be an illusion due to insufficient causal knowledge.

Going back to Spinoza, we see that there is something useful for our present discussion. In fact, there is a big difference between a human being and a machine. Human behavior is the result of mostly unknown causes that are practically unknowable because of their sheer numbers and their causal role in one's life. In the case of machines, since they are the result of human design or programming, it is much easier to provide an almost exhaustive causal account. This means that, according to Spinoza, is easier to believe that a human being is free than to believe that a machine is free, since it is easier to ignore the causes of human behavior. However this is just an epistemic difference.

The dualistic view of Descartes and others denies the possibility of free will for other things than humans. Therefore it is not quite interesting to a discussion about free will and intelligent machines. On the other hand are holistic visions more appropriate to such a discussion, but it is difficult to come to any other conclusions than the physical presumptions that are necessary to assign the property of free will, either to humans or to computers. This might be relevant in a pure philosophical discussion, but has little to do with computer science.

There is also the possibility of accepting that there is an inherent contradiction in human nature, since both the deterministic and the free will view on humans are justifiable and necessary. This dialectic approach allows thinking about free will in humans without being concerned about the physical presumptions. Free will becomes a transcendental presumption for being human. However, the transcendental view on free will in this approach does not allow discussing free will in concrete artifacts, such as intelligent machines, because one cannot model or design transcendental presumptions.

Let's consider the complicated internal structure of a live cell and its functioning. A cell only does what "it is instructed to do", nothing else. Functioning of robots can also be likened to that of cells, because they also act as they are programmed to do. Thus, our evaluation concerning cells' functioning is also the case with that of robots. They cannot attempt to do anything contrary to what they are programmed to do. If robots do not have free-will, then it follows that they cannot

laugh, believe and love and so on. At this point the question that comes to mind was ifmachines can achieve feelings or emotions?

Feeling, emotion, and intellectual comprehension are inexorably intertwined with how human think. Not only are they aware of being aware, but also their ability to think enables them at will to remember a past and to imagine a future. Using emotions, feelings, and reasoned thoughts, one can form a "theory of mind," so that they can understand the thinking of other people, which in turn enabled humans to share knowledge as they created societies, cultures, and civilizations. In humans and other animals, we tend to call behaviour emotional when we observe certain facial and vocal expressions like smiling or snarling, and when we see certain physiological changes such as hair standing on end or sweating. Since most computers do not yet possess faces or bodies, they cannot manifest this behaviour. However, in recent years computer scientists have been developing a range of 'animated agent faces', programmes that generate images of humanlike faces on the computer's visual display unit. These images can be manipulated to form convincing emotional expressions. Machines are not organisms and no matter how complex and sophisticated they become, they will not evolve by natural selection. By whatever means machines are designed and programmed, their possessing the ability to have feelings and emotions would be counter-productive to what will make them most valuable.

Can Machines have a Soul?

The question that comes to mind at this point is what is the nature of the human soul? This question can be expanded into; will AI eventually have a soul? If so, where does the AI soul could come from, and can an AI eventually have free will? Augustine, one of the early church fathers, called for cautious openness about the dichotomy of body and soul in man as the image of God (Berkouwer, 1962; Hill et al., 1990).There are two conceptions of humans in Christian circles. The first conception sees humans as two distinct parts, or a dichotomy: body and soul. The second conception sees humans as three distinct parts, or a trichotomy: body, soul, and spirit.

In trichotomy, the relationship between body and spirit is considered like the material universe and God. Between body and spirit, the soul is needed as the bridge between the material world and the immaterial world. The soul is regarded as both immaterial and material adapted to the body. As the immaterial, the body is regarded as immortal, but as the material, the body is regarded as mortal and carnal. As the material part of the human, the soul is the element that also exists in animal life. As the immaterial part of the human, the soul is the element that shows the God-related rational and immortal part of humans. Berkhof believed that the soul is the most

important part of humans, and every human has similar physical, physiological, and emotional needs, along with moral and mental capacities that belong exclusively to man (Berkhof, 1949). The human soul is endowed with intelligence, self-consciousness, freedom, conscience, and religious aspirations (Berkhof, 1949). The highest aspiration of a human soul is to find a relationship with a Higher Being.

St. Augustine is quoted to have notes that the human soul has three powers, namely, the intellect (with which it thinks and calculates), the memory (with which it remembers the past things), and the will (with which it makes decisions) (Omeregbe, 2001). Consequently, if one equates computers with man and says that they have "memory" and even "intellect" which makes them does "intelligent" things, what about the will? Do computers make decisions? Do they make choice? Do computers really have minds of their own? Do computers really think? Do they have consciousness? Can they deliberately decide between two things, two alternatives, and choose one? Can computer decide what to do, and what not to do? Only living beings can have consciousness because consciousness is a function of living things.

Are Machines created in the Image of God (*Imago Dei*)?

From the biblical view, personhood is the unity of the spiritual and corporeal in human existence. Therefore, the question of what human beings are according to the Christian must be answered biblically. The book of Genesis, chapter one, portrays human beings as part of the material world created by God beyond the material world. As a result, all creations must follow the natural order and have the longing of a creature for a relationship with God. The biblical notion of personhood is the belief that human beings are created according to the *Imago Dei,* the image of God (*Authorized King James Bible Version*, 1611/2008, Gen 1:26-27*,* James 3:9*).*

The *Substantive* interpretation emphasizes on an aspect of human reason. For Augustine it was the will; for Rreinhold Nieguhr it was the capacity for self-transcendence. Regardless of the specific answer, this approach holds that there is something particular to humans that they only share with God. These have been understood to include many or all of the following: rationality, morality, self-awareness, creativity, productivity, and generosity. In this way we show the image of God in our characters and the ways we are called to be.

The *Functional* interpretation place the locus in humanity's purpose. One such function that many scholars find support for in scripture looks to humanity's relationship with the rest of creation. Some view this relationship as one of dominion, that humans have been given creation to do with as they see fit, while others prefer the language of stewardship, that humans have a responsibility to care for creation as representative of God. As such, human share in part of God's role with regard to

creation, expressing authority over it in a way consistent with the fact that our substance also reflects the image of God – with creativity, generosity, love and a desire to conserve.

The *Relational* interpretation begins with the importance of relationality within God. The Trinity emphasizes the importance of relationality. It is the very part of the nature of God. Humans possess the same I-Thou relationship that God possesses. The creation of humans as male and female is an extension of the relationality found in the Triune God. As such, humans are created to exist in relationships, just as God, as Trinity, exists in relationship. They are made to be in relationship with him, other people, and the rest of creation in a way that reflects God's relational existence, in which communion and love spill over into creativity and creation. The relational interpretation, apart from being arguably the most beautiful, has several strengths. One of them is that it is in great harmony with the wider background of Christian theology. While the other interpretations may be over-focused on the text in Genesis, the relational interpretation of *imago Dei* incorporates the unique insight of Christian theology that God is, in fact, a trinity of persons.

Machines are a product of humans, servants and not a replacement. Human beings are the apex of God's creation, placed in the universe the home for which they were created. The authors suggest that robots that exhibit intelligence should be developed in such a way that they can "recreate" a new robot, maybe, from their own creativity. Creativity is divine, it an inherited trait from God. The possibility of robots feeding, growing, reproducing, and maybe ruling a country seems remote at this point. For one to make the assertion that human being are nothing but machines, implies that they are machines with consciousness. Consciousness here, refers to having one's mental faculties in an active state i.e 'being aware', sharing knowledge with another, thinking about one's own acts or affections, an internal testimony to one's own state of innocence, guilt, etc., (Natsoulas, 1978). McKerrow (2006) noted that conscious robots are capable of using sensing and perception to be aware of their surroundings, such that a mobile robot can recognize and avoid obstacles in its path. It is however, the lack of reflective consciousness, which leads to moral responsibility for decision making, as beings created by a just God who hold humans responsible for their actions that differentiates humans from machines. Can a robot be held responsible for its actions? For robots to really be like humans, they must learn to adapt to new situations i.e. be flexible, and must learn about nobler things of life – beauty, integrity and righteousness.

Social Effects of AI

I have argued that technology cannot adequately simulate the attributes, idiosyncrasy and characteristics that compose the inner life (Soul). That technology relies on and reflects the nature of its creators, infiltrating our daily lives. Such infiltration has impacts, in particular the use of social media and its growing connection to loneliness and depression. Many studies demonstrate that social media, is having negative effects on people's social skills, creating loneliness, and causing depression, anxiety, jealousy, and narcissism (Campbell 2016; Radovic 2017; Chan 2014).

Some of the negative effects of social networking concerning education have shown a reduction in learning and research abilities. Students' comprehension of grammar and their vocabulary have been affected due to a dependence on spell-check and internet slang. With also a decrease in creative writing (Akram and Kumar 2017, 351). Other societal impacts include harassment and bullying leading to negative effects on reputation, these effects influence children and youth more than other age groups (Akram and Kumar 2017, 352). A study on VR technologies, such as VR video games has shown adverse effects on user's health, labelled 'cyber sickness' with side effects of vertigo, nausea, and dizziness. Other consequences include fatigue, reduced cognitive performance, eye strain and physical pain. Other side effects include negative emotional reactions (Lavoie et al. 2020, 70).

This indicates that maintaining human to human relationships is essential to not only our health and learning abilities but our well-being. If we replace human connection with social media, video games, sex dolls or other artificial substitutes, they become a very second-rate fix for people whose fundamental need is human connection. While the connections that technologies incorporate, might be better than nothing and somewhat alleviate loneliness with temporary fulfilment, that is all it will do. We would be misguided to think we are not better off putting our resources into maintaining human to human relationships.

Concluding Remarks

The study explored Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the paradox of human existence from the religio-philosophical perspective. The paper discovered that the human mind has a biological function. Man is an animal and animal thinking has a natural evolutionary history. Thus, human thinking is holistic in the sense that it is an integral part of the natural life of human beings. The situation is quite otherwise in machines. The behaviour of a computer itself has no natural evolutionary history because the computer itself has no natural evolutionary history.

Consequently, inspite of the revolutions in information technology and recent development in Artificial Intelligence and robotics, a work of art remains an imitation of nature, and it can never be the same as nature itself. The sophisticated modern machine, the computer as artifices is only an imitation of nature-the human mind, and it can never be as good as the human mind, nor can it ever be the same as the human mind. It is a product of human intelligence and as such a creation of man. The computer is said to carry out intelligent activities like the human mind. It is said that it has a "memory" in which it stores away things. According to St. Augustine, the human soul has three powers, namely, the intellect (with which it thinks and calculates), memory (with which it remembers past things) and the will (with which it makes decisions). If computer is to be equated with human, to have "memory" and "intellect" with which they do "intelligent" things what about the will? Do computers make decision and choices? As the saying goes, imitation is the most sincere form of flattery, yet very few assume imitation to be equivalence. An original masterpiece may be worth millions while a copy, no matter how exact the resemblance, would yield just a fraction of the price. I propose that there is more to thought than a machine will ever be capable of. The imitation game, while reproducing an imitation that is something like human thinking and interaction, will never achieve that same unique mode of thinking we experience as human species.

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RITUALS AND ITEMS IN THE PRACTICE OF AMUGBOR AMONG THE ABUA PEOPLE OF SOUTHERN NIGERIA
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Abstract

This study delves into the rituals and items associated with the Amugbor practice among the Abua people of Rivers State, Nigeria. Amugbor is a cultural tradition focused on providing care to a nursing mother and her baby by female relatives, particularly the mother or mother-in-law. Traditionally, Amugbor is eagerly anticipated by mothers upon their daughter's marriage, with material benefits often accruing to the bride's mother at its conclusion. The research aims to explore the significance of the Amugbor ritual and its associated items, examining their influence on Abua family life and identifying rituals linked to pregnancy and childbirth. Employing Arnold van Gennep's theory of rites of passage, the study utilizes a phenomenological research method for data collection and analysis. Observations reveal that Amugbor holds deep cultural significance among the Abua people, offering insights into their cosmology and serving as a vehicle for transmitting cultural values across generations. The conclusion emphasizes the importance of recognizing and documenting this cultural practice for continuity. Government recognition is recommended, alongside efforts by the Abua community to preserve and document Amugbor as a valuable cultural heritage.

Key Words: Amugbor, Motherhood, Traditional Religion, Rituals

Introduction

In many traditional societies like that of the Abua people in Rivers State, Amugbor stands as a customary cultural practice eagerly anticipated by mothers upon their daughters' marriage. Besides the ceremonial rites involved, there are additional tangible benefits, particularly for the bride's mother at the conclusion of the Amugbor period. Marriage holds significance to the Abua people as a mechanism for uniting families and expanding the boundaries of their relationships. Arnold Van Gennep's theory of rites of passage serves as the framework for this examination. Abua, an ancient kingdom in the Niger Delta, is situated within the present-day Abua/Odual local government area of Rivers State. The term "Abuan" refers both to the ethnic group and the language spoken by the inhabitants of the region.

The Abua people predominantly engage in agriculture, deriving their sustenance from farming and fishing. They cultivate a diverse range of food and cash crops, including yam (Elell), cocoyam (arokolo), cassava (atakka), plantain (okhaan), palm oil (amunum), sweet potatoes (Apitiipi), okro (Uluru), pineapples (Arukwuoru), among others. Approximately 85 percent of the population partake in farming and fishing activities, with around 13 percent involved in trade. The remaining 2 percent pursue white-collar occupations. The region is rich in mineral resources such as crude oil deposits and valuable trees like Mahogany, Obeche, and Abura Raffia Palm. Abua is also renowned for the production of the popular local dry gin known as kaikai, a variant of British dry gin, in substantial commercial quantities (Wariboko 2013).

The significance of this   lies in its goal of identifying the rituals and items associated with Amugbor. To aid in data collection and discussion, the research utilized the phenomenological method. It was observed that within the Abua community, the cultural tradition of Amugbor serves as a window into their cosmology. The research concluded that this cultural practice plays a vital role in passing down the community's cultural values from one generation to the next. Consequently, the study recommends that the Abua people document this significant cultural aspect, Amugbor, to ensure its continuity.]

The Concept of Marriage and Associated Rituals

According to Wariboko (2013), marriage is universally regarded as an institution crucial for maintaining social equilibrium, particularly in the face of mortality rates. It is seen as governed by religious norms and social customs within a given society, and forms the foundation of the state's development. Nobbs (1980), as cited in Otto (2000), defines marriage as the recognized union between a man and a woman, sanctioned both by the couple themselves and by their community. Marriage entails cohabitation and is entered into for reasons such as procreation, security, and emotional fulfillment. Otto (2000) further references Kumuyi (1993), who views marriage as central to human life, ordained by God, and encompassing various aspects of existence, including spiritual, social, psychological, and physical dimensions. Family, inseparably linked to marriage, is identified as the primary agency of human socialization. Opoku (1978) suggests that puberty rites not only prepare youth for marriage but also for procreation, emphasizing the inseparable connection between marriage and procreation in African tradition. Marriage's primary purpose is seen as procreation, essential for averting the perceived calamity of extinction in African societies.

Mbiti (1982) emphasizes the severe consequences of childlessness in certain African cultures, where individuals without children may be denied the status of ancestors. Procreation is viewed as humanity's response to death, as it replenishes societal losses caused by mortality. It is considered a religious obligation for individuals to bear offspring, ensuring the continuation of humanity. Mbiti (1982) further suggests that in some African societies, marriage is not considered complete until the wife has given birth, with the first pregnancy serving as the ultimate confirmation of marriage. This signifies the full integration of the woman into her husband's family. Mbiti emphasizes the profound societal expectations placed on women regarding childbirth, suggesting that failure to conceive is regarded as a greater tragedy than genocide, as it represents the end of both the familial lineage and the woman's own existence.

Uchendu (1965) notes that motherhood brings about a significant change in a woman's status, elevating her from a figure of allure and attraction to one who shares her husband's dignity and contributes to lineage expansion. Uchendu adds that the biological process of conception holds significance, alongside the consent of deities and the willingness of deceased lineage members and other benevolent spirits to reincarnate.

Ilogu (1980) discusses the sacrificial rituals conducted during pregnancy, involving offerings such as yams, chickens, or goats, as advised by diviners. Egbucha (2007)

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asserts that in Igboland, upon conception, husbands are discreetly instructed to inform the family elders, who then relay the news to the ancestors during their daily prayers.

Ikenga-Metuh (1991) highlights the widespread pregnancy ritual in Igbo culture known as Ima-ogodo (clothing rite), typically performed in the early stages of pregnancy. Consultation with a diviner determines whether to proceed with this rite. Additionally, Ikenga-Metuh (1991) describes the minimal rituals conducted during childbirth in Igbo tradition, including a symbolic act by the head of the husband's family, who draws a straight line on the woman's forehead and abdomen with a seed yam, invoking divine assistance for an uncomplicated delivery. This ritual culminates with a prayer and the offering of the yam pieces to the Sun deity.(Anyanwu). The drawn line symbolizes the wish for a smooth and straightforward birth process.

Algbakwo (2013) asserts that the birth of an Igbo child is marked by elaborate celebrations, reflecting the belief that a newborn not only belongs to the immediate family but also to the wider community, as expressed in the Igbo name Nwaoha, meaning "child of the community." This custom is compared with a similar practice among the Yansi of Congo, where the placenta and umbilical cord of the infant are ceremoniously cast into the river, symbolizing communal ownership.

Mbiti (1973) elaborates on the Gikuyu tradition, wherein the placenta is interred in an uncultivated field, covered with grain and grass, serving as a silent prayer for the mother's ongoing fertility and strength for future childbirth. Further, Mbiti (1973) discusses the Akamba people's tradition of sacrificing a goat or bull on the third day following a child's birth.

Kayode (1984) underscores the importance of personal rituals in Nigeria, spanning from pregnancy to birth, circumcision, marriage, and funeral rites. Among the Igbo, Kayode highlights the belief that the absence of vigorous crying by an infant at birth is an ill omen, endangering the child's life. Additionally, he notes the custom of refraining from nursing newborns for the first day or two due to the belief that the initial breast milk is bitter and unsuitable.

In his work on Nigeria's Omugwo (postpartum care) issues, Dickson (2018) suggests that caring for a newborn after delivery poses challenges, particularly for first-time parents.

Examining the age-old practice of the amungbo ritual of motherhood among the Udekama (Degema) people of the Niger Delta, Kpe (2019) distinguishes two types of amungbo rituals. One is geared towards preparing maidens for marriage, while the other aims to facilitate a woman's recovery from the stresses of pregnancy and childbirth.

The Abua experience

From the moment of conception among the Abua people, both the unborn child and the expectant mother receive special care and treatment. According to Ekpete (2021), as cited from Itoemugh (2021), this exceptional treatment extends from the husband to the immediate and extended family, as well as all relatives. The purpose of this care and treatment is to safeguard the well-being of both the woman and her unborn child. These rituals, taboos, or regulations are deemed significant by the Abua people because they help ward off misfortune.

Some of the prohibitive rules pregnant women observe, as outlined by the Abua culture, include:

A) Avoiding visits to the cemetery, as it is believed to increase the risk of miscarriage or stillbirth. Although attending funerals is permitted, the expectant mother and her husband are advised to stay away from the burial ground.

B) Advised against consuming tortoise, as it is believed to lead to prolonged labor if eaten on the day of delivery.

C) Discouraged from drinking directly from a bottle.

D) Prohibited from eating snails (egooyi or oyula-ighori in Abua term).

E) Avoiding certain types of fish, such as snake or electric fish (dich), and fish with rough skin (Edugbom), during pregnancy.

F) Not crossing other people's legs while pregnant.

G) Encouraged not to allow a broom to touch her legs while someone is sweeping.

H) Forbidden from walking alone or going outside at night to urinate without company.

I) Grass cutter consumption is also tabooed during pregnancy due to its association with prolonged labor.

To ensure the pregnant woman's strength, she is advised to consume ample fruits, vegetables, and particularly unripe plantains, believed to provide essential calcium for the baby's bone development. Additionally, she is encouraged to avoid strenuous

activities, emotional stressors, and bending down during the latter stages of pregnancy (7 to 9 months). It is believed that bending down may cause blood to enter the fetus's eyes, potentially affecting the brightness of the eyes.

Enigheni (2018) emphasizes that from the early stages of pregnancy, typically the first or second month, expectant mothers in the Abua community seek routine check-ups from local midwives until childbirth. These midwives play a crucial role in ensuring the well-being of both the mother and the unborn child. They are responsible for tasks such as positioning the baby correctly, massaging swollen legs and waist to alleviate discomfort, and administering medication to manage various pregnancy-related symptoms like difficulty in urination, sleeping, stooling, loss of appetite and energy, and stomach pain.

In agreement, Uwoh (2021), as cited by Ekpete (2021), discusses how the birth of a child is celebrated differently across cultures, highlighting the generous celebration of childbirth in Abua and other traditional societies. This celebration signifies the communal ownership of the newborn, as they are considered not only part of the immediate family but also of the broader community.

Furthermore, it is a tradition among the Abua people that when a woman enters her sixth month of pregnancy, she returns to her mother's family for the circumcision ritual, as Fabia (2017) asserts. This ritual is believed to be crucial for ensuring safe delivery and reducing the difficulty of subsequent childbirths. The husband is expected to provide the necessary items for the circumcision ritual, demonstrating his role as the child's father. Additionally, he presents gift items to his mother-in-law before the ritual, signifying respect and recognition of her role in the childbirth process. The performance of this ritual holds such significance that even if the husband has not paid the bride price, his involvement allows him to claim paternity of the child; however, if he fails to participate in this ritual, he forfeits any claim to the child.

According to Fabia (2017), the circumcision ritual for pregnant women is typically conducted in the backyard, where the woman is securely held by both women and some men while the ritual is performed using a local knife. Following the ritual, the pregnant woman is asked to shake her body or jump slightly to confirm her strength and absence of complications. This precaution is taken because some women may become weak or even die due to the ritual's effects. Subsequently, she may either return home or stay at her mother's place until she gives birth.

As the time for childbirth approaches, the midwife administers a native medicine called Akpaguco to the expectant mother. This medicine is intended to ensure that the pregnancy is well-settled and prepared, facilitating an easier delivery when the time comes. Enigheni (2018) states that childbirth typically occurs at the traditional birth

attendant's (midwife's) house, although exceptions arise if the pregnant woman cannot reach the midwife's location. In such cases, she may deliver at home with the assistance of an experienced individual.

Ekpete (2021) posits that when labor commences, the husband or any available relative assists the pregnant woman in gathering necessary items for her delivery at the midwife's house. Upon arrival, the midwife assesses the progress of labor, aiding the woman as she lies on a molded mud surface serving as a bed. Throughout labor, the midwife monitors progress, providing massages and pressure from behind to alleviate pain. The woman is advised against shouting or uttering negative words, especially during her first pregnancy, as it is believed this may make subsequent childbirths more challenging.

During delivery, the husband or male relatives are not permitted to witness the birth, as it is considered solely a women's affair, according to Ekpete (2021). The arrival of the newborn is marked by their cry; failure to cry is deemed a bad omen, and measures such as pouring cold water or administering a gentle tap are taken to stimulate the cry. Once the child cries, the husband or relative is assured of the successful birth. The midwife then announces the birth and the mother's health to the husband or relative, who may be invited to see the newborn. In appreciation, the husband presents monetary gifts, a bottle of gin, or wine to the traditional birth attendant.

In the event of a morning delivery, the mother and child remain under the care of the midwife until the afternoon. If the birth takes place in the afternoon, they stay until evening, and if it occurs in the evening, they spend the night until morning before returning home.

Additionally, Ekpete (2021) highlights the importance of the child's inaugural feast upon their return home, a cherished tradition in Abua culture. This celebration is characterized by joyous singing, lively dancing, indulgence in food and drink, and the exchange of gifts, both monetary and tangible, to honor and welcome both the mother and her newborn into the community.

Ritual Items and Symbolic Interpretations
According to Enigheni (2018), the Amugbor practice is enriched with ritual items, each carrying symbolic significance that enhances the experience. These items include:

1. **Akpaguco:** A traditional medicine consumed by pregnant women before delivery. It is prepared by cooking a specific leaf with yam or plantain, taken twice daily to facilitate a smooth delivery by ensuring the pregnancy sets well.

2. **Dried fish (igharaghaaar'ina):** Used in abundance to prepare the Amugbor dish, it aids in enhancing breast milk production for nursing mothers and promotes postpartum recovery.
3. **Ulda (Obaam):** The primary native ingredient for the Amugbor dish, believed to assist in purging any remaining blood from the nursing mother's womb.
4. **Ulda seed:** Another native ingredient used in preparing the Amugbor dish, thought to aid in restoring the nursing mother's womb to its pre-pregnancy state.
5. **Dried ground pepper (Obiaan):** An essential ingredient in the Amugbor dish, contributing to its characteristic flavor and helping prevent nausea for the nursing mother.
6. **Uziza leaf (Ooza):** Used in combination with scent leaf to prepare the Amugbor dish, adding aroma and flavor.
7. **Yam (Ellel) and Fufu (loiloi):** Both served alongside the Amugbor dish for the nursing mother to consume.
8. **Unripe plantain (Obarrh adakaan):** Cooked, garnished with scent leaf and palm oil, and served with the Amugbor dish to aid in bone strength for the nursing child.
9. **Bitter kola (Egbe):** Given to the newborn as a remedy for stomach pain associated with the umbilical cord. It is peeled, placed in a container, and administered three times a day before and after the umbilical cord is cut. These ritual items contribute to the cultural significance and practical benefits of the Amugbor practice among the Abua people.

Edum (2018) elaborates on additional symbolic ritual items associated with the Amugbor practice, including:

1. **Palm kernel oil (Ibiolo):** A common household item among the Abua people, used as a first aid remedy and believed to protect against evil spirits. It is applied to the newborn's body after bathing, with a generous amount applied to the soft spot on the baby's head, and sometimes given to the child to drink.
2. **Knife and rope:** Utilized during the circumcision ritual for male children.
3. Awolowo leaf: A native leaf used to stop bleeding from the penis of male infants after circumcision.
4. **Anam-roraal-oga-roraal:** A traditional herb used for various purposes, including pressing the baby's stomach after the umbilical cord is cut and massaging the mother's abdomen to alleviate post-delivery pains.
5. **Alligator pepper (Alagh):** Pounded and mixed with local gin to help dissolve any blood clots in the nursing mother's system.
6. **Abua first eleven (local dry gin):** Used to mix certain herbs consumed by the nursing mother during the Amugbor period.

7. **Palm wine (Amiim-iyagh):** Given to the nursing mother before each meal to enhance her appetite and increase breast milk production.
8. **Scent leaf (Awudiah):** Added to the Amugbor dish for aroma and believed to ward off evil spirits from both the mother and child.
9. **Ani-areel leaf:** Used to alleviate post-delivery pains experienced by the nursing mother.
10. **Ekpidigh-ekpe ra-mukidim:** Herbs used to relieve stomach or naval pains in infants. The juice is administered orally or applied externally.
11. **Crayfish (Asa):** Believed to provide nourishment to the woman's body.

These ritual items play significant roles in the Amugbor practice, reflecting cultural beliefs and traditions among the Abua people.

Recommendations

Based on the insights provided in this article, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Extended Maternity Leave:** It is recommended that authorities responsible for employment policies consider extending maternity leave to a minimum of six months. This extended period would allow mothers more time to recover from childbirth, bond with their newborns, and navigate the challenges of early parenthood without the added pressure of returning to work prematurely.
2. **Documentation of Cultural Practices:** The Abua community is encouraged to undertake efforts to document and preserve the Amugbor ritual and cultural practices. This documentation would serve to ensure the continuity of this significant aspect of their heritage for future generations, safeguarding it against the risk of being lost over time.
3. **Formal Training for Midwives:** There should be a concerted effort to encourage and support the formal education and training of young midwives in the Amugbor ritual and its associated practices. By acquiring professional expertise in this traditional skill, midwives can better serve their communities and ensure the safe delivery and postnatal care of mothers and infants.
4. **Reduced Financial Burden:** Given the substantial financial and material requirements associated with the Amugbor ritual, efforts should be made to reduce the financial burden involved. This could involve implementing measures to make participation more accessible to individuals with lower budgets or income levels, thereby promoting inclusivity and equitable access to cultural traditions.
5. **Integration of Traditional and Modern Healthcare:** Expectant mothers should be encouraged to integrate both traditional and modern healthcare practices into their routine prenatal care. By combining traditional rituals with orthodox medical

checkups and interventions, mothers can benefit from a holistic approach to maternal health, ensuring safer deliveries and improved postnatal outcomes.

These recommendations aim to address various aspects of the Amugbor ritual and its implications for maternal and infant well-being, promoting cultural preservation, healthcare accessibility, and community empowerment.

Conclusion

After delving into the customs and traditions of the Abua people, particularly focusing on the profound significance of the Amugbor post-natal system, it becomes evident that this practice holds immense symbolic value within the community. Despite its substantial financial requirements, the Amugbor ritual is deeply cherished and esteemed by the Abua people, shaping their familial dynamics and providing insights into their cosmological beliefs.

The study concludes that Amugbor is deeply ingrained in the cultural fabric of the Abua society, serving as a cornerstone of their family life and offering profound insights into their worldview. Its enduring significance underscores its integral role in the community's collective identity and heritage.

Furthermore, it is evident that the practice of Amugbor has persisted over time, standing as a testament to its enduring relevance and benefits. Despite potential criticisms regarding its methods and approaches, the research suggests that Amugbor remains a vital aspect of Abua cultural life, offering invaluable support to both nursing mothers and their infants.

During the Amugbor period, the nursing mother is afforded respite from domestic responsibilities, allowing her to focus on recuperating from the physical and emotional strains of pregnancy and childbirth. This period also marks a transition in status for the bride's mother, who assumes the role of a grandmother within the family structure, further solidifying the intergenerational bonds and perpetuating cultural heritage within the society. In essence, the Amugbor ritual embodies the resilience and richness of Abua cultural traditions, serving as a vital conduit for the transmission of cultural values and practices from one generation to the next. Its significance transcends mere practicalities, offering profound insights into the interconnectedness of family, community, and cultural identity among the Abua people.

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PROSPERITY PREACHING IN THE RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE OF PORT HARCOURT METROPOLIS

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Abstract

The Prosperity Movement is a religious phenomenon that has rapidly gained and sustained ascendency in some Christian circles over the decades. Also known also as 'Prosperity Gospel', 'Prosperity Theology', 'Word of Faith', 'Health and Wealth', 'Name It and Claim It', 'Seed Faith Movement', 'Blab It and Grab It' and 'Prosperity Preaching', the movement emphasizes faith, wealth, physical well-being and personal experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit by every Christian with the accompanying gifts as manifested on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. As a worldwide movement in and outside main stream Christianity, it seems more entrenched among Christians with Pentecostal traditions, although with appeals to some outside these circles. Findings showed that despite criticisms, the movement has continued to attract large followers within Christian churches with claims of scriptural passages on wealth as reinterpreted by key proponents of the movement. Examined from the historical-descriptive perspectives, this study provided a general overview of Prosperity Gospel in Port Harcourt metropolis, its modus operandi, contributions and the attendant impacts. It is recommended that rather than promoting divine interventionist capitalism with the mentality of seeing starting a church as a fast lucrative business, prosperity preachers

should take up the role of propagating the ethics of respect for human dignity including righteous and holy living.

Key Words: Prosperity Gospel, Christianity, Morality, Faith, Speaking in tongues

Introduction

The emergence of prosperity gospel preaching in Nigeria dates back to the 19ᵗʰ and 20ᵗʰ centuries. It is currently a universal phenomenon that is frequently preached in urban areas especially in churches and on the electronic media. Prosperity gospel preaching has attracted scholarly attention mostly in the form of literary discourse. Historical records abound that prosperity preaching began in the United States of America (USA) (Barron, 2010). This was precipitated through the formative role played by Essek William Kenyon (1867-1948) and who is said to have initially put in place the cardinal principles for prosperity gospel preaching (Young, 2005). The principles Kenyon developed were probably cultic in origin (McConnell, 2007). However, Kenneth Erwin Hagin (2003) seemed to have borrowed heavily from Kenyon's ideology and developed his own prosperity theology. Hagin is said to be the father of the Prosperity Gospel. It is established that Kenyon's ideologies were also adopted, propagated and popularized by television and faith preachers in the 1950s like William Branham, Oral Roberts and Gordon Lindsay among several others. Prosperity preaching was handed down to posterity under different nomenclatures such as "word faith" or "word of faith movement", "positive confession", "faith formula", "faith message", "hyper-faith", "health and wealth theology", "name it and claim it gospel", "blab it and grab it gospel", "gospel of success", and "prosperity gospel" as it advanced down through the ages (Jones, 2006). For the purpose of this study, prosperity preaching, prosperity gospel or prosperity gospel preaching will be used interchangeably. According to McConnell (1990), the prosperity gospel from its inception emphasizes the "Three "Ps": Power, Prestige and Prosperity".

History shows that within this epoch, prosperity preaching which adopted televangelism, blossomed and was transported to different parts of the globe by people who contacted the various purveyors of prosperity preaching in the USA (Okwori, 1995). One of those who caught its fire was Benson Andrew Idahosa (1938-1998), a Nigerian, at Christ for the Nations Bible Institute in the USA (Emeka, 2002). At the turn of events in the 1970s, Idahosa responsively brought and planted his Nigerian version of the prosperity message somewhat slightly at variance to the USA version, giving it an African context (Emeka, 2002). Idahosa, pioneered prosperity gospel preaching in Nigeria and thus he is touted as its true Nigerian father (Ojo, 2013).

As a global subject, Prosperity preaching from its inception in Nigeria, attracted many followers who became enthusiastic about it; were captivated and deeply engrossed in its activities, cutting all fields of human endeavour. This seems to account for the reason prosperity churches are proliferating in contemporary Nigeria. Iheanacho (2009) observed that the more these prosperity churches multiply in Nigeria, the more they gradually shifted emphasis from spirituality and eternal life to the here and now.

There are two broad perspectives on the prosperity gospel in Port Harcourt. The first perspective sees prosperity gospel as a way through which bourgeois clergymen extort money from their naïve and unwary congregation while the other sees it as a means of empowering people in their religious and other endeavours. It is against this backdrop that this work attempts to investigate the phenomenon of prosperity preaching in the religious landscape of Port Harcourt metropolis by examining its historicity, reasons for advancement and impact especially in this century.

Conceptual Framework

The Lausanne Theology Working Group viewed Prosperity Gospel as the teaching that believers have a right to the blessings of health and wealth and that they can obtain these blessings could be obtained through positive confessions of faith and the sowing of seeds through faithfully paying of tithes and offerings (Lausanne Movement, 2010). It is believed that as a Christian theology, the core emphasis is that God wants believers to be rich and enjoy good physical health (Debra, 2012). For Peter (2009), this is a gospel of human possibility…wrapped in God's name. Advocates of Prosperity Gospel believe that poverty characterizes the work of the devil and is inimical to productivity (Mate, 2002). The true Christian therefore, must not be poor because God at creation endowed humanity with wealth, health and victory (Idahosa, 2010). Since Christ came to reclaim humanity's legal right to wealth, health, and success, which had been surrendered to Satan at the inception of sin, the redeemed now take their place in Christ and through faith actualize these legal rights in their lives. This and similar notions define the theology, homiletics and liturgical practices of the churches that have embraced thisgospel.

Similarly, from a traditional Pentecostal point of view, prosperity is viewed as a function of repentance and renewal of a relationship which was broken by sin and pollution, with healing as sign of restored relationship (Kalu, 2000). A significant manifestation of this victory is the occurrence of signs and wonders, which the believer is said to experience in day life, which are measured in terms of material wealth, good

health and success of the believer. The presence of these signs and wonders was the realization of the presence of the kingdom of God (Anderson, 2002). Since liberation and healing come through signs and wonders, the Pentecostal evangelistic methodology is characterized by an emphasis on miracles and related rituals (Saayman, 1993). Its advocates in the present century emphasise signs and wonders accompanied by an outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the proclamation of the Word.

Foundational Affirmations and Tenets of Prosperity Gospel

The Pentecostals affirm first and foremost that all Christians by virtue of their relationship with God have the right and even the responsibility to be prosperous in all areas of life most times beyond merely having enough. This financial prosperity like physical healing is available through positive faith which is spoken without doubt (Olson, 2013). This teaching has its roots in the 19th century New Thought especially as taught first by Charles and Myrtle Fillmore, founders of Unity before Phineas P. Quimby and E. W. Kenyon copiously copied from it. These thinkers taught that prosperity is every person's potential blessing which is available through a spiritual technology called "Affirmations".

It is speculated that the Pentecostal prosperity gospel has cultic origin which is built on New Thought (Okwori, 1995). According to Olson (2013) Kenneth Hagin was steeped in Kenyon's teachings which he passed on to other Pentecostal prosperity preachers and evangelists. Drawing from the various New Thought teachers, it is believed that the concept of power of positive culminated into the power of positive speaking. The implication is that healing and financial prosperity can be spoken into existence through "affirmations" which is positive sayings.

Prominent Nigerian prosperity preachers like Idahosa (1987); Adeboye (1989); Kumuyi (1990) and Oyedepo (2010) among several others have since keyed into this line of teaching. Ojo (2006) confirms that the most notable prosperity preachers in Nigeria include the late Archbishop Benson Idahosa, Bishop David Oyedepo, Rev. Francis Wale Oke, Rev. Chris Okotie and Bishop Mike Okonkwo". In Port Harcourt, they include David Ibiyeomie, George Izunwa, Chibuzor Chinyere, etc. They all emphasize that believers in Christ are all destined to enjoy God's abundant fullness.

Tenets of Pentecostalism

The basic tenets of prosperity gospel are encapsulated in the basic doctrines of Pentecostalism:

Pentecostalism which refers to protestant Christian denominations with emphasis on salvation by faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ and stress on the Spirit's radical transforming power with signs of faith healing and speaking in tongues

has certain beliefs. In Nigeria, these are encapsulated in the outlined doctrines of the Pentecostal Fellowship, namely:

i.   The belief that the Bible is inspired, the only infallible, authoritative word of God
ii.   The belief in one God , eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and the holy spirit
iii.   Belief in the deity of Jesus Christ, in his virgin birth, sinlessness, miracles, vicarious atoning death through his shed blood, bodily resurrection, ascension to the right hand of the Father and personal return in power and glory
iv.   Belief in the baptism of the Holy Spirit with evidence of speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives the utterance according to Acts 2:4 and in the operation of the spiritual gifts and ministries
v.   Belief in the church of Jesus Christ and in the unity of the believers
vi.   Belief in the practical application of the Christian faith in everyday experience and the need to minister to people in every area of life, which includes not only the spiritual but also the social, political and physical (Ukpong, 2008).

Be that as it may, there are also fundamental principles of Pentecostal preaching which include faith, prayer, giving in form of tithe and offering, speaking in tongues, conversion, Holy Spirit possession, Holy Spirit baptism, confession, Christian living and livelihood. These among others are touted as keys to achieving prosperity. They appear very flexible as no rigid criterion was adopted in formulating what different preachers of prosperity came up with as prosperity laws. As has been observed, each prosperity preachers seems to share his or her individual experiences or revelations of what should constitute keys to achieving prosperity. As noticed too, most of the principles in use vary from preacher to preacher. This lack of uniformity in prosperity principles most probably explains the very nature of spiritual laws of which prosperity principle is just a part. The fact that God is Spirit and that his revelation to human kind about his acts and ways is gradual shows that no single preacher on earth can claim to have a monopoly of knowledge of God's complete revelation about prosperity for all ages. Thus, the laws that govern spiritual things are not the same as those that govern the physical things.

Principles of Prosperity

        Prosperity as a phenomenon has some guiding principles or laws governing it. This fact is corroborated by Stewart (2009) who opined that the Bible is full of suggestions and rules for obtaining blessings from God. Based on these various

biblical suggestions on how to access God's blessings, prosperity preachers cunningly propounded series of prosperity principles or laws to be followed as being pathways to prosperity.

These principles appear very flexible as no rigid criterion was adopted in formulating what different preachers of prosperity came up with as prosperity laws. As has been observed, each of these prosperity preachers seems to share his or her individual experiences or revelations of what should constitute keys to achieving prosperity. The probability is high that God reveals principles or laws of prosperity at different epochs in history, if truly he reveals them. As noticed too, most of the principles in use vary from preacher to preacher. This lack of uniformity in prosperity principles most probably explains the very nature of spiritual laws of which prosperity principle is just a part.

The fact that God is Spirit and that his revelation to human kind about his acts and ways is gradual shows that no single preacher on earth can claim to have a monopoly of knowledge of God's complete revelation about prosperity for all ages. God's ways are mysterious. This means that prosperity principles which were at one time or the other revealed to a preacher, and who in turn observed it faithfully and found it to be very effective, may not necessarily work for another preacher who refuses to adhere strictly to it at that particular time or another period in history. There exist different principles of prosperity just as there are quite a great number of prosperity preachers in the world today. Each of these preachers claimed to have received one principle or the other from the Lord and each prosperity principle is based on ones' personal studies, revelation and conviction on the subject. These principles range from being an attitude of mind, a moral power, a life, which manifests outwardly in the form of plenty, happiness, and joy. This is foundational to understanding the various principles of prosperity scrutinized in this study which include obedience to God's laws, giving (seed sowing), welfare, righteous living (holiness), prayer, deliverance, generosity, etc.

Impacts of Prosperity Gospel Preaching in Port Harcourt

A major contribution of Pentecostal church to the development in Port Harcourt is in the area of education. Western education was introduced to Nigeria by the Christian missionaries in the 19th century. It was one of the strategies adopted by the early missionaries to get converts. Onu (2018) noted that education was Bishop Crowther's principal method of evangelization. Crowther believed that the paramount duty of the missionary was to attract people to the mission and the doctrinal refinements would follow. He made the school his most effective organ and very much depended on it more than any other missionary in securing local support. He always

introduced the mission into new places by making leaders to be interested in the idea of having a school of their own. It was his usual practice to ask the senior missionary at each station to give his foremost attention to the school. Onu succinctly captured this when he asserted that:

> When western education started in the Niger Delta coastal communities through the missionary agencies, some Ikwerre families sent their children across to be educated. In the process of acquiring western education, they became converted to the Christian faith. Most of these converts returned home and started witnessing the love of God in Christ Jesus with passion to their kith and kin. They sowed the seed of the gospel and established Christian worship stations in some villages, towns, clans and kingdoms (p. 154).

In 1874, Crowther was quoted to have said that

> education cannot but and enlighten the idea of those who are brought under its influence, especially where all the elementary school books are extracts from the Holy Scripture inculcating all virtues and condemning all vices, and vividly pointing out the folly and superstition of idolatrous worship (Ajayi, 1965, p. 19 citing Crowther, CMS CA3/04).

The Roman Catholic mission also used education as a strong means of conversion in Nigeria. According to Dedua (1999), perceiving the evangelistic potentials of education in the emerging colonial order, Fr. Legune made it the Prefecture's chief instrument for evangelism.

It can be said that the need and quest for western education is the major motivating factor in the acceptance of the church in Port Harcourt. Thus, Pentecostal churches such as Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Deeper Christian Life Ministry (DCLM), Salvation Ministry and Omega Power Ministry among others have followed the path of the mainline churches by establishing educational institutions such as nursery, primary, and secondary schools in Port Harcourt. The Deeper Life High School at Rumuoparali and Redeemers School at Rumuapara are among such schools. Though the Pentecostal churches do not have any University in Port Harcourt, their universities established within the country-Redeemer's University by the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Covenant University by the Living Faith Church, Benson

Idahosa University by the Church of God Mission, Anchor University by the DCLM among others are made open to all.

Among the Pentecostal churches, the educational project of Omega Power Ministry (OPM) has a unique and radical approach to the norm and a sacrificial commitment to the service of God and humanity with emphasis on freeness. The church focuses on completely tuition free and high standard in a standard learning environment. Instead of ostentatiously aggrandizing wealth at the expense of church members and the society, the founder and General Overseer, Apostle Chibuzor Chinyere, empowered of hundreds of men, women, youths and children throughout the African continent, Europe, and beyond educationally (Asadu, 2019). He began the running of a totally free education system for indigent children and orphans in focus (Ndukwe, 2019). The Free Schools are located at Isiokpo, Rukpokwu, Port Harcourt main city, and Borokiri. Others located outside Port Harcourt are at Eleme and Oyigbo in Rivers State, Ohanku in Abia State, Ikpe in Akwa Ibom State and Yenagoa in Bayelsa State.

Another dimension to the free school project is the All Girls Technical College in Aluu (Port Harcourt), currently under construction. It is the first of its kind in Nigeria and indeed Africa, aimed at empowering the girl-child in contributing more to the growth of the family and the society. The free school project beyond providing free tuition, each and every child in both the nursery and primary school levels is entitled to four school uniforms each academic year, school sandals, books, pencils, pens and other writing materials needed for their seamless learning at no cost to the parents. The pupils are also fed once every school day as well as ferried to and from school in the OPM school buses, which also operate at no cost to the parents. The project still has free international excursions for pupils and students.

There is also a sickbay that operates during school hours, and staffed with first aid attendants to provide basic first aid care to the students in the case of emergencies like injury and sickness. Each school has fully equipped laboratory with state-of-the-art technologies and equipment, fully stocked library, workshop and standard computer room. The structures include a fully equipped playground, football pitch and basketball court for recreational activities. In manpower, the staff lists are hardworking Janitors that make sure that the environment is clean and healthy enough for the children.

It is of note that the OPM free school project cuts across ethnic, denominational and religious boundaries.

Pentecostalism and Infrastructural Development in Port Harcourt

An interesting aspect of rural development associated with Pentecostalism in Port Harcourt is infrastructural development epitomized with the erection of aesthetic and magnificent edifices for worship.. The uniqueness of these infrastructural projects lies in the fact that they are distinct in feature as well as located in hitherto rural communities. The Deeper Life Bible Church State headquarters at Rumuodara, Redeemed Church of God at Mgbuoba, Souls Ablaze Church at Nkpolu-Rumuigbo, Greater Evangelism World Crusade at Rukpokwu, Salvation Ministry Finger of God edifice at Igwuruta, and Omega Power Ministry- Doctor Jesus City at Aluu to mention but a few are wonderful great developmental complexes. In addition to worship structures, the OPM for instance, is investing in the construction of Housing Estate in Rumuokwurusi, Rumuigbo and Aluu.

Pentecostalism and Empowerment in Port Harcourt

Empowerment as a derivative of the verb empower means to give authority, power, warrant, commission, license, strength, support or confidence to a person to enable him do something or earn a living; encouraging or assisting somebody in the form of economic assistance or skill acquisition. The economic empowerment projects of the Pentecostals in Port Harcourt are multifaceted. It ranges from providing employment for the teeming youth, and adults alike through training as pastors, clerks and so on. A major social problem in the state is unemployment. Apart from providing employment for the locals through education and printing press facilities, scholarships are also provided by the churches. Some sponsor football competitions and provide football viewing centres during major national, continental and international competitions.The churches are also involved in the training of members through skill acquisition programmes, examination coaching for students and youth empowerment sometimes through collaboration with other denominations and organisations. The OPM for instance, has established the following free empowerment project in Ikwerreland and beyond:

1. Free Computer Training Centre at Bundu Water front in Port Harcourt,
2. Free Computer Training Centre Elele Prisons in Ikwerre LGA,
3. Free Computer Training Centre Rumuji in Odegu, Emohua LGA.
4. Multi-Skill Acquisition Centres at Elekahia and Nkpogu in Port Harcourt LGA and Oginigba in Obio/Akpor LGA where Nigerians are trained free of charge in such fields as oil & gas, carpentry, tailoring, rig welding, driving, etc.

Pentecostalism and Welfare in Port Harcourt

The Pentecostals are soaring high in promoting the welfare of members and community people. They demonstrate the love of God to the widows, the poor and destitute by regularly providing food items-bags of rice, and even financial allowance for their support. They run free medical services at different times especially as part of their seasonal events. At the annual events of the churches-Easter and December retreats, participants are provided with free food and lodging as well as free transport. Some less privileged members are even provided with free shelter.

The OPM runs a Free Restaurant at Rumuagholu named after Leah Sharibu, one of the kidnapped Chibok girls still held in hostage by *Boko Haram* terrorists. The church has constructed estates of self-contain, one and two bedroom flats at Aluu for numerous widows, flood victims and repentant commercial sex workers within and outside Ikwerreland. They have also opened free boutiques for converts in Port Harcourt.

The Pentecostal healing programmes are positively affecting the development of Ikwerre rural communities. Healing and miracles are central to the teaching of Pentecostals as stated earlier in this paper. They uphold the teaching that every believer is expected to enjoy good and robust health. In this regard, a lot of propaganda has been put in place to attract people to their revivals and crusades for divine healing. There are annual, monthly and quarterly special revival programmes with different catchy captions to keep the faith of members and attract new ones. These programmes are carried out within Port Harcourt metropolis and areas including Greater Port Harcourt, both at the headquarters, branches and special centres such as school premises, community play grounds and stadia.

Pentecostalism and Development in Port Harcourt

The structures of the Pentecostal churches in Port Harcourt have helped to develop various communities. Most of the infrastructures were established through collective efforts of church members organized in groups for the provision of sand, gravel, rocks and other buildings materials. There are multiple Pentecostal churches in some communities although some seem to have been planted indiscriminately. The reason behind this could be traceable to the vision of some of the church leaders that a congregation should be established within every five minutes working distance. The action has succeeded in developing the infrastructural condition in various communities.

The Pentecostal church schools and related projects have become a source employment to a reasonable number of people, especially youths. The natives and residents are counting gains from the projects. The establishment of church in an

undeveloped area has encouraged some people to acq uire properties in the affected areas thereby improving infrastructural development. The projects are helping to improve or reduce the poverty level in the communities. Money realized by natives through property (land) sales, and payment for skilled and unskilled services in course of project construction are improving the economic life of the people. Such income is used for family, education and physical development. Some are invested in children education, attending to health challenges, reconstruction of existing structures, erecting new residential and commercial structures. Through the projects thePort Harcourt environment is enhanced with possible effect of reduction of unhealthy environmental associated diseases.

The spirituality of both pastoral agents and members is developed through rural evangelism. Exchange of pulpit programme has proved to be effective means of building and promoting cooperation among church workers. Through the revival meetings, many ailments that defied orthodox medicine have been healed by the power of the Holy Ghost. The social actions like installation of bore-hole for the supply of drinking water to the natives has improved the people's access to clean water and functioning sanitation thus, enabling the people to stay healthy.

Some Critical reflections

As presently practised, Pentecostalism has probably become a multi-billion naira business seemingly attracting the attention of many financial institutions because of its unparalleled income generating potential. The ideals and practices of Pentecostalism in Port Harcourt could be described as double-edged sword. The influx of prosperity preachers in the Port Harcourt religious landscape has to a great extent tampered with the serenity which has otherwise characterized the sound moral atmosphere of Christianity in Port Harcourt. There is probably a rise in Port Harcourt of systematic manipulation, fraud, deception and cheating under the pretext of prosperity preaching. There is no denying the fact that prosperity gospel is not completely devoid of aspects which focus on hard work and self-improvement for the individual. But by and large, it seems that prosperity gospel also promotes materialism rather than the sort of fruitfulness described in Psalm 1 as the lot of those who walk in the counsel of the Lord.

Another critical area of its impact is our contention that Pentecostal preaching should shift to the issue of human rights advocacy. Human rights are those inherent natural rights which lay at the background of human freedom with great progress made over time. Despite differences in religions, we all fall under the same umbrella of humanism. This position derives from the fact that in as much as it is biblical to do so, historically, human rights have been known to all ancient religions, cultures and

societies (Van, 2013). Malkavaara (2017) averred that human rights had received emphasis in the Old Testament in Judaism, but going forward, they were formulated during the faith-critical Enlightenment period. Also, beginning from the era of non-Western cultural circles, the idea of human values and their rights became known. This idea was corroborated by Freeman (2017) who remarked that religion could embrace human rights but where this is not the case, it becomes a problem that is strong and dominating. It is common knowledge that human rights are violated at will by state and non-state actors in Port Harcourt mainly due to its cosmopolitan nature. It is in view of the foregoing, that the Pentecostal church which claims to follow the word of Jesus with mission to the marginalized by reconciling the work of Christ should also be concerned with the preservation of the inalienable rights especially for the vulnerable and less privileged ones.

The negative effect of Pentecostal theology is that it promotes a spirit of materialism at the expense of spiritualism. If that is the case, it then means that money and the accumulation of wealth will ultimately preoccupy the attention of preachers and money making may eventually become the end rather than the means of preaching the gospel. It is in view of the foregoing that Umoh (2013) remarked that capitalist materialism is fast becoming the new Christian doctrine and dogma in Nigeria; that the spirit of capitalism sweeping through the whole world is well adopted as an indispensable component of the Christian religion. As noted, it is fast replacing the modesty, poverty and mortification strongly advocated, lived and recommended as ideal to the Christian way of life by the Church fathers. If churches in Port Harcourt encourage materialism in some ways, it means that she is directly encouraging any means people are using to make money irrespective of the danger such means portend for Nigerians. The fact of churches applauding deadly materialistic tendencies resonates in their allowing the current prosperity emphasis to dominate their preaching and teachings in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Our discussion thus far has been the examination of prosperity preaching in Port Harcourt metropolis by highlighting its impacts from positive and negative perspectives. Research shows that starting a church is fast becoming a lucrative business in Port Harcourt today. The potent danger it posits is that the gospel of the Cross seems to have been sacrificed on the altar of materialism. Again, material salvation which is the main content of prosperity gospel is done at the expense of the spiritual, which is the core expectation of Christians. This assertion indicates that when money is preferred to anything else and is allowed to have absolute control over people's feeling, against those of their fellow human beings, there is bound to be

neglect of other people's sensitive needs. To say that prosperity preaching is an exclusive reserve of the branded Pentecostals is elusive as it has swept through other strands of Christianity in what appears to be the struggle for the souls of members and converts through biblical indicatives.

Recommendations

i.   We call for a safe combination of righteousness in prosperity preaching as precursor to wealth.

ii.   Pentecostal preaching should shift to the issue of human rights advocacy especially for the indigent and less privileged persons.

iii.   Pentecostal churches under the umbrella of Pentecostal fellowship of Nigeria should bridge the gap among them and reduce cases of competition and utter criticism of each other.

iv.   The use of the social media and other forms of broadcast such as drama, home videos to stereotype other Christian denominations should be discouraged.

v.   Pentecostals should reach out to other strands of Christianity in forging a common front in Christian discipleship; encounter with the risen and glorified Jesus of Nazareth is the evangelising mission of the church.

vi.   The Christian vocation is a call to service and self-denial; it is across which every genuine preacher and believer must carry. This should be unapologetically preached.

vii.   Preachers should note that what matters ultimately is not the quantity of membership but its quality; bible based preaching which stresses good neighbourliness, care and righteous living should be paramount.

viii.   Pentecostal preaching should emphasise that it is enough for believers to be converted but that they should experience a dramatic outpouring of the Holy Spirit and live holy lives by being born again. This would reduce incidences of corruption arising from teachings of materialism.

ix.   The Pentecostal church which claims to follow the word of Jesus with mission to the marginalized should also be concerned with the defence and preservation of the inalienable rights especially for the vulnerable and less privileged ones in society.

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TRADITIONAL APPROACHES TO SOCIAL ORDER IN BONNY, RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

The rural communities of the Niger Delta have been known to have a robust social cohesion of communal life guided by their cosmological perception. However, the spate of social disorder in these communities is alarming; especially in the Bonny Island which plays host to several multinational companies. The government has employed various means and strategy to curb the menace all to no avail. Thus, this paper looks at the efficiency of the traditional measures of curtailing social disorder in synergy with the modern approach, which is prevalent in the society as a result of social change. This paper summits that owing to the syncretic nature of the religious life of the Bonny people it is imperative that the traditional measure of social control be used in synergy with the modern way of curbing social disorder to create a balance in the practice of their beliefs system. Viewed within the purview of African Traditional Cosmology the paper concludes that both the traditional and the modern measures of social control can be used in a parallel manner to facilitate peace and orderliness in the society.

Keywords: Social control, Social disorder and Social cohesion.

Introduction

The Bonny people of Rivers State lived a peaceful communal life where respect for constituted authorities, lives and properties were highly cherished. However, the agitation for political freedom, provision of social infrastructure and resource control has resulted to violence and restiveness in Bonny. The result has been wanton destruction of lives and properties; as the people feel that they have been marginalized

and denied the dividends of democracy. Hence, they seek avenue to make their voice heard by the world.

Bonny Island serves as host to the major oil companies like the Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas Company (NLNG), Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), it is expected that its indigenes both skilled and unskilled will be gainfully employed as a matter of fact. This is in addition to the benefit of social responsibilities from the companies, which has to do with the provision of social amenities such as good road network, pipe borne water and electricity, scholarships and skill acquisition. But these dreams are yet to be fulfilled; currently, Bonny Island is facing the challenge of water and air pollution from gas flares, no portable drinking water, and absence of road network for the indigenous communities etc. In addition to the aforementioned deprivations, it suffers from serious environmental pollution, oil spillage rendering the indigenes unemployed as even the local fisher men are thrown out of job due to pollution which results to the death of marine lives including fish and other sea food which is the mainstay of the Bonny people.

The neglect of the concerned institutions in responding to the outcry of the Bonny people has often resulted to the disintegration of the social ethos of the community. It further manifests in youth restiveness, social and economic violence of abduction of expatriate workers of the oil companies, pipeline vandalization and sea piracy. It is worthy to note that despite the role Bonny plays in the economy of the nations, the community is still suffering from economic deprivation, poor infrastructure and lack of link roads to Port Harcourt City which is the capital of the state where Bonny is situated and rustification of houses due to gas flaring. Lawrence-Hart (2009) observed that the struggle for revenue formula has severally resulted to cases of high level of social disorder in Bonny Island as young boys in a bid to get their fair share of the gift of the natural resources resort to cult group and militia outfits where they will be armed with weapons to fight any resistance to stop them from having their way. These young men go into the creeks to carry out oil bunkering, rape women including the pregnant ones and all manner of atrocities (NDDC Profile 2001). These entire heinous acts are as a result of the denial of the dividends of democracy and economic benefits from the International Oil Companies (IOC). This work seeks to bring to the fore the dimension of social disintegration among the Bonny people due to the presence of multinational oil companies and other stake holders. This work therefore, intends to x-ray the traditional mechanisms used in curbing social disorder among the Bonny people of Rivers State, the objective includes highlighting the dynamics of traditional and modern approach of social control.

Conceptual Framework

Sequel upon the syncretic nature of the Bonny people it is important that this work be view within the purview of African cosmological perception. This is because despite the wave of modernism and civilization; the Bonny people still hold to high esteem their traditional beliefs which makes meaning to them. This traditional beliefs is enshrined in their indigenous religion which predates the modernity and its agents. Cosmology can be said to be the worldview of a people, for Metuh, (1987) cosmology is the way Africans perceive, conceive and contemplate their universe; the lens through which they see reality, which affects their value systems and attitudinal orientations; it is the African's search for the meaning of life, and an unconscious but natural tendency to arrive at a unifying base that constitutes a frame of meaning often viewed as terminus. He further stated that the cosmology of a people gives them a sense of purpose and direction and enables them to act purposefully and exercise a measure of control over their environment. Thus it very apt to view the measure of social control within the lens of the Bonny people's world view. The Bonny people are very religious that is why it is good for a blend of religious measure in curbing the social menace found amongst them since their world view permits it. Metuh reiterated that cosmology answers basic questions about a place and relationship of man with the universe which is influenced by their religious beliefs.

The Concept of Social Control

Social control is the term sociologists apply to those mechanisms by which any society maintains a normative social system. It refers to all the ways and means by which society enforces conformity to its norms. The individual internalizes social norms and these become part of his personality. According to E.A. Ross (2000) the process of social control is learnt through socialization She defines, "Social control as the system of devices whereby society brings its members into conformity with the accepted standard of behaviour. She further explains that the individual has deep-rooted sentiments that help him to cooperate with other fellow members to work for social welfare. These sentiments are sympathy, sociability and a sense of justice. But these sentiments by themselves are not enough to suppress the self-seeking impulses of the individual. Society has to make use of its mechanism to accomplish the necessary order and discipline. Generally speaking, social control is nothing but control of the society over individuals. In order to maintain the organisation and the order of the society, man has to be kept under some sort of control. This control is necessary in order to have desired behaviour from the individual and enable him to develop social qualities. Society in order to exist and progress has to exercise a certain control over its members since any marked deviation from the established ways is considered a threat

to its welfare (Rose 2000)**.** Such control has been termed by sociologists as social control.

Reasons for Social Disorder and Conflict in Bonny

Conflict and deviant behavior constitute social disorder and are part and parcel of every society, it is inevitable due to the divergent view of different members of the society on similar issues although every society has different measures of managing and controlling disorder in their society. In the words of Tasie (2005) "though conflict is perceived as contra-society and destructive, it is necessary for social change". This implies that conflict as a part of the society is necessary for change to take place. However, this change could be positive or negative. Hence, the need for effective measures of controlling deviant behaviour and managing crisis situation when it arise; The remote causes for social disorder in Bonny are; socio-economic, issues of environmental degradation, unemployment and underemployment among youths of the community by the various multinationals companies, violation of traditional institutions etc. these factors can cause social disorder in the community. However, it can be curtailed if speedily managed.

Prior to the eve of civilization, Bonny Island had several measures whereby the societal norms are obeyed. It stems from family level, community and to the installation of chiefs and kings in the land. These measures efficiently worked for the people of Bonny Island until the advent of modernity when the modern ways of social control took the centre stage.

Pitfalls of Modern Social Control

The nature of the modern system of social control seems to undermine the traditional ways of curbing social menace, more so, its slow nature in the administration of justice tend to encourage ills in the society and also causes the pervasion of justice and punishment thereby resulting to increase in crime, youth restiveness, communal crisis and other social vices.

It is against this backdrop that this paper investigates the efficiency and effectiveness of the traditional measures of social control among the Bonny people prior to the eve of civilization and modernization. Reason being that despite the overwhelming acceptance of modernization and its agents such as modern education, new religion, etc. the people of Bonny Island still hold in high esteem their cultural heritage. Syncretism is mainly practiced among the people as they hold hand in glove with the traditional practices and the new religious belief.

Traditional Agents of Social Control

Although there are several punitive measures of social control such as the police, the judicial law court, imprisonment, fines, etc the Bonny people had measures constituted by their forebears on creating social order in the society. The forebears developed ideas and values of harmonious community living through ethical codes which form the acceptable behavior among the people. This is seen in their taboos and prohibition which everybody must observe.

Deviant to the social norms of the community goes with varying degree of punitive measures which goes a long way to deter and curb the tendency to deviate. The punitive measure meted out to deviants also vary in magnitude among the different communities in Bonny Kingdom but no deviant goes scot free having been found guilty of any taboo of the land. Stagnet maintained that

> Conflict, misunderstandings are inevitable concomitant of human existence and interaction yet these are very destructive and peace is therefore needed for security and meaningful development to be achieved. Therefore, social control measures are established by nations and communities to prevent, manage and resolve social disorganization Pg 25.

In the same vein Nwolise, disclosed that different Communities in the pre-modern era had well-established mechanisms for peace, education, confidence building, peacemaking, peace building, conflict monitoring, conflict prevention, management and resolution (Nwolise 2004).

Among the Bonny people, there are norms and taboos that address the safety of life and security. The essence of these norms are to create a peaceful atmosphere for everybody to live in; that is why stiff penalty is imposed on those who deviate to deter members of the community from engaging in deviant behavior, heavy fines are leveled on individuals or group of persons who fail to comply with the rules guiding the harmonious living of the people. These heavy fines is not just about money but include the purchase of very expensive alcoholic drinks and food items which sometimes is cooked for the consumption of everybody in the community to signify a reunion with the people.

Communal Gathering

Among the Bonny people communal gathering and eating together is highly cherished, however, if a person does not live in compliance with the traditions of the community such a person is ostracized or barred from partaking in the community gathering. The person though living among the people is almost looked at as an outcast, this is because it brings shame and ridicule to the individual concerned and the family in general; hence, people try as much as possible to conform to the traditions of the land so that they can be regarded as respected members of the community. Furthermore, it is also dangerous traditionally for a person to die in a state of being ostracized because such a person will not be given a befitting burial, attendance to such burial ceremonies are always scanty because the person is seen as a deviant in the community. Since the individual was not given a befitting burial, it is believed among the Bonny people that such a person will not be admitted into the guild of ancestors. It is indeed a great punishment, for this reason people want to live in conformity with traditions of the land. Ejizu (2015) argues that for "most African groups, ostracizing an individual or group that has fragrantly disobeyed the community is thought to be the most severe punishment that could be meted out to anybody. It feels like death for any one so punished since such a person is regarded as an outcast".

Oath Taking

Oath taking is another measure which the Bonny people use to curb the menace of social disorder amongst her members. Tasie (2005) posits that oath taking is very important at all levels of Africa social life, reason being that it is used to identify evil people in the society; also it serves as a tool for dispute resolution and for the discovery of the cause of misfortune. For example, in Abalamabie community of Bonny Island; there is a sacred pot where every member of the community swears to an oath never to think ill or take the life of member of the same community. Every person that wants to be a part of that community must drink from that pot to ensure that the person's stay in the community is not for malicious purpose.

Although, Bonny people is highly Christianized; the people still hold strong their traditional believes, suffice to say that the religious atmosphere is syncretic. Indeed like the typical Africans which they are as Ejizu observed in A. G. Leonard that "The Africans live religiously, dress religiously, eat religiously, dance religiously and die religiously. To the Africans, their existence is their religion and their religion existence. Ejizu further stated

> African traditional religion plays a crucial Role in the ethical dynamics of the different groups. In the traditional African background, 'gods serve as police men'. African traditional world-

views invariably outline a vision of reality that is, at once ethical in content and orientation. Human beings and their world are the focal centre of a highly integrated universe. Hence, traditional African world-views have been described by some people, as heavily anthropocentric Pg 22.

Traditional Agent of Social Control

Consequent upon the reasons stated above on the reasons for social disorder amongst the Bonny people of Rivers State, measures of social control is necessary for an orderly social life because the society has to regulate and pattern individual behaviour to maintain normative social order. Without social control the organisation of the society is disrupted. If the individual is effectively socialised, he conforms to the accepted ways from force of habit as well as from his desire of being accepted and approved by other persons. If he is inadequately socialised, he has a tendency to deviate from the accepted ways, but he is forced towards conformity by the pressures of social control. According to Kimball Young in Shelly Shah (2016), it is necessary "to bring about conformity, solidarity and continuity of a particular group or society". It is possible only through social control. Society has to make use of its mechanism to accomplish the necessary order and discipline. Herbert Spencer in Shelly Shah (2016) again maintains that society is a collection of group of individuals. Man lives in society because it has a utility. Through society he is able to preserve his identity and views. In order to preserve his identity and characteristics, he has to exercise some control for which certain rules and institutions are created. These agencies of social control are helpful for preserving the identity of the individuals and society.

In addition, the traditional Bonny man the ideal time has always been the days of his fathers; therefore, to maintain the old order social control is very important. In other words it is the desire of the society to make its member to live in manner in which their forefathers have been living. Even though combining the old order with the new will be difficult, it is important to maintain social control in the community. It is also very important in order to regulate individual behavior in the community to make them conform to social norms and values. This will help to maintain social order amongst the people. Without social control rules and regulations of the community for the purpose of peaceful cohesion will not be obeyed, thereby disrupting the feeling of solidarity amongst the people and this will in turn affect the harmony and order of the community.

Furthermore, social control is important because it brings about uniformity in the behaviour of the individual members of the community as any deviation from the

accepted norms, is considered a threat to the welfare of the whole community. Hence, sanctions are used by the group to control the behaviour of the individuals.

No doubt social control is needed to prevent the society from disintegration. The need is greater in modern society because of its highly complex character and disintegrating forces present in it. It has become the habit of the people to violate rules and social norms. If the agencies of social control do not act effectively society may suffer from chaos and disintegration.

Agents of Social Control

Agents of social control are divided into two namely formal and informal. The formal agents are derived from institutions and people are forced to accept them, it is enforced by secondary group such as the state, law, education and other legitimate powers. Below are the formal agents of social control.

The Family

The Family is the very first and important instrument agency of social control as it prescribes rules and regulations that the members have to follow. These rules and regulations form part of social control. The family socializes the child into the norms, values, traditions and customs of the group. Thus, family has predominant role in the shaping of the personality of the child.

Education

Another agent of social control is education as it serves as a tool for inculcating moral, intellectual and social values in individuals. It imparts a sense of continuity. It links one to one's heritage and sets a perspective before him. It gives the social vision of uniformity to the individual and fits him for social role. Education is a great vehicle of social control. After the family, it is the class room, the peer group and the leaders which exercise influence on a child by our ancients.

African Traditional Religion

Religion also serves as an important agency of social control. It is religion, which supports the folkways and modes of a society by placing super natural sanctions behind them. It adopts negative as well as positive means to regulate the behavior of the individuals in society.

Traditional Sanctions

Furthermore, the Law of the land is a powerful agent of control. The government enforces law within its territory with the help of the police, the army, the prison and the court; it enacts laws to regulate the lives of the people. The deviants or the violators of social rules are punished as per law; the state carries out its function by

means of law**.** E.A. Ross asserts that 'law is the most specialized and highly furnished engine of social control employed by society. It is law, which prevents the people from indulging in antisocial activities. The lawbreakers are punished by the law of the state. It helps in governing our social conduct and behaviors. Laws are essential in strengthening social control violation of law considered a punishable offence. In short, law is an important formal means of control to regulate the individual behavior in society (Ross, 2001).

Administration is very powerful and the most effective instrument of social control. It forces the individual to obey social control. The administrations punish the violators with the help of the police, the army etc. The use of physical force or coercion is an important means of social control. It is ancient as society itself. It is essential for social progress. Even these days some societies resort to it against the deviants or those who disobey social norms. Every state has its own armed forces or police force. It is an effective weapon to prevent people from indulging in anti-social activities. It also makes people, obey social order. The state carries out its functions by means of law, which is ultimately backed by physical force. As an important agency of social, control the state exercises its force over its people through various means such as the government law, administration, the armed forces, the police and the like. Other agents of social control include Public Opinion, Propaganda etc.

Informal Agents of Social Control:

Informal means of social control are developed over a long period according to the needs of the society; they are derived from norms, values, folk ways, religion, mores, custom, belief system, etc.

Conclusion

Although there are modern measures of social control in the society today which is also prevalent among the Bonny people, there is need to synchronize the modern and the traditional measures in order to facilitate a peaceful atmosphere. This is because despite the wave of modernity, the worldview of the Bonny people is still alive and appreciated. The people still patronize and seek refuge in the traditional deities of the land, this clearly aligns with the conceptual framework of this paper thus, the parallel use of the modern and the traditional measures of social control to curb social menace will be of great advantage to the people as it will facilitate the arrest and punishment of criminal minded deviants among the people.

Recommendations

i. The cosmological perception of a people should be considered in the aspect of curbing social menace.

ii. There should be a parallel use of both measures in solving cases of social menace.

iii. People who hold prominent positions in the oil companies should be made to swear an oath of office especially in service delivery based on their beliefs.

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FUNDAMENTALS OF AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY: ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY
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Abstract

African Christianity has come to stay as a brand among the global community of Christian religion. Christianity has one source and founder, Jesus Christ but it has through, time and experience transformed in form and size in different geographic locations. The early communal church in Acts of apostles in the bible become cosmopolitan before the schism in 11th century and very episcopal at the reformation. The evangelical posture of 18th century church brought the gospel to the prevailing African church. In all the historical transformation of the church, Christianity has worn different tango in several regions of the world but one theology and faith. Fundamentals of African Christianity: growth and development is an attempt to trace the origin and beginning of Christianity that now exist in Africa and showcase some stripes made so far. Africa Christianity is a brand familiar with contemporary Christians in Africa. It is indigenous, vibrant and militant enough to solve Africa peculiar environment problems. The paper surveys the origin of Christianity in Africa and X-rays the emergence of Africa Christianity. A historical methodology is used to analyse the work. Findings show that the prospect of the brand is bright and has global visibility and would be a force to stand and conquer. Effort should be made by Africans to sustain its drive. A narrative approach is used to gathered data, and so analytically arranged to prove a point.

Key Words: African Christianity

Introduction

The advent of Christianity in Africa may seem an easy story to narrate when one bears in mind the flight of Joseph and Mary to Egypt as instructed by the angel of God (Mtt. 2:13-15), and also the Pentecost event in Acts of Apostles chapter two. These

incidences give credence that Christianity came to Africa in the first century at the death of Christ (AD 30). However, a historical survey of the establishment of African Christianity gives contrary view. African Christianity is an indigenous adventure and bears Africans distinctive features of religious worship. The Africans are very vocal in worship and exuberance in expression of mystical revelation. They dance and clap hands at the interpretation of these revelations that reveal their in-depth expectation of divine manifestation at every worship movement. The singing and dancing that accompany reverberate and brings in identifiable community involvement in traditional religion affairs in Africa. These and others to identify later in course of the paper are religious ingredient that makes Africa Christianity unique. In all, the Africa Christianity is not a different Christianity from the universal Christianity or the Catholic church. Kunhiyob(2012) stressing the importance of African Christianity Theology said:

> However, it is critical to remember that an African Christain Theology does not stand alone but is part of the larger context of the Christian story. God's dealing with humankind began at the creation and have continued to the present day in the context of the universal church of Jesus Christ. (XIV-XV)

Africa Christianity is truly African but not a different religion on itself rather one true faith given by Jesus Christ. Africa Christianity did not come out from the skies and became African religion. It has a beginning which cannot be severed from the European Christianity. Hence it is necessary to trace the early events and involvement of African continent at the inception of the church and also the attempts made to re-evangelise Africa after the seemingly "diminished of Christianity in Africa". It is these subsequent attempts that consolidated European missionaries' activities in Africa.

The Christianity that holds sway in Africa currently cannot be said to have its growth and development from the first century evangelism, but has "a relationship in the past" that has often been ignored (Hildebrandt 1981).

The relationship in the past is the first 6 centuries history of the church where North Africa Christians were major participants in the growth and development of Christianity in the then known world (Roman Empire). The Africa church produced important personalities that contributed to the solid theology and ecclesiastical institutions of the universal church. Some of these individuals included Origen, Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine etc. The input they made are still reverberating and solidifying the contemporary church. By 18th century the same Pentecostal influence of first century has caught up the European church that in 19th century, evangelical

activities of the church ran through Africa continent and gave the African the spring board to launch African Christianity.

Efforts are made here to show that truly Africa was one of the first continents that got the gospel of Jesus Christ at the inception of the church (Pentecost day) and also participated in its spread. The spread of the gospel (evangelism), nurture (mission) and development (church expansion) that took different dimensions throughout its existence. These dimensions included phases: planting, struggle, persecution, extinction and revival. To get this work flow and help the reader comprehend the trends of events within the limited framework, some subheadings are treated: (a) attempts to evangelise African continent, (b) development of a new brand Christianity and (c) prospects of the church. The prospect of the church shows the success of the African Christianity in the global Christian Communion and its visibility in terms of evangelization and social content.

Attempts to Evangelise African Continent

Christianity is a religion of Christians who believe in Jesus Christ as their founder – son of God who came into the world to redeem man from the power of the devil (Satan) and reconcile him (man) to God. Man is believed to have sinned and neglected God who created Him. Jesus did this liberation through his death on the cross and resurrection from the death. It is this the church called Goodnews (Mark 1:1). The gospel is the message which Jesus brought to the world: "kingdom of God is with man" and repentance is needed for one to experience and enjoy it (MK 1:14ff). Jesus said he has come to fulfil earlier promise made by God to the Israelites in Isaiah 61:1-2 that the Messiah shall bring Goodnews to the poor, liberate the captives and heal the sick etc, (Luke 4:18-19). In all Jesus said and did was centred on the kingdom of God, his death and resurrection. Before his ascension into heaven, and he commanded his disciples to preach the gospel to everyone and make disciples. The major outreach of the church was carried out on Pentecost day and over 3000 people repented and came to the church fold. Pentecost day means 50 days of the feast of Jewish festival of Passover which in itself is another festival known as feast of ingathering. Jesus fulfilled his own promise to send help (Holy Spirit) to his disciples on this day.

The Pentecost day in Jerusalem was a great assembly of Jews of diaspora. People from Africa were around (Acts 2:10) and other countries. These people returned home with the experience of church inauguration in Jerusalem and some became Christians. In the Acts of the Apostles (8:26-40) we heard the story of Ethiopian Eunuch who was baptised by Philip and there was another story of Simon of Cyrene (Libya) (Luke 23:26). These Africans certainly brought the gospel to Africa. Church history has shown that Christianity dominated North Africa in the first to fifth centuries at the

death of Christ. However, this Christianity did not last nor did it spread around Africa. The church faced obstacles from the Roman's authority and later the Arabs invasion with the aim of spreading a newly formed religion called Islam. Islam evolved from Saudi Arabia among the Arab separate groups states dwelling in the Saudis Peninsular (Peninsular connote the whole Saudi Arabia). Mohammed, a prophet united them through the new religion and they became a national force to be challenged. With the religion and common interest to conquer more land for themselves, they pushed Southwest of Middle East and spread to North Africa. The conquest of the people coupled with the persecution of the Roman's authority, the Berbers and other dwellers of North Africa region, were converted or conscripted into Islam. Islam means submission and the people "submitted" into Islam. The vibrant North African church went into oblivion, except the remnant in the form Coptic minority in Egypt. There was a great revival and spiritual awareness th m at swept across Europe and even America in 18th century. This revival is known and called Great Awakening. The desire to bring the gospel to African continent and other parts of the world grew. Some people in Europe formed missionary groups. Such groups as Church Missionary Society (CMS) and Methodist Church Missionary came to Africa to preach the gospel (Oshitelu 2002). The Methodist and Baptist group came to West Africa, the Western shore of Nigeria while the CMS took the gospel to the Niger Delta. The coming of the gospel to Niger Delta was not by the CMS per se, because by 1846 the Presbyterian church led a mission to Calabar under the leadership of Rev. Hope Waddell (Ajayi 1965). Waddell passed through Bonny while on his way to Calabar on1846 and by 1848 the King of Bonny and his Chief wrote to England asking for missionaries. While the England request was being dialogued, the Bonny people request was looked into by Hope Waddell who came to Bonny with his wife and spent 3 months before returning to Calabar. The young men of Bonny wanted education seriously and yielded to the request by Rev. Waddell that the juju house in Bonny be destroyed and also, they give up human sacrifice practices. But the King advised Waddell that might not be possible, the youth were not truthful. The Waddell attempt to evangelise Bonny primarily slowed because of his unwillingness to carry missionary activities outside Duke town and Creek town; because of palsy of fund and the difficulties of maintaining long distant post or mission (Ajayi 1965). The CMS Niger mission has increased its activities after the consecration of Crowther as the bishop in 1864. He negotiated with the people of Bonny a school and mission post were established in the area. At the same time, Yoruba mission has reached Lagos in 1843 (Eche 2018). The gospel they brought is the same but tainted with their denomination differences. We had Christian church denomination along the line of the missionaries that came to the region. So, the Anglican had majority share in Niger Delta, Mid Niger (Ibo land) and Lagos (Yoruba

mission). The Baptist and Methodist had the interior of Yoruba and some coastal parts in the West. The Presbyterians held sway in the far East of Niger Delta (Calabar and up high land of Ibo tribe). Although the Roman Catholic Church Mission came a little late in Nigeria, made tremendous inward up the Northern Nigeria through Lagos.

In other part of Africa missionary activities were simultaneously carried out by European missionaries and some America missionary bodies. In the South Africa (1815) the Moravian mission more or less pioneered the missionary work that grew by 1840 was prominent in South Africa among the Bechuanaland (Botswana) and Cape Town. Missionary work was carried out especially among the Hottentot (more or less the Aboriginal) who were ill-treated because of their refusal to work in the farms of white Europeans – the Dutch. Doctor John Philip of the famous London Missionary Society (LMS) was a noted figure at this period. In 1840 another missionary started in East Africa, Mombasa led by Ludwig Krapf and Johnannas Robman who joined Krapf in 1846. They were Germans and did extensive work in Kenya under Church Missionary Society (CMS). The CMS work was not the fruitful in the region. The Roman Catholic church established their mission in 1863 on Zanzibar Island but their interest in slave trade did not encourage expansion. The Methodist Missionaries came as a challenge to restore the effort of Krapf, who was among four other missionaries sent from London. They were able to have their first baptism in 1870 and established a mission post in Galla 1885. However, they were raided by some persons (Masai). Nevertheless, a successful mission was carried out among the Buganda in 1878 through the activities of Livingstone partner, Henry Stanley and the ex-slave Dallington Mufta. The ex-slave was a Christian and able to speak the language of the people. This aided the spread of the gospel swiftly in the region. The king of Bugada was interested in the gospel and CMS sent 8 missionaries to the region. After a while other missionaries came to work in Bugada (Hildebrandt 1981).

By 1920 and 40 other church denominations have started coming into Nigeria to establish their churches; such as Seventh Day Adventist, Assemblies of God, and Jehovah Witness etc. All these are western oriented churches, even the ones that came later into Northern Nigeria, through Sudan Interior Mission. These churches worked in Nigeria to make Christianity what it is now.

The modern Christianity in Africa, which many people ascribed as successful passed through rough and tough stages of history. These stages are classified as first, second and third attempts to evangelise African continent. The first attempt is the direct involvement of some Africans at the early activity or events in Christian history. The founder of Christianity, Jesus Christ took refuge in Africa when his life was under threat by Herod the Great. At birth he was seen as a rival to Herod dynasty and effort was made to eliminate him. By God's intervention he was taken to Egypt and he was

weaned there, came back at the death of Herod the great. During his earthly ministry, though no African was in his cabinet (12 disciples) however he was assisted by an African to carry his cross at crucifixion. At the inauguration of the church (Pentecost day) Africans were present (Acts 2) and when the church set out for wide-world evangelism an Ethiopian royal court member was around, so these events and persons involved ardently influenced the gospel spread in Africa. No wonder that North Africa was able to produce leading church figures in the early five centuries of the Christian era. Such personalities as Cyprian of Alexandria, Clement, Tertullian, Origen, Anthony of Egypt and Augustine of Hippo etc. These men contributions to the growth of Christianity were enormous. Anthony was the first Christian to lay the foundation of Monastery activities that contributed a lot to the educational development of Western Europe. Augustine came from Carthage to Roman and became a great theologian, while Tertullian and Origen were college great teachers who influenced people of their time (Johnson 2015, Anjov 2007). Modern theological issues were often evolved from the writings of these great African men. However, at the period of Barbarian invasion, the church could not survive the surge and rampage of Islam and Arab. The African church was swallowed up in North Africa. The only sign of the church is Coptic Church in Egypt; which Ethiopian church claims Ecclesiastical origin through St. Mark.

The second effort made to enter Africa with the gospel was in 15th century; the Portuguese and Spaniard took voyage exploration down the Cape Bojador (Buah 1970). By 1456 some ships of the western European traders were seen along the coast of West Africa (Ajayi 1965). The Portuguese were the first to take voyage into the open sea across Africa. The exploration was encouraged by Prince Henry, the son of the King of Portugal in 1434. In 1471, they traded at Elmina in Ghana with a native name Edena (Buah 1970). Gold was the major item in the transaction in West Africa and Ghana was called Gold Coast because much gold was found in the country. These two countries (Portugal and Spain) sent missionaries to West African coast of Benin and Warri. The people heard the gospel and even received it. The gospel and the church existed only among the royal court members, especially in Warri. For 200 years the church and good news of Jesus Christ could not penetrate into the hinterland and among the ordinary citizens. And so, the church did not survive. There are reasons why the church did not survive, which are beyond this write-up, however the mistake made and lesson learnt helped the subsequent attempt to make tremendous en-route into the African continent.

The third attempt to evangelise African become pertinent for the church because of available information and favourable circumstance of the 19th century. This century

was an enlightening and science period when many easy travelling assisted discoveries were made on sea voyage and even land journeys. The steam engine could serve both land and sea journey. More importantly is the interest in foreign mission as a result of spiritual revival, that started with Wesley in England and the Great Awakening in the American colonies (Thomson 1976) in the 18th century and by 19th century, the whole Western Europe was enveloped by the fire of revival. The Great Awakening became a religious experience that spurred the church at this period to go into social work and evangelism. It was this desire that prompted groups like Clapham Brothers (England) to send missionaries to Africa and William Carey (A Baptist) to lead 20missionaries to India in 1886.

In 1787 efforts were made to establish colony of ex-slave (450 in number) in West Africa and in 1842 the first missionaries came to Nigeria. The Niger expedition and Niger mission were all enterprises that resulted in the present Christianity in Nigeria (Africa). So far, the story is fairly accepted but there is a probable fear if this "success" would survive the modern attack on the church by different instruments of modernity. Time will tell and how the church situates itself to sustain this "success".

Development of a New Brand of Christianity

The church in Africa spread fast and became Africanised in most part of the Continent. African church leaders saw the need to worship God in African context and so indigenised the church; though allowing some African indigenous practices in the worship of God, they introduced clapping of hands in the church, allowing exuberance and expression of aesthetic practices such as jumping and prophecies in the church.

This came because many people were not comfortable with European stereo-type of worship – singing written Hymns with organ and silent meditation without expression of inner touch by the Holy Spirit. It was this desire to worship the African way that led to the establishment of African Independent Churches commonly referred AICs. The Africans church leaders sought means to bringing the Bible real to their people. The legalistic Christianity (Gaiya 2020) of European missionaries was not spiritually satisfactory. The missionaries were more or less coloniser who gave rules on how the Africans should wear cloth, the type of food they should eat and even the number of women they could marry. Understanding the Bible in the context of their situation could only be through reading the Bible in Africa language. A typical example is the ex-slaves colony in Freetown, Sierra Leone where Musa A.B.Gaiya (2020) remarked:

> The Christianity become meaningful not through the English language but through the *Linga Franca, Kiro.*This perhaps may explain what is meant by religion in Africa (427).

The Sierra Leonean church growth was as a result of common language used by ex-slaves as a means of communication known as *Kiro*. The language formulated by them made communication and understanding of their environment easy so they could use it to read the Bible when it was translated into their language.

Different translation of the Bible in many Africa languages came up in the second decade of the 20th century and increased peoples' desire to worship God and appreciate Christian religion as their own. In Nigeria, Ibo, Yoruba, Hausa, Efik, etc translations were used freely by church members. G.O.M. Tasie (1996) appreciating the work on Ibo Bible said:

> The overriding factor in the way the Bible was received was
> that it contained the word of God and for the first time in a
> language near enough to theirs.

Those indigenous churches rose almost at the same time across Africa. In the first decade of 20th century, a spiritual awakens among the local African church came up. Individuals were inspired to preach the gospel in the African context and there by challenged the monotonous and ridge pattern of western Christianity; more or less forced through the threat of the Africans. "Prophet", "Evangelist" "men and women of God" appeared in various regions of Africa. The William Harry Wade of Liberia, Sokari Braide of Bakana in Niger Delta, Nigeria, the Simon Kimbangu of Zaria, the Zion churches in South Africa and more Aladuras of Western Nigeria, all came up to strengthen Africa Christianity through their activities and numerous followers. These local churches grew steadily with African methodology with theological design that contextualise African peculiar problems to meet modern desire for global Christianity. Global in the sense that the African Christianity has created a niche for itself and yet it is within the ambit of Christianity brought by the Western European Missionaries.

A typical example of developing a pattern of worship could be taken from Sokari Braide pattern of preaching based on his ideology and principles, which of course is biblical and ethically pertinent for Christian aspiring to grow in the faith and serve his God. He had prayer meetings and open-air preaching where he discouraged consumption of alcohol and wearing of charms in form of armlet to ward off evil powers. To him, the evil power that one's faith cannot ward off, is it greater than Jesus Christ or God? Faith should be seen in action and practice the bible is not foreign book rather word of God for everyone. Africans in the local congregations have freedom to access God and His power of healing. He healed many people with sickness and did other wonder works that aimed him the title "Elijah". Though his fame was a threat to the existing powers both in the church and the government, it was an insult to them

and so his exist from the earth was certain. He was imprisoned and he died in 1918. Sokari treatment was not different from William Harry Wade of Liberia. He showed the spirit of African spiritual leaders – pragmatic and dynamic yet Liberal to give followers freedom of expression in worship. This expression is seen in dancing, singing, clapping and aesthetic. The next generation of these early African church leaders expanded this freedom and created avenue for self-development of worshippers. Powerful men and women of God grew and more churches sprangled up in difficult location. The Africans have now mega churches led by Reverend Pastors, Prophets and Evangelists contributing their quota to the evangelisation of the world with the gospel of Christ as commanded.

The African indigenous churches are the churches where their founders are Africans who received the gospel direct or indirect from the missionaries. The churches grew out of "both the background of African heritage and Western or Mission Initiated churches"(Ayegboyin 2017). The experience of growing between two traditions solidify an emerging church tradition in Africa especially in Nigeria. The new Pentecostal churches that came up in the midst of 20th century "were nourished" by the Mission Initiated Churches (MICs) and the African Indigenous Churches (AIDs). The New Pentecostal Churches (NPCs) benefitted from the two Christian culture that existed before their arrival. Almost the practices and teachings of the classical Pentecostals, called in another name "African Pentecostal Churches" benefited from African Indigenous Churches. They leverage on AIC tenant, though they are regarded as "mushroom" churches, because they are very nearer to the common people, make use of their practices. These practices include the night vigils, camp village fellowship, healing crusade etc. The AICs also copied from the Mission Initiated Churches or Orthodox Mission Churches.

The church in Africa has grown with features identifiable and distinct. This distinctiveness cut across all denomination barriers. These are seen both in the Orthodox (main stream) and Pentecostal churches. The exuberances, shouting, instant solution of problems, contestation with the negative power whether in the air, water, in government and the church etc., are well known characterises of Africa church.

Prospect of African Christianity

The labour of early missionaries to Africa is not in vain, though many of them died while evangelising the continent, it is worthy to remark that blood of those killed in course of carrying out their duty is the rain that water the seed of faith (Gospel of Jesus) planted in the continent. From South Africa to the East and Central to West Africa, the gospel of Jesus Christ spread and affected many lives. The economy of the people improved and educational qualification of the affected regions increased. This

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is because the missionary schools in Nigeria aided the rise of modern education system in the country. By 1956 according to Ogbu (1978)

> Most of the mission trained teachers were Christians. About one half of the government trained were also Christians. As most of the Christians taught in "pagan" areas or "Sabon garis" it is evident that these areas were ahead of the traditional Muslim North (114)

It is also on record that the church from 1960 to 1975 grew even in the midst of modern persecution, after many African countries gained independence from the colonial masters. At the Lausanne conference on evangelism in 1974 Switzerland it was noted that "Christianity is growing in Africa faster than anywhere else in the world" (Hildebrandt, 1981).

This growth is very remarkable and visible at the advancement of information communication technology. In 2009 at the peak argument of human sexuality, the church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) led by Most Rev. Peter J. Akinola took a stand "to build bridges of peace and understanding (that) will be based on biblical principle of repentance, confession and reconciliation" (Johnson, 2018). It is this stand that warranted and engineered the formation of Global Anglican future conference (GAFCON). The African church stood against the same sex marriage in Anglican Communion. The majority of Africa Christian denominations supported the stand taken by Nigeria Church (Anglican Communion) against same sex marriage. African Christianity has shown strength and global competitiveness. Its vibrancy and militancy are appreciated. The militancy is the desire and readiness to do evangelism and maintain the 'old time religion" tradition bequeathed to it yet claim liberalism to accommodate "Africaness" in context and scheme. To buttress this point a brief history of African church (Christianity) in England according to Ola Finjani (2013) started in 1960 after the independence of many African countries. The first was an African Initiated Churches led by Apostle Adejobi of church of the Lord Aladura. He came as a missionary and later increase the number to remarkable level to be recognized. By 1980s and 1990s a reasonable number of new African Pentecost churches has risen in England. The new covenant church came first and was led by pastor Titus David in 1986.

Two years later Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) arrived led by a dua of pastors Kumade and Ade Okonede. The African Initiated Churches are blazing trail of a new brand Christianity that is global visible, though accused of Monotonous mission. In spite of the monotonous mission accusation, AICs has through charismatic mission

in Africa and in other continent, Britain became prominent in this missionary adventure of the AICs because, the first European mission was in England.

The prospect of African church is bright. The church is making in road to the global circle. Though the critique is that, it is the Africans that patronise these churches in Europe and Asia and other colours do not attend. However, with time it would attract participation from other continents. The church is strong in Africa and has prospect.

Conclusion

The origin and development of African Christianity is very important in the quest for fundamentals of African Christianity. African Christianity is not different from European Christianity or any other, rather the Christianity is contextualised in African cosmology and ontology in the light of bible teaching. Africans must solve its own peculiar situation and environmental problems through the religion they have accepted to see God in action and involvement.

The church which has been a means of conveying the good news of Jesus Christ to the world is quite available in the African continent since the inception of Christianity. However, the two previous attempts were not successful but the third attempt succeeded. It is the prayer of the faithful that this attempt will succeed every generation until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

From previous points of view, the church in Africa cannot sing Alleluia now because it is constantly in danger of extinction. The Islamic attack, secularism and current persuasion against the Bible are the red light the church has to watch.

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THE SILENCE OF WOMEN IN 1 TIMOTHY 2:11-12 AND WOMEN IN THE CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN MINISTRY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The participation of women in the ordained Christian ministry of the church has been an issue of concern in some Christian denomination worldwide. Apart from some New Religious Movements and the Aladura churches, women participation in the ordained ministry is restricted in most orthodox churches like the Anglican church particularly in Nigeria. Often those who argue against the participation of women in the ordained Christian ministry quote 1 Timothy 2:11-12 among others. Consequently, this paper examines the silence of women in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 and women in the contemporary Christian ministry in Nigeria. Were women impactful in the propagation of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the New Testament and contemporary times? What is the intention of the author in 1 Timothy 2:11-12? Should 1 Timothy 2:11-12 be read literally as restraining women from the ordained Christian ministry? What are the reasons for the silence of women in 1Timothy 2:11-12? Has the silence of women in most churches helped in promoting the gospel? This is the burden of this paper. The paper employs the Historical-critical and phenomenological methods and argues that the author of 1 Timothy 2:11-12 does not generally suggest a restriction of women in the ordained Christian ministry of the church as supposed by most chauvinistic interpreters rather the instruction was culturally conditioned based on the people in which the author addressed his work. The paper maintains that women have been a veritable tool in the propagation of the gospel in the New Testament and in the contemporary Christian periods and as such the understanding of 1 Timothy 2:11-12 as restricting women from the ordained Christian ministry of the church must be refrained.

Key Words: Aladura, Christian Ministry, Orthodox Church, Women Silence, Women Ministry.

Introduction

Over the past decades the participation of women into the ordained Christian ministry of the church whether as leaders or as participants has provoked serious concern within the socio-ecclesiastical circle. While some persons and institutions argue for the inclusion of women in the ordained Christian ministry quoting biblical text such as "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28 KJV), other persons and institutions argue against the involvement of women in the ordained Christian ministry citing biblical scriptures such as "Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent" (1 Timothy 2:11-12 RSV), "the women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church" (1 Corinthians 14:34-35 RSV) among others. The interpretation of these biblical scriptures has created division among biblical scholars and some religious institutions as to the true position of women in the ordained Christian ministry of the church. Consequently, this paper centres on the silence of women in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 and women in the contemporary Christian ministry in Nigeria. The paper critically appraises some scholars' view on 1 Timothy 2:11-12 and also unravel the original intention of the author of the text. Furthermore, the paper examines the circumstances that led to the biblical injunction as revealed in 1 Timothy 2:11-12. Moreover, the paper focuses on the activities of women in the New Testament and in the contemporary Christian ministry to prove their worth as vital instruments in the spread of the gospel and Christianity for church growth. The paper also answers the poser, should the 1 Timothy 2:11-12 be read literally as restricting women from the ordained Christian ministry of the church?

Literary setting of 1 Timothy

Every letter in the writing of the New Testament canon is an ad hoc document; it is a piece of correspondence prompted by a set of specific historical situations. Therefore, by traditional attribution, it is believed that Apostle Paul wrote 1 Timothy to his beloved son and co-worker- Timothy who had pastoral oversight of churches in Ephesus. Apostle Paul among others wrote to Timothy in order to arrest the influence of some false teachers who arose in the region of Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:1-2ff). McCain (2005) avers that 1 Timothy was scripted for several reasons namely to charge Timothy to dissent false, legalistic teachers (1:1-20); to outline the nature and purposes of prayer in the public worship service (2:1-8), to discuss the spiritual roles of women in the church (2:9-15) and to enumerate the qualifications of the bishop/pastor/elder

(3:1-7). Other reasons include to catalogue the qualifications of deacons (3:8-13) and to give instructions on Timothy's personal conduct on doctrinal, ecclesiastical, spiritual, moral and other affairs (4:1-6:21). This is in addition to admonishing wealthy converts to be good stewards of God's resources and to eschew metaphysical supposition. On a similar note, Nwigwe (2003) remarks that Timothy at Ephesus was confronted with the challenge of false teachers, who, not only criticized the authentic faith, but also their teachings threatened the religious and moral life of Christians. He maintains that Paul wrote to Timothy on how he should conduct himself and the church, and to guide him on how he should handle the influx of the false teachers until he (Paul) arrived Ephesus.

Vos (2004) adds that in accomplishment of the prophecy pronounced in Acts 20:29-30 "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves" (NKJV), Paul found the need to send Timothy to Ephesus in order to deal with the incursion of doctrinal errors among the Ephesians brethren. He asserts that in the Ephesians church some worshipers had turned from genuine faith to ungodliness and gross apostasy while others were misusing the law, insisting on austerity as a means to attain high spirituality. The false worshippers also emphasized abstinence from certain foods and marriage (1 Tim.1:5-6,7; 19,20, 4:1-3). To this group of persons, Paul counselled for pragmatic godliness, proper use of the law and the need for stern chastisement. Moo (1991) stresses that the rebellious teachers sowed discord among the congregation in Ephesus and were preoccupied with trivialities (1 Tim. 1:4-6; 6:4-5). He maintains that they did not only emphasize abstinence from certain foods in order to attain high spiritual maturity but marriage and sex generally (1 Tim. 4:1-3). He notes that the false teachers tried to convince many women to themselves (1 Tim. 5:15), and urged them to reject the traditional feminine roles of submissiveness in favour of a more egalitarian approach to the role relationships of men and women. However, the later assertion is inferred with a high level of possibility since it is not clearly affirmed in the pastoral letters as one of the cardinal essence of the false teachers' agenda in the city of Ephesus. It is pertinent to note that Paul's rational for his verdict in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 differs. Thus, the task of the next section is to present scholars views on 1 Timothy 2:11-12 and the reasons that resonated the command for the silence of women in the text.

Interpretations of 1 Timothy 2:11-12

The church from the earliest period (second century A.D) understood 1 Timothy 2:11-12 from the literally point of view as barring, restricting and prohibiting women from partial and active participation in the ordained Christian ministry. This interpretation prohibiting women from any form of teaching, preaching and other ministerial

assignments swayed through until biblical scholars from diverse disciplines and approaches recommended that the church had universally misread the text and that universal accord on the meaning of 1 Timothy 2:11-12 cannot be used as a guide influencing the relationship of men and women within the church circle. Marshall (2008) remarks that in the fifth century which was patriarchal in nature, women played little or no part in public affairs. Thus, engaging in exercises such as teaching and preaching were unacceptable whether among Jews or also among some Gentiles. Therefore, the restriction could be interpreted as culturally conditioned. However, this reason is no longer binding in the 21st century as women have been found productive in the advancement of the gospel and spread of Christianity in a male dominated society as will be expressed later.

Amolo (2003) identified four reasons for the silence of women in the church as stated in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 to be namely heretical, behavioural, illiteracy and cultural. She notes that the heretical reason was as a results of the infiltration of false teachers and preachers which fascinated mostly women and not the men. She avers that Paul in giving the command for the silence of women in the church felt that relegation of the women to their spouses would go a long way to solving the issues of being deceived easily by the false teacher and preachers since the women were the most vulnerable. She remarks that the behavioural reason adduced for the silence of women in the church was as a result of the noise created during worship sessions and the noise or confusion was practically charged on the women. Furthermore, she expressed that another reason for the silence of women in the church was as a result of the low educational background of women at that time. It was noted that most women within the period were unlearned and untrained. Thus, to maintain orderliness and decency in the church, women were required to keep silent. This point is substantiated by Marshall (2008) when he states that in a society, where illiteracy and lack of education were common, it was mainly the women who suffered from these disadvantages. Ayandokun (2012) submits that the need for orderliness in the church became necessary as a result of gentile women who were advancing into the church and were yet to learn what being reverent in church meant. She maintains that the call for silence of women in the church was to avoid the domineering attitude of women of Ephesus over their men. However, it must be noted that Paul's command for the silence of women in the church was as a result of the prevailing circumstances of that period and has no universal application.

Amolo (2003) like Marshall (2008) adds that the strongest reasons for the silence of women in the church was culturally based. She asides that the ancient Jews prayed daily to God for not making them women, stating that women were greedy eaters, sit-

around listeners, indolent, jealous and frivolous. Thus, this cultural bias among the Jews and Gentiles towards women in the era of Paul has been identified as the major reason for the exclusion of women in the ordained Christian ministry. However, as earlier noted, this is not to be generalized as restricting women in ordained Christian ministry of the church today. This is because Paul in 2 Timothy 1:5 "when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also" commended the teaching roles of Eunice and Lois on Timothy which distinguished him among his peers, thus, through the mentoring of Paul was able to rise to the position of a bishop in Ephesus. Secondly, it must be noted that by the time of writing this epistle, Paul had left in Ephesus a Christian couple named Priscilla and Aquilla for the work of ministry (Acts 18:18-19), and they were still there when he wrote his first epistle to Corinth (1 Cor. 16:19), and years later when he wrote to Timothy his second letter (2 Tim. 4:19). By implication, these couple were resident in Ephesus along with the false preachers (Nwigwe 2003). Apparently, it is not that there were defects in the teachings of the women but rather the teaching women were exercising authority over the men (Marshall 2008). With the above expressions, the next section delineates the indispensability of women in the ministry of Paul and Jesus Christ.

Women in the Ministry of Jesus and Paul

The New Testament reveals that Jesus and Paul valued women and treated them with respect and dignity. The four gospels of the New Testament contain vital information on the relationship of Jesus to women and portray the involvement of women in the life and ministry of Jesus. Women were key witnesses to the events of Jesus life. They played prominent roles in the events surrounding his crucifixion and resurrection. The writings of John 19:25; Mark 15:47; Matthew 26:57 shows that they were willing to risk their lives for Jesus, remaining at the cross and visiting the tomb while the male disciples had fled. In the gospel's, Jesus' attitude and behaviour towards women were in contrast to the norms of his time. Jesus healed women and allowed them touch him and also follow him. He spoke without restraint to them. He related to them primarily as humans being rather than as sexual beings (Akintunde, 2005). Jesus accepted women who were neglected and rejected within his society as persons of worth (John 8:1-2), The first persons to receive Paul and Silas in Macedonia were women (Acts 16:13). Lydia, the first European convert exhibited hospitality to the apostles (Acts 16;11-15). She was wealthy, having a home large enough to accommodate her own family as well as guest rooms for Paul and Silas. In Thessalonica, many leading Greek women believed the preaching of Paul and Silas (Act 17:4, 12) to the annoyance of the Jews. Philip had four unmarried daughters who prophesized (Acts 21:8,9). The account of Acts 12:12 recounts that after Herod had murdered James the Brother of John on

account of the gospel, he proceeded to arrest Peter because it pleased the Jews who were antagonistic to the preaching of Christ. In response, a prayer meeting for Peter's deliverance was held in the house of a woman, Mary the mother of John Mark at a risk of incurring the wrath of the arrogant and wicked Herod. Other women notable in the New Testament include the women of Berea who studied the scriptures diligently (Acts 17:10-17), Eunice and Lois mother and grandmother respectively of Timothy (1Timothy 1:5). The powerful preacher, Apollos had Priscilla's help to him explain the way of God more adequately (Act 18:24-27). Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchrae is worth mentioning, Paul described her as being a great help to many (Romans 16:2).

Women in the Contemporary Christian Ministry in Nigeria

Has the chauvinistic interpretation accorded 1 Timothy 2:11-12 over the years prevented women from participating fully in the ordained Christian ministry of the church? Are there indices of women's worth and roles in the ordained Christian ministry? This is the thrust of this section. The roles of women in the contemporary Christian ministry in Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized. Just as it was in the early church women in the contemporary Christian ministry in Nigeria are forces to reckon with for support, viability and sustainability of any project, vision and mission. The viability and tremendous growth of some present day Christian ministry depends largely on the activities and contribution of women. Some church's women ministry cannot function effectively and efficiently without the wife of the priest leading and organizing the women. As noted by Ampitan (2015) women are the major volunteers where men would show apathy or indifference. They are always seen in large numbers than their male counterpart particularly in church activities and in arranging and dusting the church pews, windows and other liturgical vestments. Women are also involved in the beautification and gleaning of the church premises. Worthy of note is the fact that in the contemporary Christian ministry women are frequently more than men in the music department. Women often times compose music for festivals and ceremonies through inspiration when carrying out their domestic chores and other responsibility. The resounding voices of women in the music department serves as enticement to many into the church. In addition to music, women dance to the music which they or their male counterpart compose to showcase their African heritage. This is against most male who feel that it is not necessary to dance.

Additionally, in the 21st century, women serve as leaders in house cells or fellowship in the Orthodox and Neo-Pentecostal Churches such as the Anglican Church, Methodist Church, Redeemed Christian Church of God, Deeper Life Bible Church and Salvation Ministry. Thus, serving in the capacity as propagators of the word of God.

Women are involved in televangelism and one-on-one evangelism, thereby enabling in the spread of the gospel and winning of souls for the kingdom of God. Oyibo (2005) recounting the activities and contributions of women in the contemporary Christian church submits that women such as prophetess F.E. Alaba founded God's Grace Church in IIorin, Grace E. B Kolawale and prophetess G.I. Ayinla founded and leads Saint Peter's spiritual church and Christ the Messiah Church IIorin respectively. Other women notable for their outstanding performance(s) in the church especially in the Pentecostal and Aladura churches are Rev. Mother Dr. Esther Abimbola Ajayi, an educationist, businesswoman, philanthropist and founder of Love of Christ Generation Church C&S, Archbishop (Mrs.) Margaret Idahosa of the Church of God mission, a Pentecostal Church. With the death of Benson Idahosa who was the pioneer founder of the church, Margaret stood in the gap making sure the life of the church comprising of the spirituality and administrative trend(s) is hitherto sustained. With the effort and administrative acumen Mrs. Margaret Idahosa has been able to establish churches in most part of the Nigeria and abroad with myriads of men as serving pastors. Other prominent women in the list of Pentecostal Church founders are Archbishop Margaret Bola Odeleke of the Power Pentecostal Church. The church which has remained hitherto is sound in biblical interpretation. In the Aladura churches, women like Captain Christiana Abiodun Akinsowo, Evangelist Florence Babalola, Evangelist Bola and Prophetess Deborah Aboyin are important figures. Their charismatic gifts of preaching, teaching, healing, praying, and performing prophetic utterances makes them unique. Omotoye (2011) writing on the works of Captain Christiana Abiodun in Christianizing the Yoruba land attests that the revival team she led to the Yoruba land in 1927 recorded tremendous achievements. The preaching of Abiodun in conjunction with her miraculous healing of the sick permeated the minds of pagan worshippers at her time and that made them surrender their charms, idols, and fetish objects for destruction.

Conclusion

Although the society in which women in the first century found themselves were male dominated, women were never silent but functioned effectively in the New Testament church. Women were effective instrument in the ministry of Jesus and Paul. Thus, Paul's teaching and injunction in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 is viewed as culturally conditioned on the women of his time and not a universal command. On this note the perpetual denial of women from the ordained Christian ministry in some known orthodox churches as observed in Nigeria such as the Anglican is non-Biblical. The paper maintains that women were involved in nurturing the young and also rendered selfless services to the early apostles, thereby promoting the gospel and Christianity. In the contemporary Christian ministry, women have been and are still useful vessel in

the proclamation of the gospel, teaching and counselling in a world dominated by male. The effectiveness and efficiency of the contemporary Christian ministry cannot be fully ascertained without the concerted effort of women. Thus, women must be incorporated and given adequate opportunity in the contemporary Christian ministry to advance the gospel of salvation. There is no need any longer to restrain women especially in the Orthodox church from carrying out their divinely endowed roles since such roles and activities were exemplified in biblical scriptures.

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THE PRICE AND PRIZE OF INTEGRITY IN DANIEL 6:1-18 FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN LEADERS

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Abstract
Integrity will continue to be essential and relevant throughout all generations. One of the virtues that has recently been the subject of public debate, particularly among scholars, is the idea of integrity. This idea needs to be rethought in the context of Christian leadership because it has grown to unimaginable proportions, significantly shifting the emphasis on ecclesiastical growth processes and theologies in the development of global Christianity. Scholars have treated the integrity issue synthetically in several publications covering history, teachings and features. However, not much attention has been paid to the positive contributions to the impact of Christianity in Africa. Therefore, the study examined the price and prize of integrity in the life of Daniel as revealed in Daniel 6:1-18 and lessons for contemporary Christian leaders. The paper employed an eclectic exegetical approach of both diachronic and synchronic perspectives, which allows the exegete to be flexible in data analysis to purposefully achieve the study's objective and draw inferences for the formulation of biblical ethics in the African context. The latter aspect of the approach allows the exegete to accept the text of Daniel 6:1-18 as the final matured text accepted by the religious community of the Old Testament, which the Torah shapes. The entire discourse is on the background of the religious teachings that did not consider integrity relevant in this millennium. Instead, contemporary Christian leaders should reevaluate their lives and learn to collaborate for genuine Christian change in a world where plurality and competing voices are the norms rather than dismissing them as a threat.

Keywords: Price, Prize, Integrity, Christian Leaders, Exposition.

1.0   Introduction

Integrity is the unwavering commitment to a high moral standard and possessing solid moral principles and uprightness. Individuals with integrity must uphold the most

significant standards of truthfulness and justice. Authenticity in this context involves consistently being honest with oneself and others, regardless of whether others appreciate such straightforwardness. In the current generation, where the relevance and intrinsic value of integrity are sometimes overlooked, it becomes essential to reflect on this topic. Many individuals in contemporary society have compromised their integrity, leaving little trust or reliability for others, driven by self-interest and pursuing goals at any cost. Unfortunately, this trend extends to numerous Christian leaders as well. Undoubtedly, maintaining integrity is crucial for societal reputation. Christians, who profess to be followers of the Lord and bear the responsibility of representing Him on Earth, should prioritise integrity, emphasising Christian leaders even more.

Irrespective of how admirable or truthful one is, and regardless of how accurately one lives, it is not guaranteed that everyone will appreciate such qualities. Nonetheless, even those individuals who may harbour dislike should be capable of recognising one's integrity. The uncontroversial observation is that integrity is valued and sought after and less costly than arrogance. People seem to place a unique value on integrity that transcends utilitarian considerations and is not dependent on the valuation of other attributes. Although having integrity proves advantageous in business and losing it could result in a loss of trust, these benefits appear to be secondary to the inherent importance of integrity itself. Another uncontroversial assertion is that integrity is a moral virtue, representing excellence of character, specifically in good conduct. Individuals with integrity typically adhere to and act on morally upright principles, avoiding compromise and embodying this moral virtue's essence.

The enduring connections between integrity and truth, honesty, and sincerity present complications and challenges to the common belief that integrity is solely a moral attribute. There is a longstanding association between integrity and a commitment to truth-seeking, as individuals with integrity are expected to prioritise truthfulness (Tracy 2016: 1). Sincere, dishonest, or cunning disregard for the truth appears incongruent with the essence of integrity. This observation is noteworthy, considering that many integrity theories in philosophical literature often neglect to emphasise the importance of truth. Through the historical-critical method, this paper explores the significance of integrity in the success of leadership and the price Christian leaders must pay, drawing parallels with the experiences of Daniel in chapters 6:1-16. The argument is made that integrity and leadership are intertwined,

and any leader who fails to recognise integrity as an essential element enabling effective leadership may not indeed merit the title. Consequently, the notion of leadership devoid of integrity is deemed hypocritical.

2.0 Review of Related Literature

Philosophers have grappled with defining integrity as a virtue, leading to varying perspectives. Cox, LeCaze, and Levine (2017) propose that it relates to one's identity, while others argue for including subjective or objective moral standards. Some see integrity as merely a formal connection of consistency. Miller and West (2020: xviii-xxiii) posit that an individual with integrity is harmonious, undivided, and acts wholeheartedly in diverse ways. Such individuals, as outlined by Frankfurt (1971) and Dworkin (1988), are not mere "wantons" driven by desires but act consistently with their alignment or identification. Coherence in integrity does not impose normative restrictions from a strictly legal standpoint (Halfon, 1989; Calhoun 1995: 236–8). Proponents of integrity as coherence, like McFall (1987), emphasise various coherence relations as crucial, including consistency between values, commitments, and principles. In this view, integrity demands consistency in actions aligned with one's values, especially in the face of temptation or social pressure. For instance, acts contradicting one's political cause would be inconsistent with integrity. Furthermore, integrity is a coherent relationship between values and behaviour, where actions are grounded in one's values. Rather than genuine belief, acts driven by guilt or peer pressure are considered insincere demonstrations of integrity.

Concerns arise that the coherence perspective may diminish the significance of honesty, particularly as proponents fail to distinguish between essential identity-related commitments and incidental ones. This implies a broad application of integrity, even in mundane activities like eating, brushing teeth, or turning off lights (McFall 1987: 12–13; McFall, 1987). The practical identity perspective addresses this issue by highlighting "identity-conferring commitments" or "ground initiatives." These core values, encompassing relationships, careers, and deeply held beliefs, form the foundation of an individual's character. In this context, integrity involves developing a character based on these ground projects and remaining faithful to it, even when faced with challenging situations. Individuals' profound commitment to this form of integrity underscores why honesty is far from inconsequential (Taylor 1981, 143–159).

Cheshire Calhoun critiques the previous perspectives, arguing that they misinterpret integrity by framing it as a personal virtue primarily concerned with self rather than a social virtue focused on relationships with others (Calhoun 1995: 252). Calhoun suggests a shift in perspective, viewing individuals as part of a collective

deliberation about "What is worth doing?" According to Calhoun (1995: 259), displaying integrity involves standing up for something because it matters to the common interest of deliberators in determining what is worthwhile. A person of integrity respects the opinions of others in the community while advocating for their judgment. By doing so, they represent themselves and all other decision-makers, contributing to determining what is worthwhile (Calhoun 1995: 257). In this view, opting not to uphold specific ideals aligns with community standards rather than individual commitments (Calhoun 1995: 254). From this, one can rightly assert that the agent is not bound by any substantive normative restraints on their commitments. However, concerns arise about the potential emergence of moral outliers that may challenge the accuracy of these theories. To address this, a more critical integrity account necessitates the inclusion of normative limitations. One approach to achieve this involves employing normative standards to determine what is reasonable for an agent to value.

Lynne McFall (1987: 5-20) contributes to this perspective by highlighting that agreement with their beliefs or commitments is not mandatory when attributing integrity to someone. Instead, acknowledgement is required that these beliefs or commitments are significant to a reasonable person, even if they might be tempted to forsake them for other, less essential, but still recognisable values (McFall 1987: 11; McFall, 1987). According to this viewpoint, a person of integrity adheres to values deemed acceptable rather than objectively accurate (Graham 2001; Scherkoske 2013). Constructing integrity as a reasonability viewpoint can take at least two forms. The first involves asserting the existence of objective standards that can be used to determine what is reasonable for a person to value. This approach aims to establish a framework that objectively identifies the reasonability of an individual's values, providing a basis for evaluating their integrity.

While introducing normative restrictions on commitments, the integrity as reasonability viewpoint allows for a diverse range of commitments, acknowledging that some might be incorrect. However, the integrity as objective correctness approach takes a further step (Ashford 2000: 424). In this perspective, commitments must be objectively correct in both moral claims and empirical presuppositions, imposing a more stringent criterion on the content of agents' commitments. Beyond the philosophical discourse, integrity is associated with various entities, unlike canonical qualities such as wisdom, courage, and temperance, typically attributed to agents and their actions. The term "integrity" logically extends to diverse contexts, including bridges, databases, buildings, ecosystems, and legislation. This broad usage underscores the versatility of the concept.

Solid etymological connections between integrity and wholeness or soundness further illuminate its meaning (Miller 2013; Dworkin 1986). While individuals may use the term to characterise various aspects of their lives or existence, it is predominantly employed to convey the quality of one's character (Cox, LeCaze, and Levine 2017). Philosophers often lean towards a more straightforward understanding, associating integrity with the concept of something being whole or sound. This inclination prompts a search for specific traits in individuals that align with this extended use of the term. Practical analyses of integrity have attempted to capture and organise these elements, varying in degrees of success (Scherkoske 2013).

The following data points offer a glimpse into the diverse elements that practical examinations of integrity seek to encompass:

Integrity demands unwavering commitment to one's beliefs, especially in the face of opposition, difficulty, or temptation. The most evident display of integrity occurs when an individual refuses to compromise, betray, or undermine their moral principles (Williams 1973, 1981; Calhoun 1995). A person of integrity must adhere to their principles while remaining open to rational arguments. A stance of inflexible convictions, irrespective of merit, cannot reasonably serve as the foundation for integrity. This distinction highlights how integrity differs from and is incompatible with fanaticism, dogmatism, and a lack of interest in self-examination (McFall 1987, Halfon 1989, Graham 2001, McLeod 2004, see Miller 2013).

Integrity is not confined to moral convictions alone; it is a quality that permeates various aspects of an individual's life. Demonstrations of integrity extend across one's professional role, intellectual pursuits, and creative endeavours, encompassing both practical and abstract domains. It emphasises that integrity is not limited to matters of morality. Integral to integrity is the notion of integration and coherence within an individual's convictions. As Susan Mendus observes, the lives of people of integrity form a coherent whole led by their purposes (Mendus 2009: 16; McFall 1987: 7–8). In this context, coherence describes the elusive quality of a person's convictions "hanging together." Integrity is reflected in the seamless alignment and consistency among an individual's deeply held beliefs, contributing to the overall unity and purposefulness of their life.

Integrity reveals itself through actions, showcasing the volitional strength of individuals who adhere to their convictions. Those with integrity demonstrate resilience against weakness of will, premature judgment instability, or a lack of resolution. The possession of integrity is incompatible with gross moral turpitude. Even if individuals like Hitler or Stalin displayed principled or resolute behaviour,

their actions could not be considered as having integrity (McFall 1987, Halfon 1989, Ashford 2000, Graham 2001, and Miller 2013).

Integrity is especially crucial in leadership and advisory roles. Seeking help or guidance from individuals with integrity is a common concern, reflecting an appreciation for their insight, judgment, and probity. Whether acting as interlocutors, counsellors, mentors, or leaders, people of integrity are valued for their ethical and principled approach to providing guidance and leadership in matters of importance (Tracy, 2016; Levison et al., 2014; Johnson, 2015). These observations intentionally remain open-ended and ecumenical. While not all points may be universally applied to determine integrity, they contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the concept. Some aspects may seem logical in abstract or hazy forms but could gain clarity or lose relevance when examined concretely (Scherkoske 2013: 17–18).

3.0   Critical Introduction and Exposition of Daniel 6:1-15

The Book of Daniel is rich in historical superscriptions, signifying that its narrative and prophecies span a significant portion of the sixth century B.C.E. The initiation of the book, as indicated in Daniel 1:1, is traced back to the third year of Jehoiakim in 605 BCE. During this time, Nebuchadnezzar's victory over the Egyptians at Carchemish led to his southward movement into Palestine, resulting in the siege of Jerusalem—an event notably absent in 2 Kings or Jeremiah. Jehoiakim swiftly surrenders, leading to Nebuchadnezzar taking away select items from the temple and a group of noble youth, including Daniel (Longman III, 1999:43–45).

Daniel, belonging to the upper class, becomes one of the first exiles transported from Jerusalem to Babylon for training in Babylonian administration. His journey extends into the subsequent years of the Babylonian empire, during which he served the Babylonian kings and bore witness to the near destruction and exile of Judah and Jerusalem. The narrative of the Book of Daniel extends into the Persian era, concluding with the last historical reference tied to the third year of King Cyrus of Persia in 537 BC. This contextualises the book within a setting akin to Ezekiel, both unfolding in Babylonia and addressing the plight of a disheartened remnant of Israel.

3.1   Daniel in the Canon

In the tripartite division of the Hebrew canon, the Book of Daniel finds its place in the Writings, positioned between Esther and Ezra, rather than in the prophetic section. Consequently, early Jewish tradition often associated Daniel with the wisdom tradition, utilising its content for instruction in wise living. However, in the Septuagint and most Christian Bibles, Daniel is grouped with the prophets, following Ezekiel and preceding the Book of the Twelve. This shift in classification is reflected in Matthew

24:15, where Daniel is referred to as a prophet, aligning with Christian tradition that interprets Daniel as a prophetic figure and places him within the prophetic tradition.

The Septuagint version of Daniel includes additional sections absent in the Hebrew text. These additions, known as the Prayer of Azariah, the Song of the Three Jews, Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon, are not included in Protestant Bibles. However, Catholic editions retain these additions along with other Apocryphal books. Scholars remain divided on various aspects related to the setting of Daniel, such as its date, authorship, and audience. While most evangelical scholars assert that the book is historical, with prophecies originating in the sixth century BC (Longman III, 1999), some evangelicals and non-evangelical scholars place the majority, if not all, of the book in the second century BC (Goldingay, 1989). This article adopts the latter perspective, as it appears more plausible. The precise dating of the work is often linked to the prophecy concerning the end of the oppressive king (11:36). The description of this oppressive ruler's activities (Dan 11:29-35) closely aligns with the actions of Antiochus IV in Jerusalem during the 160s BC.

3.2   Message

While Daniel is situated within the prophetic tradition, his primary focus diverges from the typical three-part message found in other prophetic books, which usually addresses idolatry, social injustice, and reliance on religious ritualism. Although the latter portion of the Book of Daniel poses challenges for specific interpretations, its core message remains clear: God is sovereign, reigning over all people and kingdoms, even when appearances suggest otherwise. Despite the apparent dominance of the Babylonians and later the Persians on the world stage, Daniel asserts that Yahweh remains in control, orchestrating events toward a divinely directed culmination of history.

The central theme of Daniel underscores that there is more to history than meets the eye on the surface. In the interim, while the Babylonians and Persians may appear to be in command, God's genuine and faithful followers should anticipate suffering. However, amid their trials, they can endure with the understanding that God will ultimately bring history to a climax, establishing His kingdom (Baldwin, 1997: 502–503). This overarching message reassures believers that, despite temporary adversity, God's ultimate purpose and sovereignty will prevail in the unfolding of history.

3.3 The Text of Daniel 6:1-18 and The Translation (from Biblia Herbraica Stuttgartensia)

וְדָרְיָ֫וֶשׁ (מדיא) [מָדָאָ֔ה] קַבֵּ֖ל מַלְכוּתָ֑א כְּבַ֥ר שְׁנִ֖ין שִׁתִּ֥ין וְתַרְתֵּֽין׃ ¹

שְׁפַר֙ קֳדָ֣ם דָּֽרְיָ֔וֶשׁ וַהֲקִים֙ עַֽל־מַלְכוּתָ֔א לַאֲחַשְׁדַּרְפְּנַיָּ֖א מְאָ֣ה וְעֶשְׂרִ֑ין דִּ֥י לֶהֱוֺ֖ן בְּכָל־מַלְכוּתָֽא׃ ²

וְעֵ֤לָּא מִנְּהוֹן֙ סָרְכִ֣ין תְּלָתָ֔א דִּ֥י דָנִיֵּ֖אל חַֽד־מִנְּהוֺ֑ן דִּֽי־לֶהֱוֺ֞ן אֲחַשְׁדַּרְפְּנַיָּ֣א אִלֵּ֗ין יָהֲבִ֤ין לְהוֹן֙ טַעְמָ֔א וּמַלְכָּ֖א לָא־לֶהֱוֵ֥א נָזִֽק׃ ³

אֱדַ֙יִן֙ דָּֽנִיֵּ֣אל דְּנָ֔ה הֲוָ֣א מִתְנַצַּ֗ח עַל־סָֽרְכַיָּא֙ וַאֲחַשְׁדַּרְפְּנַיָּ֔א כָּל־קֳבֵ֕ל דִּ֥י ר֣וּחַ יַתִּירָ֖א בֵּ֑הּ וּמַלְכָּ֣א עֲשִׁ֔ית לַהֲקָמוּתֵ֖הּ עַל־כָּל־מַלְכוּתָֽא׃ ⁴

אֱדַ֗יִן סָֽרְכַיָּ֤א וַאֲחַשְׁדַּרְפְּנַיָּא֙ הֲו֣וֹ בָעַ֗יִן עִלָּ֛ה לְהַשְׁכָּחָ֥ה לְדָנִיֵּ֖אל מִצַּ֣ד מַלְכוּתָ֑א וְכָל־עִלָּ֨ה וּשְׁחִיתָ֜ה לָֽא־יָכְלִ֣ין לְהַשְׁכָּחָ֗ה כָּל־קֳבֵל֙ דִּֽי־מְהֵימַ֣ן ה֔וּא וְכָל־שָׁל֤וּ וּשְׁחִיתָה֙ לָ֣א הִשְׁתְּכַ֔חַת עֲלֽוֹהִי׃ ⁵

אֱדַ֗יִן גֻּבְרַיָּ֤א אִלֵּךְ֙ אָֽמְרִ֔ין דִּ֣י לָ֤א נְהַשְׁכַּח֙ לְדָנִיֵּ֣אל דְּנָ֔ה כָּל־עִלָּ֑ה לָהֵ֕ן הַשְׁכַּ֥חְנָֽא עֲל֖וֹהִי בְּדָ֥ת אֱלָהֵֽהּ׃ {ס} ⁶

אֱדַ֗יִן סָֽרְכַיָּ֤א וַאֲחַשְׁדַּרְפְּנַיָּא֙ אִלֵּ֔ן הַרְגִּ֖שׁוּ עַל־מַלְכָּ֑א וְכֵן֙ אָמְרִ֣ין לֵ֔הּ דָּרְיָ֥וֶשׁ מַלְכָּ֖א לְעָלְמִ֥ין חֱיִֽי׃ ⁷

אִתְיָעַ֜טוּ כֹּ֣ל ׀ סָֽרְכֵ֣י מַלְכוּתָ֗א סִגְנַיָּ֤א וַֽאֲחַשְׁדַּרְפְּנַיָּא֙ הַדָּֽבְרַיָּ֣א וּפַחֲוָתָ֔א לְקַיָּמָ֤ה קְיָם֙ מַלְכָּ֔א וּלְתַקָּפָ֖ה אֱסָ֑ר דִּ֣י כָל־דִּֽי־יִבְעֵ֣א בָע֡וּ מִן־כָּל־אֱלָ֨הּ וֶֽאֱנָ֜שׁ עַד־יוֹמִ֣ין תְּלָתִ֗ין לָהֵן֙ מִנָּ֣ךְ מַלְכָּ֔א יִתְרְמֵ֕א לְג֖וֹב אַרְיָוָתָֽא׃ ⁸

כְּעַ֣ן מַלְכָּ֔א תְּקִ֥ים אֱסָרָ֖א וְתִרְשֻׁ֣ם כְּתָבָ֑א דִּ֣י לָ֧א לְהַשְׁנָיָ֛ה כְּדָת־מָדַ֥י וּפָרַ֖ס דִּי־לָ֥א תֶעְדֵּֽא׃ ⁹

כָּל־קֳבֵ֖ל דְּנָ֑ה מַלְכָּ֣א דָּרְיָ֔וֶשׁ רְשַׁ֥ם כְּתָבָ֖א וֶאֱסָרָֽא׃ ¹⁰

וְ֠דָנִיֵּאל כְּדִ֣י יְדַ֗ע דִּֽי־רְשִׁ֣ים כְּתָבָא֘ עַ֣ל לְבַיְתֵהּ֒ וְכַוִּ֨ין פְּתִיחָ֥ן לֵהּ֙ בְּעִלִּיתֵ֔הּ נֶ֖גֶד יְרוּשְׁלֶ֑ם וְזִמְנִ֨ין תְּלָתָ֜ה בְיוֹמָ֗א ה֣וּא ׀ בָּרֵ֣ךְ עַל־בִּרְכ֗וֹהִי וּמְצַלֵּ֤א וּמוֹדֵא֙ קֳדָ֣ם אֱלָהֵ֔הּ כָּל־קֳבֵל֙ דִּֽי־הֲוָ֣א עָבֵ֔ד מִן־קַדְמַ֥ת דְּנָֽה׃ {ס} ¹¹

אֱדַ֣יִן גֻּבְרַיָּ֥א אִלֵּ֖ךְ הַרְגִּ֑שׁוּ וְהַשְׁכַּ֙חוּ֙ לְדָ֣נִיֵּ֔אל בָּעֵ֥א וּמִתְחַנַּ֖ן קֳדָ֥ם אֱלָהֵֽהּ׃ ¹²

בֵּ֠אדַיִן קְרִ֨בוּ וְאָמְרִ֥ין קֳדָם־מַלְכָּא֮ עַל־אֱסָ֣ר מַלְכָּא֒ הֲלָ֧א אֱסָ֣ר רְשַׁ֗מְתָּ דִּ֣י כָל־אֱנָ֡שׁ דִּֽי־יִבְעֵה֩ מִן־כָּל־אֱלָ֨הּ וֶאֱנָ֜שׁ עַד־יוֹמִ֣ין תְּלָתִ֗ין לָהֵן֙ מִנָּ֣ךְ מַלְכָּ֔א יִתְרְמֵ֕א לְג֖וֹב אַרְיָוָתָ֑א עָנֵ֤ה מַלְכָּא֙ וְאָמַ֔ר יַצִּיבָ֥א מִלְּתָ֖א כְּדָת־מָדַ֥י וּפָרַ֖ס דִּי־לָ֥א תֶעְדֵּֽא׃ ¹³

בֵּ֠אדַיִן עֲנ֣וֹ וְאָמְרִין֮ קֳדָ֣ם מַלְכָּא֒ דִּ֣י דָנִיֵּ֡אל דִּי֩ מִן־בְּנֵ֨י גָלוּתָ֜א דִּ֣י יְה֗וּד לָא־שָׂ֨ם (עליך) [עֲלָ֤ךְ] מַלְכָּא֙ טְעֵ֔ם וְעַל־אֱסָרָ֖א דִּ֣י רְשַׁ֑מְתָּ וְזִמְנִ֤ין תְּלָתָה֙ בְּיוֹמָ֔א בָּעֵ֖א בָּעוּתֵֽהּ׃ {פ} ¹⁴

אֱדַ֨יִן מַלְכָּ֜א כְּדִ֧י מִלְּתָ֣א שְׁמַ֗ע שַׂגִּ֤יא בְּאֵשׁ֙ עֲל֔וֹהִי וְעַ֧ל דָּנִיֵּ֛אל שָׂ֥ם בָּ֖ל לְשֵׁיזָב֑וּתֵהּ וְעַד֙ מֶֽעָלֵ֣י שִׁמְשָׁ֔א הֲוָ֥א מִשְׁתַּדַּ֖ר לְהַצָּלוּתֵֽהּ׃ {ס} ¹⁵

בֵּאדַ֙יִן֙ גֻּבְרַיָּ֣א אִלֵּ֔ךְ הַרְגִּ֖שׁוּ עַל־מַלְכָּ֑א וְאָמְרִ֣ין לְמַלְכָּ֗א דַּ֤ע מַלְכָּא֙ דִּֽי־דָת֙ לְמָדַ֣י וּפָרַ֔ס דִּֽי־כָל־אֱסָ֥ר וּקְיָ֛ם דִּֽי־מַלְכָּ֥א יְהָקֵ֖ים לָ֥א לְהַשְׁנָיָֽה׃ ¹⁶

בֵּאדַ֜יִן מַלְכָּ֣א אֲמַ֗ר וְהַיְתִיו֙ לְדָ֣נִיֵּ֔אל וּרְמ֕וֹ לְגֻבָּ֖א דִּ֣י אַרְיָוָתָ֑א עָנֵ֤ה מַלְכָּא֙ וְאָמַ֣ר לְדָֽנִיֵּ֔אל אֱלָהָ֗ךְ דִּ֣י (אנתה) [אַנְתְּ֙] פָּֽלַֽח־לֵהּ֙ בִּתְדִירָ֔א ה֖וּא יְשֵׁיזְבִנָּֽךְ׃ ¹⁷

וְהֵיתָ֨יִת אֶ֣בֶן חֲדָ֔ה וְשֻׂמַ֖ת עַל־פֻּ֣ם גֻּבָּ֑א וְחַתְמַ֨הּ מַלְכָּ֜א בְּעִזְקְתֵ֗הּ וּבְעִזְקָת֙ רַבְרְבָנ֔וֹהִי דִּ֛י לָא־תִשְׁנֵ֥א צְב֖וּ בְּדָנִיֵּֽאל׃ ¹⁸

Translation (As it appears from the HBS text).
¹and Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.
²It pleased Darius to appoint over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps to be in charge of the whole kingdom;
³over them were three ministers, one of them Daniel, to whom these satraps reported, in order that the king not be troubled.

⁴This man Daniel surpassed the other ministers and satraps by virtue of his extraordinary spirit, and the king considered setting him over the whole kingdom.

⁵The ministers and satraps looked for some fault in Daniel's conduct in matters of state, but they could find neither fault nor corruption, inasmuch as he was trustworthy, and no negligence or corruption was to be found in him.

⁶Those men then said, "We are not going to find any fault with this Daniel, unless we find something against him in connection with the laws of his God."

⁷Then these ministers and satraps came thronging in to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever!

⁸All the ministers of the kingdom, the prefects, satraps, companions, and governors are in agreement that a royal ban should be issued under sanction of an oath that whoever shall address a petition to any god or man, besides you, O king, during the next thirty days shall be thrown into a lions' den.

⁹So issue the ban, O king, and put it in writing so that it be unalterable as a law of the Medes and Persians that may not be abrogated."

¹⁰Thereupon King Darius put the ban in writing.

¹¹When Daniel learned that it had been put in writing, he went to his house, in whose upper chamber he had had windows made facing Jerusalem, and three times a day he knelt down, prayed, and made confession to his God, as he had always done.

¹²Then those men came thronging in and found Daniel petitioning his God in supplication.

¹³They then approached the king and reminded him of the royal ban: "Did you not put in writing a ban that whoever addresses a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, during the next thirty days, shall be thrown into a lions' den?" The king said in reply, "The order stands firm, as a law of the Medes and Persians that may not be abrogated."

¹⁴Thereupon they said to the king, "Daniel, one of the exiles of Judah, pays no heed to you, O king, or to the ban that you put in writing; three times a day he offers his petitions [to his God]."

¹⁵Upon hearing that, the king was very disturbed, and he set his heart upon saving Daniel, and until the sun set made every effort to rescue him.

¹⁶Then those men came thronging in to the king and said to the king, "Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that any ban that the king issues under sanction of oath is unalterable."

¹⁷By the king's order, Daniel was then brought and thrown into the lions' den. The king spoke to Daniel and said, "Your God, whom you serve so regularly, will deliver you."

[18]A rock was brought and placed over the mouth of the den; the king sealed it with his signet and with the signet of his nobles, so that nothing might be altered concerning Daniel.

3.4   Analysis of the Passage (Daniel 6:1-18)

The narrative of Daniel in the lions' den holds significant importance within the Book of Daniel, notably as it contrasts with the earlier events in chapter 3, where only Daniel's friends faced a trial, with Daniel mysteriously absent. Chapter 6 unfolds with Daniel being targeted by adversaries and vindicated by God. This experience mirrors those of biblical figures like Joseph, Esther, and the three Hebrews in chapter 3. However, the primary emphasis of these stories is not a guarantee of divine deliverance in every trial but rather the manifestation of God's saving presence after a period marked by divine silence. Despite the supernatural intervention, God consistently assures His enduring presence to those enduring trials.

The specific timeline of the main event in this chapter is not explicitly stated. However, it will likely have occurred shortly after the fall of Babylon, around 538 BCE, aligning with the events in the preceding and subsequent chapters. During its zenith, the Medo-Persian kingdom emerged as the most extensive empire, stretching from Egypt to India, with Judah as its fifth satrapy. The empire's builder, Cyrus the Great, earned a global reputation for his tolerance, supporting local laws and temples through generous policies. This historical context provides a backdrop for understanding Daniel's challenges within the broader geopolitical landscape of the time.

3.4.1.   The Exceptional Satrap and a Fateful Edict (Hebrew Bible, Daniel 6:1-9)

The narrative unfolds with a glowing acknowledgement of Daniel's prosperous career within the Medo-Persian court, arousing envy among his fellow administrators. The precise location of the events in this chapter remains unspecified, leaving the possibility of it occurring in either Babylon or Susa, one of the principal cities of the Medo-Persian Empire. The transition from Babylonian to Persian dominance transpired seamlessly, with most administrative officials retaining their positions.

The empire that supplanted Neo-Babylon was renowned for its well-organised administrative structure. The text delves into a hierarchy featuring 120 satraps who served as provincial governors or, more likely, officials of lower rank. Overseeing them were three administrators. The book of Esther refers to the existence of 127 satrapies during the reign of King Xerxes (Esther 1:1). The land of Judah, designated as the fifth satrapy, was also identified as the province "Beyond the River" (Ezra 4:11), denoting its location beyond the Euphrates. The Medo-Persian Empire, described as

"the largest empire the world had yet seen" (Baldwin, 1978:126), had an imperial structure designed to uphold peace and facilitate the systematic collection of taxes.

Initially identified as Darius the Mede in the preceding chapter, Darius is now introduced as the reigning king in the text. Contrary to the previous assumption that he governed only the province of Babylon, this chapter asserts his authority over the entire kingdom. The likelihood emerges that this figure is more than a mere governor but possibly the emperor, with solid indications pointing towards Cyrus the Great. The author, however, seems less concerned with Darius's specific identity, emphasising instead the significance of his actions over his details. In this narrative, Darius is portrayed as a benevolent king, juxtaposed against the previous dominant figure, Belshazzar. The focus shifts to Darius's deeds rather than his identity, suggesting that "what Darius does is more important than who Darius is."

Daniel, known for his unwavering trustworthiness in fulfilling his duties, becomes the target of envy among his adversaries. Recognising his integrity, they plan to undermine him by interfering with his religious practices. Drawing parallels to earlier biblical stories, such as Daniel 3 and the plot against Mordecai in Esther 3:5-9, the adversaries set out to exploit the conflict between human and divine laws. A delegation, symbolising Daniel's enemies, approaches Darius politely, concealing their true intentions. Deceptively asserting unanimous agreement among royal officials, they propose a new law regulating worship throughout the empire for a specified period. Montgomery (1950:266) notes that the conspirators falsely claim to represent the entire officialdom.

As the story unfolds, it becomes evident that the conspirators are not merely targeting Daniel but are agitating against King Darius himself. Their manipulation surpasses the actions of the Chaldeans in a previous chapter, where they reported a perceived problem to the king and left the resolution to his discretion. In contrast, these officials pressure Darius directly to fulfil their agenda (Seow, 2003:90). Explaining how the head of a supposedly "religiously tolerant" world empire could endorse a decree mandating that anyone praying to any deity or person, excluding the king, within the next thirty days, would face punishment in the lions' den presents a challenge. Some scholars propose that this peculiar law could be understood in the context of the "disturbed religious conditions in Babylon immediately after the Persian conquest" (Shea, 2005:85). If the ruler in question were Cyrus, who enjoyed popularity in Babylon, such a decree might align with the period when deities from surrounding towns were either still present in Babylon or in the process of being returned to their respective temples.

The chosen form of punishment, casting transgressors into the lions' den, finds parallels in early Assyrian practices where oath-breakers were publicly devoured by wild animals placed in cages in the city square (Walton, Matthews, Chavalas, 2000:739). The severity of Darius's decree is underscored by the declaration that the laws of the Medes and Persians are irrevocable. Similar assertions about the unalterable nature of "the laws of Persia and Media" are made in the book of Esther (1:19), and Ezra 6:11, 12 also highlights the immutability of a Persian decree. However, within Daniel's narrative, the regulation of worship is guided by another unchangeable law – God's divine law. This distinction emphasises the clash between earthly decrees and the unwavering principles of faith in Daniel's life.

3.4.2. Arrest and Verdict (6:10-18)

With the edict firmly in effect, Daniel's adversaries spring into action again, this time on a mission to find evidence of him violating the imperial law. Daniel, known for his unwavering habit of thanking God thrice a day despite life's challenges, resorted to prayer in times of difficulty instead of seeking assistance from his colleagues or the king. Shea contends that "long before this plot was formed against him, he had found prayer to be the vital ingredient in his busy life in Babylon as a high-ranking official" (2005:86). It is a known truth among believers that "it takes less effort to pray during an emergency or trial than in the course of ordinary life" (Doukhan, 2000:92). Daniel, recalling a previous threat to his life (Dan. 2:18), combines petition with praise in his prayer.

Remaining steadfast in his daily routine, Daniel continues praying in his upper room with open windows, maintaining his posture and direction towards Jerusalem, even though the temple is in ruins. This practice dates back to King Solomon's dedication prayer for the temple (2 Chron. 6:36-39). Daniel does not alter his habits in response to the new decree, continuing his daily devotions without interruption (Slotki, 1999:50). Upon gathering evidence against Daniel, his opponents report to the king. A play on the word "before" is evident in the text, emphasising that Daniel's act of praying before his God led to his denouncement before the king by his adversaries.

In a dramatic turn, the envious officials, storming Darius's office, omit the customary greeting, "O king, live forever!" This time, they attempt to diminish Daniel's stature by referring to him as a captive, identifying him as one of the exiles from Judah. This is the third instance in the book where Daniel is described this way (other instances include 2:25; and 5:13). In chapter 6, the accusers insinuate that a foreigner can never be fully trusted, employing the mention of Daniel's captivity solely to humiliate him and cast doubt on his loyalty (Miller, 1994:184).

Furthermore, Daniel's adversaries resort to exaggerated and false accusations to malign him before the king. In their initial meeting with Darius, they claimed unanimous agreement among all officers, a statement incompatible with Daniel's high-ranking position. Now, they accuse Daniel of neglecting the king, a claim directly contradicting Darius's favourable opinion of him as stated earlier in the chapter (6:3). Despite their inability to find any fault with Daniel (6:5), these officials persist in their efforts to tarnish his reputation. In his defence at the end of the chapter, Daniel emphasises his consistently blameless conduct before the king (6:22).

The narrative highlights Darius's sense of justice and exceptional devotion to Daniel. The Aramaic term יְשֵׁיזְבִנֵּךְ, often used to describe something inherently evil, underscores Darius's distress upon learning the true motive behind the decree. Despite his initial efforts to save Daniel, the opponents relentlessly pressure him, even demanding immediate execution. Their approach becomes increasingly threatening, revealing the precarious nature of immutable human laws that can ensnare their makers (Towner, 1984:89). As Darius realises his helplessness, he turns to prayer, pleading for Daniel's deliverance by the God he serves continually. Scholars suggest that Darius's words express a deep belief in the power of Daniel's God, possibly influenced by the miraculous deliverance of Daniel's friends from the fiery furnace. In contrast to the king's overt expression of faith, Daniel quietly demonstrates trust through his actions in the face of mortal danger (Collins, 1984:272).

The sealing of Daniel's fate prevents tampering with his situation, ensuring that neither enemies can harm him clandestinely nor friends can intervene, such as by feeding the lions. This underscores the reliance on divine intervention; Baldwin notes, "God was the only person who could intervene on Daniel's behalf." Despite appearances, with Daniel seemingly at the mercy of his adversaries, the book of Daniel teaches a crucial lesson about the power of earthly forces over the people of God. The king's concern is palpable as he spends a sleepless night fasting and praying, anxiously awaiting daybreak to ascertain Daniel's fate (7:21).

4.0. The Price and Prize of the Integrity of Daniel

Chapter 6 of the Book of Daniel is one of the most captivating and well-known stories, evoking creative imagination and quickened heartbeats. The narrative of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace from Chapter 3 is a parallel, showcasing God's omnipotence in saving those who unwaveringly trust Him. The intentional price Daniel pays for his integrity is a central theme, as outlined below:

4.1 The Price of Self-Sacrifice and the Prize of Success

Daniel sets a benchmark for Christians aspiring to hold public office. While dedicated to the intricacies of statecraft, his more significant commitment lies in being recognised as a servant of God, resolute in upholding God's commandments at any cost. The narrative suggests a need for more political figures like Daniel in contemporary culture. Under Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel governs with "insight, intellect, and wisdom" (5:11), earning a reputation as a person with an "unusual spirit" or a "Spirit of God" within him (5:14). This recognition continues until the time of Belshazzar, the last Babylonian ruler. Darius, too, acknowledges Daniel's exceptional qualities and appoints him to a prominent leadership role in his government. Establishing "120 satraps" or administrative provinces covering the entire empire, Darius appoints "three administrators" to oversee these areas, aiming to prevent deception (6:1-3). This highlights the persistence of governmental corruption, a theme relevant to contemporary society.

Daniel's distinction among administrators is no surprise, as he consistently "distinguished himself beyond the administrators and satraps." His extraordinary success prompts the king to consider appointing him over the entire realm (6:3). Daniel's secret to success lies in having "an incredible spirit," a quality he consistently demonstrates. His rise is attributed not solely to talent or natural skill but to his relationship with God and how God has shaped his life. Nebuchadnezzar had earlier observed Daniel's possession of "a spirit of the holy gods" or "the Spirit of the Holy God" (Daniel 4:8). Daniel's prominence is a testament to God's transformative work in his life (cf. Psalms 92:12-15; James 3:17).

4.2   The Price of Consistent Service and the Prize of Victory (6:4)

At the pinnacle of success, isolation can set in, accompanied by a rise in adversaries. The prosperity of the upright may provoke envy from the wicked. These three truisms resonate in Daniel's story and echo the experiences of those blessed and acknowledged by the Lord. Beyond possessing an extraordinary spirit, Daniel stands out as trustworthy and untainted by negligence or corruption (v. 4). His character parallels the obedient Joseph in Egypt from the book of Genesis (Gen 37–50). However, the envy-fueled motivation of the other two administrators and satraps leads them to conspire against Daniel, attempting to find any charge that would warrant his overthrow. Despite their efforts, no negligence or corruption is discovered in Daniel, leaving them unable to make any accusations. Daniel consistently conducts himself with integrity, always choosing to do what is right. His exemplary work ethic aligns with the ideal for every follower of Messiah Jesus, transcending mere declarations of allegiance. Proverbs 20:6 asks where one can find a trustworthy individual, and in Daniel, Darius discovers precisely such a person.

4.3   The Price of Faithfulness and Prize of Legacy. Daniel 6:5-15

In Ezekiel 14:14 and 20, the prophet compares Daniel's virtuous life and the righteousness of figures like Job and Noah. The accuracy of Ezekiel's assessment becomes evident considering the forthcoming events in Daniel's life. Unlike a connection with the Lord solely during crises, Daniel's relationship with God was characterised by a continuous and daily walk, as noted by Swindoll in "Daniel" (53). This ongoing communion with God equipped Daniel to confront crises and catastrophes when they unfolded. His character had been moulded by a consistent connection with God, providing him the resilience to face any challenge. The decision to enter the lion's den had been made many years prior, with the cost already calculated. For Daniel, betraying his God was never an option.

4.4   The Price of Being Trapped by Wicked Men and the Prize of God's Hand (6:5-9)

Daniel's adversaries were frustrated as they could not identify any dishonesty or negligence in his service to the monarch. He was a man of unwavering morality, exemplifying qualities akin to those outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-2. His record was unblemished. Despite his impeccable service, his adversaries recognised that his devotion to his religion and his God might be an area where they could exploit his commitment (v. 5). Daniel's stance was clear when faced with a choice between upholding the "law of the Medes and Persians" (v. 8) and the law of his God.

In response, these political adversaries set aside their differences, formed a united front, crafted a strategy, and directly targeted the man of God. They intended to ensnare him and presented their plan to King Darius with a façade of unity. Beginning with the customary royal hyperbole, "May King Darius live forever," they proceeded to share their deceitful plan under the guise of honouring the king. They claimed, "All the administrators of the kingdom, the prefects, satraps, advisers, and governors have agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an edict that for thirty days, anyone who petitions any god or man except you, the king, will be thrown into the lions' den" (v. 7). Manipulating the situation to create an irrevocable and unchangeable Medes and Persian law, they persuaded the king to sign their proclamation into effect (v. 8). A carefully laid trap had been set.

4.5   The Price of Being Hated and Jealous and the Prize of Disciplined Heart (6:10-15)

The absence of hardship does not merely shape Christian character; adversity brings out the best in Christian characters. When Daniel becomes aware of the edict, recognising Darius as the sole god of the empire, he responds by adhering to the

established pattern of spiritual commitment that has characterised his life for years. This pattern, well-known to his adversaries, compels him to obey God rather than man. Despite the threat, Daniel resumes his routine, entering his house and ascending to the prayer room, where his windows face Jerusalem. Demonstrating daring, defiant, and disciplined prayer, as described by John Piper, Daniel kneels in prayer three times a day, publicly declaring the greatness of God over the glory of Darius. This devotion is not a temporary retreat for a month but a continuation of Daniel's lifelong reverence for God, akin to Peter in 1 Peter 2:11–12 and Paul in Philippians 3:20, both acknowledging their status as exiles in a foreign world.

Daniel's adversaries, keenly watching and anticipating, promptly inform the king of his continued commitment to prayer (Dan 6:11). In making their accusation against Daniel, they even hint at anti-Semitism by referring to him as "one of the Judean exiles." Dressed by the situation and desiring to save a man he admires, Darius falls into the trap set by his malevolent officials. Reminded of the legal obligations of the Medes and Persians, the king is bound by his decrees (v. 15). Significantly, these wicked individuals had counted on Daniel's loyalty to obey his God, and he had indeed remained faithful. Daniel understands that past loyalty does not compensate for present loyalty. His preparation in the past has equipped him for the present and future challenges. His steadfastness serves as a powerful witness, affirming the trustworthiness of the man of God to be true to his convictions.

5.0.   Lessons for Contemporary Christian Leaders

1. In contemporary times, Christian leaders should prioritise character over appearance or charisma, and it should be esteemed even more than talent. Enyinnaya (2018:32) underscores this by stating, "Daniel's pursuit of integrity and character helped him to thrive and excel in the most challenging environments." Those relying solely on brilliance or attractiveness frequently disappoint their followers when life exposes their lack of moral fortitude. While physical appearances can be enhanced through cosmetic procedures, an individual's character is forged through life's experiences and choices. People develop character and integrity as they mature in responsibility and accountability. It is essential to note that God values honesty, as the apostle Paul emphasises in the Bible: "Suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope" (Romans 5:3-4 NIV).

2. Integrity stands at the core of excellence and leadership, making everything leaders do revolve around their internal character. Enyinnaya (2018:36) emphasises, "One of the notions of integrity is the courage to stand on one's principles whatever the cost. This is one aspect of integrity that Daniel and his friends so eminently portray. Daniel 1:3-4 conveys their qualifications: physical

attractiveness, intelligence, endowment with knowledge, understanding, and ability. Beyond the usual physical and intellectual requirements, these young Hebrew boys had integrity, godliness, and spiritual discernment."

Consequently, Christian leaders' activities, actions, and words reflect who they are on the inside. Successful individuals, especially outstanding leaders, are recognised for their honesty, trustworthiness, and straightforwardness in all interactions. Therefore, in today's context, Christian leaders must tirelessly pursue integrity, regardless of the cost.

3. Christian leaders must actively cultivate trust among their followers. They need to engage in actions that are distinctive and achievable, resonating with the aspirations their followers have been pursuing. A crucial aspect of this is the expectation for leaders to demonstrate moral conduct, embracing truthfulness in their words and actions. They must practice what they preach, remaining committed to their mission and vision and, more importantly, to their authentic selves. In the contemporary context, Christian leaders can only wield genuine spiritual authority to impact lives, dispel skepticism, and inspire others to align with their cause. This authenticity is achieved by living as consistently in private as in public. To foster complete trust from their followers, leaders must consistently and unwaveringly uphold these principles in every facet of life. Setting a positive example is paramount, and leaders should conduct themselves as if they are constantly under scrutiny, maintaining integrity even in the absence of an audience. Furthermore, leaders should be steadfast in keeping their promises, treating everyone equally, and consistently showing respect to those around them, regardless of their circumstances. This approach is integral to building and sustaining trust among followers.

4. Leaders' integrity and reputation are built on people's beliefs, while their character reflects who they are. Reputation is shaped by what people say, not necessarily by God's perspective. Leaders ought to strive to be individuals whom God can affirm when the time comes for them to give an account of their lives. Their primary focus should not be altering others' perceptions or opinions but on aligning their lives with God's standards. The absence of integrity transforms leadership into mere management, stripping it of its true essence. Leaders who compromise their integrity in pursuing power or success, irrespective of the noble objectives they aim to achieve, cannot genuinely claim to be leaders in any context, be it politics, business, or religion. Integrity, therefore, stands as the bedrock that preserves the authenticity and effectiveness of leadership at all levels.

5. Successful Christian leaders, exemplified by figures like Daniel, are celebrated for their unwavering faithfulness and integrity. Trustworthiness and honourable conduct, marked by integrity, are defining features of their lives and professional journeys. These leaders exhibit moral convictions deeply embedded in their character, becoming most evident when faced with temptations that their principled judgment prevents them from yielding to. Albert Einstein, known for his astute observations, urges individuals not to seek success solely but to prioritise becoming individuals of value. Integrity, in essence, is encapsulated by the commitment to consistently do what is right, irrespective of the situation or circumstance. Alan Simpson succinctly states, "If you have integrity, nothing else matters. If you do not, nothing else matters." This underscores the importance of integrity in shaping a person's character and determining their impact and legacy.

Conclusion

The study examines the life of integrity that is apparent in the life of Daniel as revealed by the exegetical study of the passage of Daniel 6:1-16. The study revealed that Daniel was consistent, disciplined, and honest, which are the hallmarks of integrity. It is becoming increasingly apparent that integrity is essential to leadership, cannot be compromised, and should serve as a standard for all leaders, especially Christian leaders, regardless of location or situation. Integrity-driven leadership has several advantages for everyone involved, including the leader and the organisation's stakeholders, consumers, and clients. While demonstrating integrity in leadership is undoubtedly challenging, it ultimately benefits the general welfare.

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A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF RITES OF PASSAGE IN BASSAN TRADITIONAL 1.RELIGION AND CULTURE

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Abstract

Rites of passage are religio-culturally constructed phenomena with associated symbols that represent the cultural identities and values of a people. Yet our scientific understanding of this core religious and cultural phenomenon remains limited. The objective of the work is to create an awareness of the deep-rootedness of ritual experience and expression in Bassan traditional religion and culture. As a qualitative research, the study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The researchers gathered data through oral interviews, books, journals, and published and unpublished materials. Data collected were subjected to historical and phenomenological analysis to present them objectively. Findings indicate that the Bassan people had a robust worldview that impinged on all human activities as manifested in the rites of passage: birth, naming, circumcision, marriage, and funeral. Generally, rites of passage play a role in giving meaning to a people's ways of life, promoting African brotherhood against individualism, bridging the profane and the sacred, helping the people out in a state of lifelessness and despair, vital in making life real, emotional and purposeful, as is very much needed in the current Nigeria situation. Though rituals may not be static as changes occur in forms and practice, when exposed to modern agents of change, however, they remain the heart of the people's religion and culture.

Introduction

In every human society, certain principles and practices play important roles which make them unavoidable in the quest to maintain corporate cultural identity, one among others ritual practices or behaviours which may be religious or non-religious. The various forms of rituals are generally believed to be predictable patterns of actions in which participants repeatedly engaged at particular times and circumstances.

White (2005) in Encyclopedia of Christianity generally describes ritual as an agreed-upon form of coded communication using the language of significant action, objects, and formalized speech to convey meaning. As a feature of religion, Durkheim defined ritual as the reference or object, the belief system of a society, which is constituted by a classification of everything into the two realms of the sacred and the profane.

Types

Despite classifications of rituals in other disciplines, it is an uphill task to categorize ritual forms in African Traditional Religion. However, even with the overlap in practice, for the purposes they serve the following types can be gleaned: redress, life crisis or rites of passage, conflict or rebellion, propitiatory, expiatory, agriculture, and purification rituals (Wotogbe-Weneka, 2001). Kemdirim (1997) opined that rituals can be broadly categorized as (i) wholistic or personal rituals (ii) healing rituals (iii) festival rituals (iv) rites of passage.

Functions

Horton in Burns (2020) avers that from the functionalist viewpoint of ritual practices being adaptive and adjustive in response to the social and physical environment, equally serve the function of control of the environment. The beliefs that underlie ritual activities arise as a way to understand what the world is, and why it behaves the way that it does. The Encyclopedia Britannica submitted that rituals perform the function of providing the proper rules for action in the realm of the sacred as well as supplying a bridge for passing into the realm of the profane. In other words, rituals can reintegrate personalities and groups. More elaborately Etim (2019) opined that among Africans rituals perform a series of functions among which are: the communicative role of bridging the gap between Divine and human, human to human, recreating people's solidarity, and expressing African ontology of communalism and social hierarchy. He equally noted that rituals are useful in African society given their ability to transfer traditions from one generation to another, helping to expressly communicate hidden and mysterious symbolic actions, provide rules for actions in both realms of the sacred and profane, and lastly, create an avenue for making present in time and space actions that futuristic; tacitly providing an avenue for conquering space and empowering man in its desire to control nature for his advantage. Kemdirim (1997) in espousing the importance of rituals noted that they help humanity out in a state of lifelessness and despair, vital in making life real, emotional, and purposeful, therefore, they are something that can neither be toyed with nor be ignored.

It is the realization of the importance of rituals in the religious and socio-cultural life of individuals and groups, there is the preponderance of different classes of rituals as earlier noted, even as practiced among Bassan people. However, this work shall examine only four rites of passage namely: (i) birth (ii) childhood (iii) marriage, and (iv) funeral rites. The phrase "rite of passage" was coined by Arnold Van Gennep (1873-1957) which has become known as the rituals which mark significant life transitions of individuals in a community (Larson, 2014).

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Birth Rite

According to Nwadiokwu, Nwadiokwu & Okwuazun (2016) opined that childbirth is naturally an easy process but the experience of difficulties (delayed birth) can be attributed to various causes ranging from adultery committed by the woman which she must confess and the handiwork of witchcraft or sorcerers. According to Metuh in Kanu (2015), birth rites can be divided into two stages: purification and naming ceremony. In the Bassan clan, when a baby is delivered before it is cleaned up, it is customary for it to touch Mother Earth, as a sign of union and surrender to the care and protection of the goddess who is next only *to Woyin*, the female Supreme Being. This rite which is perceived to havea direct link with the success of the child later in life is monitored and performed by elderly midwives.

As noted by Ariye (2013) among the Mein Ijaw of Delta State, equally observed in the Bassan clan too, where the birth process is delayed more than necessary, and there is suspicion of conflict situations like an unfaithful house-wife or a lady maintaining two male sexual partners unknown to the men and results in pregnancy to which both claim the paternity of the unborn baby, either men or their representatives must buy a bottle of gin together and each will pour libation and call on to the ancestors to help determine whose child it is that is in the womb. Each of them does the libation separately at intervals calling on the child to come out of the womb. The efficacy of this has been proven over time as the child only responds to the prayers of the rightful father.

The traditional Bassan society abhors babies whose paternity is in doubt as the baby is a prospective ancestor of the lineage, as such efforts are made to determine the rightful father during delivery; an authentic alternative to modern-day deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) test. This factor will instigate ancestors participating actively in the process of paternity determination not wanting strange blood in their lineage or not willing to allow their blood to be lost in another family. This is one reason the sin of adultery remains an abomination in the Bassan clan as such married women who are involved in extra-marital sex can only be forgiven by the ancestors after a public confession is made before the elders at the community square, for the betrayal of trust. This act of public confession is called *Amasin.* It is to avoid sickness and even outright death of the female culprit. This measure is believed to help in sustaining the sanctity of marriage as women would generally want to avoid this public embarrassment.

When the baby is finally delivered, the umbilical cord is stretched and touched with a sharp object at different spots four or three times for girl or boy respectively, before it is cut off with the placenta. The umbilical cord and placenta are usually disposed of by the father or a trusted family member in a secret place, mostly under a symbolic fruitful tree, or dustbin to avoid evil people from having access, given its perceived

mystical link with the child's destiny. Furthermore, prayers are offered for it to continue the biological function of supplying food nutrients to the child as it was while the child was in the womb since it is again planted in another source of life, the most fertile and fruitful Mother Earth, which is capable of mystically supplying life goodies to the child from cradle to grave.

The mother and child are confined in a room for seven days before they are allowed into open space within the compound. The confinement of both mother and child whose spirits are perceived to be weak and vulnerable is purified and fortified to prevent attacks and possible death from the activities of malevolent spirits. If a woman dies during pregnancy or three days (*ere ghe pa*) after delivery during which period she is presumed ritually unclean, her corpse is buried in an evil forest.

Naming Rite

The second stage of birth rites is the naming of the child, which is treated as very important because the name in Bassan culture is not just nomenclature but carries with them meaning and exerts some metaphysical and psychological impact on the bearer. The brief ceremony usually takes place in the morning hours of the eighth day, with few family members and friends. The child is usually brought to the sitting room or any open space, the head of the family pronounces the name, and thereafter prayers and libation are offered to invoke the ancestors to protect and prosper the new member of the family. The repetition of names of great ancestors evokes awe as the baby is given symbolic reverence due to the original name bearer.

Those who give name to children may not be masters in the art and science of onomastics, but the names given very often are good and propitious, and proverbially philosophical, portraying the belief systems and experiences in the marriage or life in general. According to Eyo, Vivian, & Kirsty (2021), emotional names are bestowed through a range of motivations such as being a reflection of familial problems, death-prevention, religiously inspired, and name-saking. For instance, names like *Iyorowari* (female family), *Oweizitei* (I have given birth to a male child), *Uyake-ewerikumo* (don't insult my state of poverty), *Orupreye* (gift of the god), *Ayibadeinyefa* (no one is more than God) are given out of emotion, etc. Traditionally, anyone who gives a newborn a name other than the parents must present a wrapper gift to the child or else the name is declared null and void.

The birth itself is a sacred event therefore only skilled and mature women who are presumed to be innocent of witchcraft practices participate in the process. With all rites done, it is generally believed that the child has been given an identity and is integrated fully into the family and the community at large. However, all these ritual ceremonies

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do not cover the birth of twins as their arrival is perceived as a bad omen that portends danger for the family and the community, therefore were drowned or starved to death and the mother ritually cleansed before reintegrating back into the community.

Circumcision Rite

Circumcision is the operation of cutting away the foreskin (prepuce) of the male sex organ, the penis. There are various medical reasons for male circumcision, such as prevention of penile disorder, cancer both of partners, sexually transmitted infections, urinary tract infections, etc (Cleveland Clinic, 2023). However, beyond the derivable medical benefits, male child circumcision in the Bassan clan though private the exercise is a necessary solemn ceremony usually performed on the eighth day that serves as a rite of passage; as the child is classified as an adult thereafter. The first set of blood flowing from the penis must be allowed to touch Mother Earth as an offering of genital blood to the deity. Thereafter, the father, like in the case of the burial of the placenta and umbilical cord, takes responsibility with due diligence and buries the little foreskin in a secret place to avoid sorcerers using the body part to negatively influence the child. The exercise can simultaneously take place with the naming of the child. On the other hand, female circumcision (female genital mutilation), the act of cutting the external female genital organs, particularly the clitoris (clitoridectomy) is forbidden in the clan.

Marriage Rite

In the Bassan clan, marriage is generally held in high esteem as a result, refusal to marry was considered an offense against the ancestral spirits who are concerned with the perpetuity of the community. It is customary for a marriage proposal to be done through the parents or guardians as it was an abomination to approach a lady directly to ask for her hand in marriage. The act *ere ke tei* (wife abduction) was a common practice in the clan. When the *Ayoro bau* (bride) has been successfully abducted by the groom and his friends and kept in his or her family house, or in a hideout in cases where there is protest. It is common practice to senda middleman with drinks by the groom's family to the bride's parents to plead and persuade them from going to fishing or involved in any other engagement. With the consent of the parents consent and bride the marriage the bride price and other accompanying items are paid. The brief ceremony is normally witnessed by key members of both families, especially the groom's family head who symbolically receives the bride, who is already in their custody. The head of the bride's family pours libation calling on the ancestors to protect, prosper and make the couple fruitful. Thereafter, both family share drinks together as a mark of beginning a new kinship bond.

In a situation, the couple is fourth or fifth cousins, therefore are related by blood, a ritual of *Inabina seikumo* (the blood relationship should not be destroyed) is observed to avoid the wrath of ancestors. The family head or the oldest man pours libation with hot drinks to appease the ancestors since they forbid incest.

There is no special ceremony of excursion or public display by the *Ayoro bau* (bride). From the day of her abduction, she is given special care and treatment, even though may be shy, and therefore avoids food and drinks. A team of maids and elderly women are assigned to keep company with the bride. Whereas the maids ensure the bride's welfare throughout the seven days mandatory indoor periods, the elderly women lecture her on her conjugal duties.

Apart from the series of lace material and blouse, the bride has to change daily, the bride and bride's maid are adorned with a set of seven and two*ibolo* (coral beads) respectively around her necks. The seven straps of beads around the bride's neck signify the dignified new status of a wife.

Funeral Rites

Death is the termination of human existence on planet Earth by separating the *teme* (spirit) from the *oju imini* (body). The Bassan peoples' description of the process of the dead taking the last breath as *pelei koro* (cut down), like the cutting down of a live tree. Whereas the masseurs ascertain and certify the stoppage of heartbeat and breath, therefore pronounce the sad news to family members around, three or four cannon shots for man or woman respectively, officially announce the death of the aged.

Traditional myths suggest that physical death *(fii)* is not the end of life but the beginning of continuing living in the spirit realm. As noted by Tasie (2013) the Isiokpo ethnic nationality shares the same belief in life after death therefore grief for the dead is short-lived as they find solace in the fact that the deceased has joined the ancestors to enjoy the brotherhood, comradeship, and communal life, which it hitherto enjoyed here on earth, from where it will reincarnate back into the homestead.

According to Opoku (1978), funerals are great social occasions that involve whole communities who gather together for the performance of appropriate rites which help to strengthen the bond between the living and the dead. Funeral rites depend on the type of death; whether it is a "good death", "bad death" or a special category of persons. Any death as a result of swollen body parts, leprosy, drowning, falling from a height, death from a thunderbolt, death in childbirth (not up to three days) or with pregnancy, open sores, suicide, accident (of any kind), insane, etc are termed as *uwofii* or *esun fii* ("fresh" death). It is believed that any bad dead buried in town will become a malevolent spirit that can haunt or kill family members until they are exhumed and

buried in the appropriate evil forest. In essence, the burying of the bad dead in an evil forest, in ignominy without ceremonies implies a permanent separation that will prevent the malevolent spirit from wandering into the family and community to cause misfortunes or possible death.

Generally all bad dead, who died outside the community, the boat carrying the corpse is not allowed to branch into the community as it is usually anchored opposite the community until the cause of the death is ascertained, and it is ferried to the appropriate burial site. This is to avoid defiling the community. The funeral rituals of the "good dead", begin with painstaking checking of body parts for injuries or swelling, before bathing the corpse by people of the same sex concentrating on body parts that accumulate dirt such as the mouth, armpit, genital area, etc. This exercise is necessary to avoid the deceased reincarnating with osmidrosis (body odor). Thereafter the body is properly moisturized and dressed in the best attire before lying in state (Tasie, 1999). The corpse is usually laid in-state in the parlour with the legs facing the main entrance, indicative of its departure from the household where he or she was once a member.

Going forward, a three-man high table is constituted; the leader is known as *duwoi nanawei* (literally meaning corpse owner). The high table of corpse owners is exclusively a male affair. The *duwoi nanawei* as a symbolic representative of the dead, therefore, is addressed as such, and even answers the title of a male deceased until the burial activity is over. The high table which is empowered to direct all affairs of the burial will demand from the family the cause of the death and the last words of the deceased. The family will select and present one person particularly an individual who witnessed the last moments of the deceased, on the second or third day of the gathering. These demands are important to ascertain circumstances surrounding the death which may guide in dispensing the will of the deceased. If no family member heard the last word from the deceased; a farewell message for the living, the family is made to pay a fine of three bottles of locally distilled hot drinks known as *bebe naghen awuru*. If an investigation reveals that the deceased died of lack of care, the family pays a bigger fine.

Any Bassan indigene who died in a community other than his or her own must be given a symbolic "community bath" (sprinkling of water in a sort of ablutionary baptism) on the corpse's arrival home no matter the mortuary rites performed earlier. The traditional import of this ritual according to Bimene is "acceptance home". He further asserted that if prevailing circumstances prevent taking the corpse home, the fingernails and hairs are mandatorily taken home for normal burial. One reason they are taken is because they don't decompose easily. Though the body parts may be negligible to the living yet they are significant in burial rites performance as they

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symbolically represent the entire deceased. The significance of this ritual is that all Bassan indigenes must return home, even at death.

For the matured good dead, the first-night wake keeps (*duin koru*) is organized by the community while the second is sponsored by the son-in-law(s) if he or she had married daughter(s); both nights are supported by the family. During the wake keep, dancers usually file out in two lines, men and women in different roles with interesting traditional songs rendered by gifted traditional singers. The family and community will take turns to entertain the crowd with *ogogoro* (locally distilled hot drink) and palm wine, at least three times, which influences or motivates many to dance entertaining the audience tirelessly with traditional dance steps, some dance steps are unusual just to create fun. There is a general belief that wake keep serves as a mark of honour (sent forth) and to make the decease's journey home void of boredom, more especially when a masquerade celebration is added to the funeral rites.

Coffin

According to Aisein (2013), the ancient Benin people perceived the coffin (box) both as a house or cage and as a facsimile of a well-decorated local canoe that will aid the transportation of the dead to the great beyond. Similarly, in Bassan culture, the *duwoi ekpeti* (coffin) must be properly constructed with planks and decorated interior and exterior with white clothe like a ceremonial boat, the cost of preparation borne by the community, with funds generated from contributions during the burial. The coffin preparation process is supervised by a man appointed by the high table as *ekpeti nanawei* (coffin owner) who ensures drink entertainment of the carpenters. The coffin is taken into where the corpse is lying in state and placed on the right-hand side for a man (corpse) as against the left-hand side for a woman's corpse.

Whereas normal coffins are constructed with planks, the coffin for elders who survived the third and fourth generation of great-grandchildren for men and women respectively is weaved neatly with matured bamboo stalks, called *ikpatagha*. This distinction coffin, according to Okaba (2003) gives credence to the high premium placed on longevity, fertility, and fecundity. To further honour this category of persons, their corpse is always taken around the town in a rally before interment. The sons-in-law of the deceased provide special drink refreshments called *ikpatagha dori awuru* (drinks for preparation of bamboo coffin) for the team of women preparing the coffin.

Grave

The grave, a carefully dugout portion of land for laying to rest of the departed is entirely a service rendered by male youths. The exercise is supervised by a chairman known as *dubu nanawei,* whose responsibility is to ensure the job is properly done, and the diggers are refreshed three times before the digging is completed. Unnecessary caving in of a grave speaks of a bad omen. The site of a grave brings awe and reminds everyone of the end of all struggle, now continues rest. The selfish rich are reminded that they will dig their grave and bury themselves at death.

Another important ritual associated with the grave is "locating grave site" (*dubu di*) for children of deceased parents who were absent at the time of burial. Tradition forbids such visiting children from accessing the grave site even if it was right at the homestead. It is the prerogative of the *duwoi nanayou* or family elders to show such a child(ren) after providing some drinks. The person(s) is first taken around the town under the guise of searching for the location, on arrival at the grave site, libation is made and prayers are offered for the dead to protect and prosper the individual having shown concern and participated in the burial though late. This exercise is sometimes carried out in the morning after the individual(s) have sponsored a wake to keep.

Ritual of Interment

The burial rituals of *Amananawei* (King) are different, which usually take place at night to keep secret certain rituals from the general public. It is reported that household properties and slaves are usually buried with the king. It is intended that the slaves will continue their services to the king even in the world beyond.

When an illustrious son or daughter dies mysteriously in the clan, friends and aggrieved family members add items like a razor blade, live firewood and machete, and native lamp to the grave for the deceased to identify the murderer and retaliate by afflicting the person for purpose of confession or outright death. However, these items must not be kept inside the coffin as it is an abomination to bury any Bassan indigene with pieces of jewelry or any mental object attached to the clothes as it is believed to make the deceased uncomfortable, therefore must be removed at the graveside.

Funeral for the Missing Dead

There is also the ritual of *duwoi feun* (bringing the spirit of the dead home for proper burial). This applies to the good dead erroneously buried in an evil forest, those who drowned or die in the bush, and the corpse was not retrieved for proper burial at home. A group of agile young men will move to the perceived location with a boat, make it still, and then call upon the spirit of the dead with a shout seven times to come and join the boat, to be buried in the community. An unusual shaking of the stilled boat is experienced indicative of the spirit of the dead boarding the boat. A symbolic burial is

done on arrival home. This ritual is necessary for the deceased to be buried with their ancestors in the same land, and to avoid the ghost of the dead haunting the family members.

Last Day of the Funeral Rite

After each burial, there is general sanitation and cleansing of the house on *duin karabai* (last day of burial); the third or fourth day for man and woman respectively. The properties of the dead are shared (*du diye*) including the wife (ves) for a man who survived any, on that day.

The ritual of shaving hair for deceased parents or husbands on the last day of burial is highly regarded because of their perceived wealth value in the world beyond.

On this day, the family of the deceased will buy drinks to appreciate the effort of the high-table members, and the community at large.

Ritual of Separation

Walson, a traditional historianopined that in Bassan clan the dead do not depart immediately to the world beyond after interment as they are believed to grieve with the mourners or still want to engage in and enjoy the company of the living, therefore, the need for the ritual of separation.

As rightly captured by Mbiti (1967) "the living dead are wanted and yet not wanted", in the Bassan clan too the good dead are wanted in satisfying the spiritual needs of the family yet the ritual of separation is necessary to keep the dead at bay for fear of the unknown. The ritual is usually carried out by the head of the family, group, or association e.g., the Council of Chiefs. For instance, to separate and stop a late king from attending and presiding over the Council of Chiefs' meeting even as he is ushered into the land of the ancestors, libation is done by the person(s) designated for the task using the following words

1.	*Wo imumu keni ghen iye mie timi*	1)	We were doing things together while you were alive.
2.	*Imi fii tei mi wo bakeni ghen iye mie gboloi kumo.*	2)	Now you are dead, we shall not do things together.
3.	*E gba idia mini bra me wo ba keni ghen*	3)	I am telling you now, we shall do nothing together.
4.	*Ba wo dou bo kumo.*	4)	Don't look for us.
5.	*Woni beni kpo bo kumo*	5)	Don't attend our meetings
6.	*Womofiyai kpo fii kumo*	6)	Don't eat with us anymore
7.	*Womo wuru kpo bou kumo*	7)	Don't drink with us anymore

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8. *Wo mo bini kpo bou kumo*	8) Don't drink water with us anymore
9. *Wo ipuu mu tei akpo timi faa minis*	9) We are separated from you for eternity

In the case of a husband and wife - particularly separating the living wife from her dead husband - on behalf of the wife (ies), the eldest man in the family prays thus:

1. *Mii gbarin ke beleu se oni tamo zeimo seitei* - From today your husband and wife (s) relation is nullified – divorced
2. *Ba amumu (on mumu) su wo siyen kumo* - Don't sleep with her (them) anymore
3. *Ba amum (on mumu) iye fii kumo* - Don't eat with her (them) anymore
4. *E opumu tei* - I have separated you from her (them)

According to a traditionalist, this ritual is significant for the survival of living colleagues or family members. Ironically, even though the ritual of separation is performed, the living desires the company of the dead, particularly for a wife or wives who are not interested in remarrying but wants to remain in the husband's house to raise their children. Such women regularly exclaim or mention the deceased husband's name in prayers for protection.

Spiritual Beings in Funeral Rites

A traditionalist submitted that funeral rites must be conducted in strict compliance with the desires of particularly the ancestors and the earth goddess (Amakiri). These spiritual forces can force a dying person to make confessional statements, which will give clues of particularly the choice of the burial place. For instance, a drowned corpse, though a bad death can only be buried in town if the body floats with the face up; otherwise, it is seen as a bad omen, so the corpse is buried in an evil forest or any nearby forest. Other signs include the corpse defecating, fresh blood being seen around the corpse, excess carving in of the grave, etc. all indicating bad omen.

Though it is a coveted honour to be buried in the community, however, the earth is believed to be governed by the gods and ancestors so it is their prerogative to decide who and where a deceased is buried. These measures are taken primarily to deter others from indulging in any unwholesome act. The deities and ancestors are ordinarily benevolent but will not hesitate to visit death on recalcitrant members of any family which bury the "bad dead" in the community.

This is the more reason why divinities and ancestors are recognized and appeased during burial to prevent premature (*biri bein)* and violent (*uwo fii*) death so that the family and by extension, the community will not be thrown into a round of mourning.

Conclusion

Van, B., Knapp, D. & Ogunbanjo, G. (2014) suggested that in as much as cultural beliefs and practices do not cause harm, they should be respected and left alone, considering their spiritual role in alleviating anxiety and enhancing a sense of purpose. In this paper, we discussed rituals embodied practices surrounding rites of passage: birth, naming, circumcision, marriage, and funeral as practiced in the Bassan clan. Rites of passage are not only representative of the Bassan indigenous system of knowledge but also play a role in giving meaning to a people's ways of life, helping the people out in a state of lifelessness and despair, vital in making life real, emotional and purposeful like, as is required in the current experiences in Nigeria. That rites of passage facilitate African brotherhood, which is fast giving way to individualism, is soothing enough but much more they can bond the human world with the supernatural world, the profane and sacred, which makes life whole.

Rituals are not static hence changes occur in forms and practice when exposed to modern agents of change like Christianity and Western education. The change became intensified with the stereotype of these ritual practices by Christian converts in the Bassan clan, therefore the socialization process has changed, and young people do not know about the rituals nor talk of practicing them. However, they remain "the heart of the people's religion and culture", as they are an eloquent expression of the age-long cultural beliefs and values. In essence, some basic Bassan religious rituals will remain because of their deep-rootedness in the people. This resonates with Parrinder's (1954) observation where he stated that *"Yet behind the facade of modernism and education, many traditional beliefs remain, for religions are hard to kill and have a way of rising again after an apparent lapse of centuries".*

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CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN RELIGION AND POPULAR CULTURE

BY

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Abstract

This topic, Contemporary Issues in Religion and Popular Culture as the headline reads, discusses trending things in 21st century, precisely in Ikwerreland that are invading the field of religion and thereby, exerting their influences on the religious sphere. However, how to blend these two vital concepts elicits understanding especially as it concerns our religious lives and the tolerable level of relationships between both enterprises as captured in this research which has Ikwerreland as its area of concentration. Stepping further, it was discovered that irrespective of the polar nature of their relatedness that religion utilizes popular culture for the growth and expansion of its field; as well as popular culture taking advantage of religion to showcase itself in accordance with this panoramic survey. However, this qualitative documentation and critical exegesis also adumbrates the position of some of the religious and philosophical scholars on this subject. In addition, it gives an answer to what point some popular cultures will be considered credible to be incorporated into religion and the rationale behind such justification. Again, this research also discloses religious content of popular culture, and then, offers suggestions about what we might learn from these presentations from religious angle. The study the historical analytical method in order to be able to give detailed account of historic events and analyze them in perspectives.

Keywords: Ikwerreland, Popular Culture, Relationship, Religion, Trending.

Introduction

In antecedence, onlockers have associated Ikwerre people with popular cultures like cultural dance, local wrestling, and festivals which were interfering with religion in one way or the other. However, this 21st century has been marked with a shift in paradigm, where this modern catch phrase, religion and popular culture, in Ikwerreland has extended to disclose the relationship between religion and some popular cultures like carnivals, sales or marketing, native songs, cultural dressing and various forms of festivals that are dominating human activities. In fact, according to Terry (1993), he opined in connection with this discourse that people typically think first of the mention of god in the lyrics of a popular song, or the portrayal of Jewish rabbis in network television series, or some similar example of the way popular culture expresses religious values. Invariably, this example (the mention of god in songs) represents the first of four relationships between these two concepts in Ikwerreland. Although, religion and popular culture are often seen as separate conceptual spheres, the former dealing with the sacred and the later with the profane, these two spheres are intertwined and shape one another reciprocally (Cooster, 2018). In this manner, religion expresses itself in popular culture through the arts and various forms of media, while popular culture frequently expresses itself through religious memes and other representations (Forbes & Mahan, 2005). This discourse however, is set to be an exploration of the complex relationship between religion an popular culture by studying the impact of arts, cultural dance, land sales, cultural dressing or costumes, pageants during marriage, native songs, tattooing, wearing of bands and other cultural products reigning in Ikwerreland, it also unveils how beliefs, ideas, practices, institutions from various religious traditions shape popular culture and how symbols and its likes, that are engrafted in popular culture on their own, shape religious traditions. In this trajectory, it also suffices to understand that there are habits/ sets of practices that are trending in this 21st century in Ikwerre that elicit our interests; and worthy of note is the instance of sagging which is prevalent among our generational youths.

Theory of Modernity

Many theories of modernity exist, but Weber's theory of rational bureaucratic society is adopted likely on the ground of its appropriateness to this work. Hence, Weber's theory of modernity as it therefore concerns the rational bureaucratic society states that the ideas, especially religious ideas, play an important part in the formulation of modern rational capitalism. However, his view here also reflected in his analysis of nature of power and authority, which he summarized by saying that modern society was increasingly a place in which the transcendental world of gods was giving way to

science and the rational calculation of social actions. According to him, modernity is rationalization (Marrianne Weber and Johannes Wincklemann, 1925). This weber's idea can be rationalized by saying that scientific discoveries and social actions and interactions are not to be completely undermined when you talk about man's relationship with his environment and gods. They play an integral part for man to understand his gods more, and solidify his relationship with them.

Concept of Popular Culture

The common-phrase popular culture which is also known as mass culture or pop culture, generally means the tradition and material culture of a particular society. According to Crossman (2019), John Storey sees popular culture as the culture that is leftover when we have decided what high culture is. Meanwhile, it was coined in the 19th century, and according to Crossman (2019), it was formally associated with the lower class of people and those with no educational background. Whereas, those with high educational qualification often referred to as high class were differentiated from the lower class by engaging and enjoying what is called official culture. With the rise of the industrial revolution, he opined, in the eighteen and nineteen centuries, Britain experienced social change that resulted in increased literacy rates, and with the rise of capitalism industrialization. Cooster (2018) confirms that people began to spend more money on entertainment, such as commercialized pub and sports. Therefore, this also inspired people to develop the habit of reading as well. However, the people's concept of labeling "penny dreadful" the Victorian equivalent of video games, is what "the Guardian" in 2016 described as "penny fiction" and as Britain first taste of mass-produced popular culture for the young. A growing consumer culture and an increased capacity for travel via the newly invented railway (the first public railway Stockton and Darlington railway opened in north –east England in 1825) created both a market for cheap popular literature, and the ability for its distribution on large scale (Wikipedia.en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/popular-culture). However, in America today, the study of popular culture has been a catalyst of sorts in the context of studying religion. Some have speculated that with the increasing presence of religion in commercially produced products and specifically in the entertainment media, religion may be reduced to entertainment (Crossman, 2019). Whereas, others, have argued that religion has always been expressed and experienced through contemporary forms of culture, and thus its manifestation in popular culture can be interpreted as a sign of the vitality rather than the demise or superficiality of contemporary religions.

In the light of this, Rachael Wayne expresses that popular culture is worthy of study given its role in cultural reproduction (Wayne, 2014). The study of popular culture and religion encourages scholars to consider the extent to which popular cultural

representations limit broader critical considerations of religion by depicting and reinforcing taken-for-granted assumptions of what religion is all about and how it endures as a powerful societal institution (Cooster, 2018).

In Ikwerreland, popular culture in latent form is traceable to about 19th century when cultures like cultural dance, local wrestling, and festivals were reigning among the people, as rightly disclosed by one of the respondents. And today it has advanced in scope and dimensions, including being studied by various churches and religious groups within Ikwerre metropolis, which they use in form of entertainment to attract people to their programmes.

Relationship between Religion and Popular Culture

Popular culture can no longer be exclusively seen as a source of escapism since it has got something to do with religion of the people in Ikwerreland these days. It is true that it can amuse, entertain, instruct, and relax people, but what if it provides inspiration for religion? Then, it will now mean that popular culture has some links with religion.

Instantiating on this, Davidsen (2016) expresses that "The Church of All Worlds", "The Church of Satan" and "Jediism" from the Star Wars Series are but three examples of new religious groups that have been greatly inspired by popular culture to (re)create a religious message. These are hyper-real religions, according to him, that are a simulacrum of a religion partly created out of popular culture which provides inspiration for believers/consumers. These postmodern expressions of religion, to him, are likely to be consumed and individualized, and thus have more relevance to the self than to a community and/or congregation. On the other hand, religious fundamentalist groups tend at times, to resist this synergy between popular culture and religion, and at other times, re-appropriate popular culture to promote their own religion (Cooster, 2018). Examples of this re-appropriation are Christian super-hero comics and role playing games, Bible-based PC games, and 'White Metal' music.

According to Wotogbe-Weneka (2021), there are three major examples of how religion relates and influences popular culture, which seemingly apply in Ikwerreland.

Firstly he said, **religion affects popular culture through individual** - One may ask, has religion impacted your life in any way? The affirmative response is yes. Most often, people will interact with religious beliefs in some forms; for instance, a friend or a family member may like to share with you their faith. From there, he or she enters into sharing global conflicts or trending stories that have connections with religious beliefs. In this illustration, the truth remains that as religion and popular culture interplay, they are as well complimenting each other's agenda. Truly, religion can also

affect more than a particular person's habits. These beliefs and practices can influence an entire community. Therefore, religious practices can shape, as well as be shaped by the culture around them.

Secondly, he said **religion affects popular culture through the spread of religion** - In the early Roman Empire, Christianity was at first viewed as threat or at the very least blasphemous to the beliefs of the leadership. Early Christians experienced persecution as penalties for practicing their religion and even being put to death. The emerging religion that was originally so persecuted would eventually go on to influence the Roman Empire in a big way. Christianity received a major boast when Emperor Constantine professed Christian beliefs. Therefore, all attentions and discussions now focused on him, and religion in a way, is said to have boasted popular culture.

Thirdly, he affirmed that **religion affects popular culture through impact of Islam -** During the latter part of the first millennium of Common Era, Islam was growing influence just like Christianity. Islam spread throughout the regions of Arab, then, North Africa and so on. Therefore, the influence of Islamic culture includes idea from many disciplines such as the arts, science; medicine etc. architecture also experienced shifts as a result of this content.Islam also influenced the politics of its region.

Popular Culture in Ikwerreland

There are different kinds of popular culture in Ikwerreland. Meanwhile, Ikwerreland is made up of four Local Government Areas (LGAs) such as Emohua, Ikwerre, Obio-akpor and Port Harcourt LGAs (Johnson, 2012). Yet, the influence of these cultures on religion cuts across them in similar magnitudes. Some of these cultures are gross cultures that are trending, whereas, some are ordinary events that have obsessed the minds of the people living within the stated areas. Cultures like carnivals, cultural dance, sales or marketing, native songs, local wrestling, tattooing, arts, sagging, farming, land sales, and festivals are some of the popular cultures relative to Ikwerre people, though not limited to it.

Local wrestling as one of the reigning popular culture in Ikwerreland is really influencing religion in diverse forms, especially during September to December when different communities observe it in accordance with their cultural calendar. In most communities within the city, the festivity pulls crowd in such a manner that attendance in church and religious gatherings diminishes drastically since many people (religious and irreligious) will like to witness the event. In other words, this occasion most times causes traffic jam that robs people who are willing to attend church service punctuality, and as well, extend to causing them late arrival to their homes after fellowship.

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On the one hand, cultural dance and its attendant costume/dressing is another popular culture making way into religion. Today, many religious groups within the Ikwerreland, of recent have adapted whining of waist in African style as part of their display of joys and praises to God (WikiHow Staff, 2021) during their church services. The choristers, apart from dancing in African style, have as well, found pleasure in wearing native attires like Ankara during their ministration, which they now prefer more than the English gowns and choir robes.

In view of the foregoing, Ikwerre people therefore, are generally receptive in nature and have extended this trait of magnanimity to land sales to outsiders and religious groups. Hence, it has come to stay as a worldview within this geographical area that land sale is now a popular culture credited to the Ikwerrans, especially when it comes to selling land to religious groups (Obuah, 2022). However, this culture, in no small measure has influenced religion positively in the area, creating opportunity for different religious groups to buy land and build their church for the spread of their gospels. Alternatively, in Ikwerreland today, the vastest landmass within the area is owned by different religious groups whose presences have ambivalently affected the habitants. Therefore, it suffices to say that this popular culture of land sales have put Ikwerre ethnic ahead of other ethnics as in the number of churches and religious groups situated in a given geographical region.

The position of Sales Day in the church has been questioned by many people today. Nonetheless, in Ikwerreland, it is one of the trending programmes that helps the women in most religious group to raise money. Unlike before, many Christian denominations around the metropolis are keying into it while some are reluctant on the premise that Jesus' driving away the money changers in the temple (Matt 21:12-13) is a mark of disapproval of all kinds of sales in the church.

Moreover, according to one of the interviewees, Nduka (2022), she disclosed that marketing is another popular culture that is obviously affecting religion in the place. Marketing has attracted much attention that no woman or man is left out of its knowledge. Alternatively, its interplay with religion is so remarkable that no time you go to the market within this Ikwerre area without seeing gospel singers, preachers and evangelists with their PA systems and musical bands fellowshipping with marketers who are in their business of the day. Some of the alleged men of God who own one ministry or the other are always found within the market places where they can get crowd of people to preach to, as well as collect offerings in return. Owing to the fact that most indwellers who are business men and women within Ikwerreland hardly allow religion to interfere with their market or business, they placed premium on an atmosphere where the gospel and their business will run concurrently, which will spear

them the time of leaving their business to the church grounds. Relative to this kind of scenario, people living within this area have coined words like market preacher, market preaching, market evangelism and market singers to addressing situations.

Ultimately, carnival is another popular culture that has waded into most religions in Ikwerreland. Ikenna, one of the respondents disclosed that now, some churches conduct youth and children carnivals so that their church members will not be tempted to participate in the secular ones which are most times exposed to cult activities. In continuation, he confided that most churches have adopted it to serve as bait or strategy to gathering people together for their evangelistic reaping campaigns. Be that as it may, everything has its peculiar advantages and disadvantages and must be adapted to the glory of God.

Facts about Religion and Popular Culture

Jordan (2021) opined that, as people allow their faith to motivate and inform them how they navigate the world around them, how should they as religious people engage with pop culture? "In Christian perspective, the earth is the Lord's and everything in it" (Psalm 24:1). According to Jordan, everything, including culture and pop culture, is covered by God's sovereignty. It is ideal to believe that by God's common grace in the world, believers and unbelievers alike are capable of creating beautiful things including movies, TV shows, music, and more. In the same vein, as everyone allows his or her faith to motivate and inform him or her on how to navigate the world around him or her, Christians should be careful of how they involve themselves in pop culture.

With Curiosity

Because culture is included under God's creation and sovereignty, we should approach pop culture with an optimistic curiosity. Jordan (2021) encourages that all adherents are to explore every piece of pop culture by asking: Does it echo the gospel in some fashion? Does it evidence our need for the good news? Does it contradict our understanding of the world in a way that deserves a loving response? These questions allow Christians to consider pop culture on its own terms and then ask how it might sit alongside their faith. In actual sense, Christians can appreciate the parts that resonate with their faith while learning more about the world and their shared humanity. They can also notice how the good news of the gospel according to Cooster (2018) rises to respond to patterns of thought or action present in the piece that are not aligned with what they know of their faith from God's Word.

With Grace

Colossians 4:5-6 says, live wisely among those that are not believers, and make use of every opportunity. Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will

have the right response for everyone. Just as all of Christians' conversations should be seasoned with love, their discourse around pop culture should offer grace and space for those with differing opinions and beliefs. To put it plainly, they should not expect a non-Christian piece of art to align with all of their Christian values, but they *can* look for the days that God's truth and beauty might be present in unlikely places. Better still, they can take the lead to be the shapers of pop culture instead of being the influenced (Richard, (2001).

With Discernment

According to Richard J. Muj, paraphrasing Apostle Paul's statement in Christian religion, he once said, I have the right to do anything you say, but not everything is beneficial. 'I have the right to do anything but not everything is constructive" (1 Corinthians 10:23). In this verse, Paul touches on something crucial to Christian's life. The Bible doesn't say "Don't watch non-Christian movies or listen to non-Christian artists." Nor does it give us a check-list of what makes a TV show acceptable for Christians, or detail how many hours of video games a Christian should play. However, the Bible *does* tell us that God has given us a spirit of discernment and wisdom. Every Christian, informed by Scripture, should prayerfully make their own decisions about what pieces of pop culture are beneficial and constructive for them (Richard, 2001). And just as we should be gracious towards non-believers, we should extend the same grace to our brothers and sisters in Christ who may have different boundaries than we do. As you consider how you can meaningfully engage pop culture with curiosity, grace, and discernment, pray that God would give you the eyes to see, and ears to hear "whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, and whatever is admirable" (Philippians 4:8) in his creation.

Recommendations

1. 21st century understanding on the issues of religion and popular culture is that they denigrate each other and hence, are incompatible. However, one needs to decipher that as time spirals with respect to technology, there will be corresponding effect in trending things. Meaning that religion must be influenced in one way or the other by what is trending at any given point in time, be it popular culture or others. In such situation, religious people must adapt to the popular culture by seeing how they will judiciously utilize such popular culture and make it relevant in any aspect of their programme, before that trending concept turns to be a barrier to their progress.

2. Generally, popular culture is good to be incorporated into religious system, but any religion or church wishing to adopt it must study that particular pop culture very

well as to know how, when and where to use it; and must also consider its advantages and disadvantages before integrating it into the programme of their organization. This will save the beliefs/dogmas of that religion from facing disorganisation.

3. There are popular cultures that are indispensably vital. Therefore, such inevitable cultures like dressing, music, use of radio and television etc can only be checked or regulated and not to be taken for granted.

4. According to Christianity, we are in the closing era of the planet earth's existence when expectation is the second coming of Jesus Christ. Therefore, people should adapt making things that will support religion their popular culture rather than heaping much interest on worldly things that compete with it. By so doing, most popular culture will be religion friendly.

5. Religious groups should try as much as possible to jettison popular culture that competes with the instruction from their gods or supernatural force, and follow that trajectory that will lead them to their expected end.

Conclusion

Panoramically, religion cannot thrive well without popular culture. Inferences from this research prove that popular culture influences religion positively by generating more unseen audience (especially the high class) for religion and religion as well, reciprocates such interaction in similar proportion. Indeed, worthy of note is the fact that popular culture which has many forms utilizes them to resonate with religion in achieving religious goals. Nonetheless, churches and religious believers must be careful as they approach popular culture so that they will be the shapers who will drive the popular culture in their contemporary societies in this 21st century instead of being influenced adversely. Ultimately, the negative effect of popular culture should not negate its use by religious groups since some of the groups have started utilizing it for their church growth. Therefore, every religious group should try to constitute the type of pop culture that will be relevant to them and jettison others.

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EXPLORING TRADITIONAL AND MODERN VIEWS ON SEXUALITY IN IKWERRE TRADITION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROMOTING SEXUAL MORALITY.

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Abstract

Many indicators in our modern African society suggest that the level of freedom allowed for sexual activities in today's society is creating a huge threat to morality. To ascertain the truth of this suggestion, the concepts of morality and freedom have to be given attention in relation to conservative principles of functional society alongside the dynamics of modern day freedom. To deal with this issue, the work employs the use of secondary source of data collection which will be analyzed and integrated. Rational and absolute theories were employed as a way of buttressing conservative values of Ikwerre people in contrast to the liberal and pleasure theories of the modern society. The work tries to ascertain values, decays and the remedies in relation to sexual morality. Observable conclusions indicate that sexual morality seems to be ebbing away in Ikwerre due to pleasure and postmodern liberalism - an imported philosophy of the west; creating all sorts of sexual adverse vibes aiding in rapidly bringing the society to a moral halt. However enough indicative evidences show that enough remedies to these sexual moral menaces abound, one of which can come through conscious attention given to traditional ethical values of the Ikwerre; which were used as conservative propellers of moral disposition before the visit of other foreign cultures. It thereby recommends that good part of these traditional values, ethics and practices can be applied as means of handling sexual decays in our society today.

Introduction

In most traditional African society like Ikwerre, issues that have to do with sexuality are taken seriously and considered sacred (Quarcoopome, 1987). The rules and regulations including the punishments meted on anyone that commits any sexual offence are means through which sexual matters are carefully monitored and handled

in Ikwerre land. Traditional actions and the fear they generate upon the members of the society and respect to human dignity, have helped in creating sexual moral society, creating boundaries and eliminating many sexual abuses and vices accompanying our modern day society (Kunhiyop, 2003). Western philosophy and sexual revolutions championed by postmodern philosophy and changing attitude on sex have aided much in granting sexual freedom (Kunhiyop, 2003). These have made what was held sacred and defined a free for all, leading to all manner of sexual activities most of which are not actually checked and managed by the society. This raises the question of: What is sex and sexuality? What is (are) the perimeter of judging moral conducts? Is sexual morality changeable through the dynamism of social change or cultural change? Did foreign cultures influence Ikwerre sexual moral life positively or negatively/ Can there be remedies to sexual decay in Ikwerre land and in where can it be found? These are questions the work aims to address.

There are two different theoretical thoughts that juxtapose these two cultures, the absolute theory of religion which buttresses that laws emanating from the gods are supreme and conservative together with rational morality as promoted by Plato (428-348BC) (Elechi and Ogbonna 2009) and Emmanuel Kant (1724-1804 AD); (Sweetman 2007). These laws are seen as best for man and has proven to conserve the moral status of majority of individuals in their social coexistence. Plato who believes that there is a purest way of conduct which determines the best practice of any given virtue or social life, advocates for pure practice in anything one is to do, including moral life. Most of the moral conducts of traditional Ikwerre people are referred to have been given by the gods of the land and must be observed accordingly.

This is in contrast to the modern day theory of liberalism and pleasure as championed by Charles Olson (1910-1970) and Thomas Hobbs (1588 – 1679 AD), (Lawhead, 2002). These are driving the global philosophy of pleasure and individual right. The community life of the traditional culture is put under the global philosophy of individual rights. This has made the society loosen their conservative laws to grant leverage to individuals who exercise these right against the community. This culture has affected the Ikwerre people in their moral grip on sexuality. What are obscene before are now in display in the public because individuals have rights to live their lives the way they want.

Sexuality and Social Freedom

The concept; sexuality, can be divided into two parts, these are sex and sexuality, while sex concentrates on two dimensional understandings, sexuality is an aggregation of all that pertains to sexual relationships or activities (Katchadourian, 1989). Sex in the first instance, stands for the biological differences between the male and female

organisms. This situation is brought about through genetic replication of chromosomes in the body. In reproduction the male humans are said to carry XY chromosome leading to having a male sex while the female carries the XX chromosomes leading to having female sex. The sex to be born now depends on the kind of chromosomes donated by the adult male. The second understanding of the word "sex" is the emotional intimacy between a man and woman, leading to sexual satisfaction. It consists of a variety of behaviours and relationships aimed at erotic pleasure. It is that activity that goes on when male and female genitals come together in erotic satisfaction as the climax of their intimacy. However, the word "Sexuality" goes beyond having sex only, it is a holistic inclusiveness of all activities toward sexual satisfaction. Everything that is done to bring an individual to sexual satisfaction is called sexuality. In this premise sexuality embraces heterosexuality, homosexuality, transexuality, lesbianism, prostitution, sodomy, bestiality, rape, masturbation, and everything in relation to sexual arousal and satisfaction (Katchadorian 1989). It is by this understanding that the relevance of this paper is defined. It tries to distinguish between what is moral in sex and what sexuality represents which in our modern society are being practiced as means of pleasure and satisfaction

It is at this conceptual understanding that the work of this kind becomes relevant as it looks at sexuality from the point of morality. In relation to moral society, so many of these practices represented here as sexuality captures the alteration of moral society in relation to man's freedom to engage in them as a free agent. Even in our contemporary environment, several of what sexuality represents are seen today as a serious threat to sexual morality as supported by Egbucha (2007, 206) in his attempt to buttress the wave of promiscuity and sexual failures in Owerri.

Factors Promoting Freedom of Sexuality in our Today's Ikwerre Society
Influence of Foreign Culture:

According to Jaja (2016, 3) Africa is facing great challenge in her sexuality, so it is important to call attention to it in terms of the destruction of morals. The first of these problems is the infiltration of foreign cultures and beliefs. The Western way of life which could be traced to many philosophical postulations of the postmodern culture of liberalism and pleasure, championed by Olson and Thomas Hobbes, have done much in demystifying that sacredness in many African beliefs. These more dominant foreign cultures have aided in making prominent African society like Ikwerre, vulnerable in the face of foreign ones (Eze 2011).

The Western culture which is driving the global culture of today is full of moral pitfalls. For instance; the postmodern philosophy sees nothing sacred and absolute in

morality. Every action should be free and relative. Postmodernism does not see many sexual perversions as bad. All these are relative (shield 2004). For instance; issues of adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, and many more have all been granted to individuals who want them through the law courts of nations. This is against the ethical values that govern a fundamental moral society like Ikwerre. This is actually putting pressures on moral society. As a result of this, gay sex and gay marriages, prostitution, adultery, transgender etc have all been allowed for individuals who so desire them as a way of granting them freedom as rational or consenting adults (Melissa Murray, 2024). This has reduced sexuality to individual choices. The result is high level of sexual moral decays in any culture it visits and Ikwerre is not exempted.

Foreign culture also came with the philosophy of individual pleasure. In relation with sexuality, it is advocated that there is nothing moral in sex; according to Iwuoha (2014), among the Europeans and the Americans everyone who is of age can decide what to do with his life, making their sexual life different from the Africans. The assertion that pleasure controls sex can be said to be true when compared to amount of pleasure derived in sexual engagements, making advocates to ask that these so called moral roadblocks to it be removed. Goldman (2019) and others support this view, they see nothing normative in sex. To them consensus of two adults is the key. They see morality as merely constructed by the society. In his engagement, nothing is sexual morality and as such no sexual act is immoral in nature. Others stick more on the conservative moral society. Monday, in his book Life is Richer with Mobile Phone But.... Published 2013 disagree with this by emphasizing that freedom available to young adults today through web is a danger for the future sexual morality of the society. In moral society, there must be a control in pleasurable things especially that of sexual activities because it is capable of imposing negative urge in people

Liberal thoughts are influencing the African society to see their views as global culture. It has the capacity to eat up morality by raising a society that will be too difficult to handle. One of the pillars of any society is that it has rules and regulations guiding every aspect of the societal life. These robust rules are there in Ikwerre culture and have guided them to piety. Today sexuality is one of the receiving ends of these Western cultures and philosophy in our soil.

Influence of Information and Community Technology (ICT)

Information technology is one of the factors influencing globalization. It has made the world a global village. ICT has made tremendous impart to reading and learning. As good as this can be there are dangerous and adverse influences of ICT on sexuality. One of the major vices of ICT is that it has made privacy a matter of data (Monday,2013,27-38). Once you have your data and television you are free to access

whatever that supposed to be private affairs. Africans hold sexual issues so sacred and highly covert. This is actually ebbing away due to the use of television, mobile phones, internet etc. Children watch obscene movies in their privacy which is capable of making them behave immorally when under the psychology of what they watched.

In Nigeria, several media houses use sexual gestures for advertisements. There are several pornographic stands in various selling points in Nigeria. These contents are not regulated by the government even in the midst of established regulatory body, leading to feeding idle hearts with negative sexual contents resulting in many cultural values being neglected, creating a disconnect from cultural reality. This media freedom has encouraged nude displays, obscene dressings, bikinis and several immoral sexual behaviours on screens. In several traditional cultures in Africa, women are not allowed to dress anyhow or act in ways that give sexual messages to their male folks. Children are not even allowed to discuss on sex or speak languages that suggest it, internet in its contents has destroyed all that and demystified the sacredness in sexual activities. In Ikwerre culture, sexual languages are coded even among the adults, to dissuade the society from being mentally sexualised, this has gone down the drain courtesy of ICT.

Nonchalant Attitudes by the Stakeholders

The authorities, religious organizations and families which are vested with the responsibility of handling these lifestyles are actually paying little attention to the decay in sexual activities. For instance, in several Nigerian churches today, there is no difference between the way prostitutes dress and that of a church woman. Even religious organizations that suppose to drive moral and sexual sanity have decided to pay less attention by watching these moral decays while some have gone ahead to ratify these practices (Jaja, 2016). Several sexual moral laws are all in our various religions, cultures and even the constitution of several African nations yet none is being implemented, instead it seems as if these western lifestyles are adopted and ratified.

For example, few African countries have adopted some Western ideas on sex. Example is South Africa who decriminalized adultery (Dikpalaya 2015) and pressure is upon other African nations to follow suit and decriminalize many of these laws for adverse sexual urge. Freedom granted individuals in Africa are increasing on daily basis leading to litigations when a person feels that his right is obstructed. Girls go naked on the street without any respect to the law. In our university campuses, girls and boys dress the way that depicts sexual appeals. Our traditional custodians feel vulnerable in the face of overwhelming flood of sexual freedom to the extent that it has become impossible for them to influence their children. This has made it difficult for the

community to enforce these laws because individuals affected can appeal to secular laws which interprets freedom to such individual.

Negative Implications of Freedom of Sexuality in Ikwerre
Destruction of Moral laws

Tradition is one of the strongest powers of the Ikwerre society. Tradition in Africa comes with it ways of the people, their religion, laws and all that shape their society. One of the powers of this tradition is the laws restricting certain moral behaviours on sexuality, Ikwerre has several of such laws. For instance, in Ogbakiri, sexual acts like, rape, adultery, sleeping with a woman on bare floor, or in the bush, sex before marriage etc are all restricted and forbidden; to some extent they are regarded as taboos and actions against the gods or the Eli goddess (Quarcoopome, 1987) and when any of these laws are committed it carries a heavy punishment and appeasements. Tasie (2001) as quoted by Wotogbe has this to say in regard to offences against the goddess.

> The belief and fear of Eli among Ikwerre (people) is so pervasive that the implications and consequences of performing it is not contemplated, as the purificatory rites for offences against Eli are not only complex but elaborate.

This fear of punishment and the laws surrounding sexual activities have helped in shaping the moral of Ikwerre people. The influence of liberalism and freedom in sexuality seem to delete all that leading individuals to define sex the way he wants. As it is stated, In **"Psalms 11:3. If the foundation is destroyed, what can the righteous do"**, and this seems to be the attitude of our traditional fathers who see the future without any hope in terms of morality.

The Rise in Sexual Immorality

In nations where adultery was decriminalized there is a high rate of immorality and infidelity. Many African women are at home with this law on adultery with the conclusion that their male counterparts use adultery laws to hold them down while they – the men - can commit adultery and even have many concubines (Shehzad, 1988). They see this measure as freedom to pleasure.

In South Africa (Dikpalaya, 2015)and indeed in other places where this law has been repealed, the major reason for it is that while such law lasted, men were not criminalized except women making the law lopsided. The law favours the male folk who the female folk also see as the makers of such law. The proponents of this abrogation refer the law as uncanny and infringement on people's right (Rush 2015, -

The independence). By implication this abrogation gives the couple the right to commit adultery and be protected by the law, thereby promoting immorality and individual pleasure as against the established societal or traditional norms.

This is still an attempt to relegate sexuality to individual pleasure. Thomas Hobbes who was a hedonist sees pleasure as good but concentrated on the pleasure of the greater masses in the society and not individual pleasure (Sweetman, 2007). This shows that pleasure of any individual should put society in mind. Any pleasure that is detrimental to the next person should be avoided; this is the spirit behind the communitarian life of Ikwerre people. Every member of the community is born for the community and for this reason he must abide by the community laws or face sanctions. Sexual immorality in marriage today has created several problems, like divorce, death, lack of trust, single parenthood, lack of values in our children etc. Typical African society is suffering from all these. Egbucha (2007) was right when he said that in traditional African society, promiscuity after marriage was very rare. This cannot be said today as several men and women are given power to commit all sort of sexual immorality as a way of exercising their freedom.

Sex before marriage today is promoted as against the tradition which takes pride to see that young girls remain virgins until marriage. To an extent this has created moral anomaly with other attendant moral, health and social issues and behaviours. There was a high state of respect in Ikwerre in respect to sex following the fact that the children wait for the blessings of their parents when they grow to adulthood before marriage. Independence and the freedom granted to them by modern culture have destroyed all that as they can do anything in front of their parents without fear.

Sexualized Environment

According to Geek Feminism Wiki sexualised environment is where sexual activity or clothing or sexual behaviours are prominent. Sexual freedom has created a sexualised environment causing adverse sexual activities in Ikwerre soil since several Ikwerre males and females have bought the idea that nothing is sacred in sex and that sex should be a pleasure they need to enjoyed the way they want, the respect accorded to sexual activities is gone. This has made the society a sexualized one. Individuals today are wild in sex including married members of the society. It is common in Nigeria for instant to see brothels everywhere, places where many of the girls are held captives for sexual activities and any man can go and buy sex with the lowest amount possible. There are several night clubs where even leaders of the society go in to have illicit sex at the expense of their wives and children. Prostitution has increased and are having national association in Nigeria with the government doing nothing about it

(Wikipedia). Increase in rape, bestiality and illicit sexual engagements among young adults and teens are alarming today due to repeated practice without any measure against offenders by the authority.

It is common to see a child of unit age talking about sex, this is because in the first place he heard it from an adult, it could also be that he has seen them do it or she may be a victim of pedophile. Such a child could also watch it on the television or through a phone set. All these immoral vices on sexuality are propelled by the level of freedom given to the individuals and the influence of the western lifestyles and ICT.

Adverse Effect of Sexual Freedom

A sexualized environment due to freedom has many dangers. One cannot afford to say what women in particular go through. Sometimes women go through sexual violence and abuse in terms of rape, abandonment during pregnancy leading to trauma and single parenthood and hardship. There are also harassments. Some of these sexual abuses can, in some way, be caused by the women themselves when they expose themselves to certain sexual gestures; these can give an appeal to the male folks who see them as looking for sexual relationships (Monday, 2013; 70-72). Their dressings, make ups, gestures during greetings, their intonations when talking to males and many other things, suggest sexual appeals in some occasions. There is a gradual, if not a rapid breakdown of the moral strength of the society due to all these. There must be rules and regulations to make a society moral, because moral society has rules governing all aspect of it to be a functional society (Igbal, 2023). A society that grants excessive freedom to its citizens has failed already especially when it has to touch the moral powers of such a society. The society is actually dynamic, no doubt about that, but there are quite lot of things that don't need to change with the society, one of them is moral values and the opposite of it is the problem of the society today (Ojewale, 2023). Till generations come and go, killing another man will remain social vice, rape, sexual perversion, stealing etc will remain moral evil. If these are broken as we see in term of sexuality, then the society is dead. As it is today, we see a rapid breakdown of sexual boundaries leading to several immorality and sexual offenses.

Another effect is in connection to the rate at which sexuality has become alienated from the normal human interactions to any type of interaction in the name of freedom, example is homosexuality. Homosexuality has altered the natural boundaries on sex and created a depraved attitude of inordinate sexual appetite. Several interpretations have been advanced to support this but nature teaches otherwise (Sanders, 1998, 53,54). Freedom of sexuality has made people marry to trees, animals, fellow gender etc. It has also created opportunity to masturbate or have sex with toys, have intercourse with animals and sleep with relations in the name of consensus.

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Court has granted individuals the right to marry these elements and the church seem not to have the power to go against the law. It is no long a new thing that females are now granted license to prostitution, spreading adverse sexual knowledge to the coming generation. In hotels there are ratified harlots with hotel cards readily available for any guest who needs them. Recruitment is easy as parents who are custodians now push their children to the city to go and fend for the family due to poverty and hardship (Jaja 2016,7)

Greater danger lies in the future as the sexual moral fabrics are on constant decay, the coming generation may witness serious sexual danger if what is going on today is not tamed, as experts have predicted. The world is witnessing a total nakedness and public display of sexual satisfaction on our streets. Some countries have places where public sexual engagements are committed (Ayah, 2021). In our time we are beginning to see a rising attitude from the women, stopping the use of brazier and undergarments. Some of these females openly fly their sensitive organs in the public and teaches the younger ones the same. This will affect the society greatly leaving the future generation to add more to it.

Possible Remedies/Recommendations

1. One cannot be hypocritical about the pleasure derived in sexual engagements. Sexuality has in its power of pleasure ability for someone to misbehave that is why heavy restrictions are given against such misbehaviour and huge sanctions meted on offenders in traditional African society. To make sure there is sanctity in today's Ikwerre society, certain measures should be taken. One among these measures is to go back to traditional laws, punishments and measures against sexual issues. During the period of conservativeness, Ikwerre laws controlled sexual activities, as a result of this, sexual perversions were very rare or almost impossible. This is because traditional rules bring in sanity and morals as the people fear the sanctions (Tasie 2001).

2. Ikwerre tradition and religion are quite inseparable. Kunhiyop (2008) observed that it is impossible to separate the life of the Africans and religion. The fear of the gods and the dislikes of the ancestors hold sway in keeping sexual morality in check as said earlier. This is because several sexual offences are regarded as offences against the gods and the ancestors (Quarcoopome, 1987). Appeasing the gods when this is committed is huge and failure to do it attracts punishment from the gods and the ancestors. Such a person can become barren for life or die

abnormally according to tradition and cannot be buried normally or unite with the ancestors. This knowledge keeps a traditional African moral sexually.

3. The respect and fear for the community is another way the tradition can curb the menace of sexual morality in our society today. Unlike Western culture that individualized humans in the society, Ikwerre tradition sees a person as a member of the community. In Africa, no individual has life except as it is lived among the community (Kunhiyop 2008). When any serious offence is committed, a person can be ostracized from the community as a serious punishment. One of the contentions against the postmodern culture is the freedom of individual to exercise his right the way he pleases especially on sex. Ikwerre people live for each other and before any action is taken the interest of the community must be considered. If this is given prominence in our society today, the level of freedom for sexual acts will consequently fall.

4. Apart from traditional culture, it is important to state here that the existing laws of several countries are now left in the hands of law court judges. Examples are the laws on abortion, adultery, prostitution etc, these laws are clearly spelt out in the constitutions of various nations but the various constitutional court judgments interpret these laws away in attempt to grant individual rights to those who want freedom to commit these sexual abominations. (Rush, 2015). The laws of the African countries should be interpreted in its conservativeness without fear or favour and the attempt to change it should be resisted in order to disallow these sexual insanities in the society.

5. Ikwerre people should strengthen their culture especially those that have moral implications and return back to their values instead of buying into what the foreign cultures are selling to them. Observation shows that the social tide is almost sweeping away the Ikwerre values (Church-Hill, 2023). Several of what remains today in Ikwerre culture are ceremonies and festivals but the moral walls are rapidly being broken. Complaining cannot solve the problem than actively getting involved in instilling these values on the younger generations.

6. Finally, the most important social unit where children are taught morals should be strengthened. Family plays a big role in shaping the society according to Langfall and Muscato, (2023), family is the basis of training the children's morality and future. Morality of the society can be taken care of if the family is put in moral shape. Parents and the government can start today in training their children by inculcating values in them to replace the next generation. Family training helps the child to see the world from the lens of those who taught them. Families should

harness on their moral obligations to birth a future where sexual morality will be a priority.

Conclusion

The issue of sexuality is general to every culture, nation and individual, it is more than engaging in emotional intimacy between a man and woman. It is the totality of all that is done to make one sexually satisfied. It is observed that the rate of sexual decay is as a result of the breaking down of traditional values and the inflation of western ideas. This has triggered several activities into sexuality making it free for all. Attention on sexual satisfaction has shifted from the conservative practices to individual freedom as championed by postmodern ethics of relativism and sexual pleasures. This attitude, coupled with information and communication technology (ICT) and nonchalant attitudes of the custodians of custom and tradition have created a sexualised society where everything can go for sex. Prostitution, lesbianism/homosexuality, bestiality or pedophile among others are today in display to be exercised by free humans. Adultery, divorce, abortion, etc are ratified easily on the plea for freedom to enjoy sex as a conscientious adult. One of the greater dangers is that the future is fearful if this is not handled. It could lead to open sexual intercourse on the street and outright nudity if things continue this way. Solution to these is possible if the traditional values on sexuality can be revisited and practiced alongside the religious fears and the community spirit. The nations should as well stick to their constitutions instead of granting the judges the undue advantage of interpreting the laws to suit individual freedom.

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DRUG ABUSE AMONG NIGERIAN YOUTH: OVERCOMING CHALLENGES AND PROMOTING PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES FOR SUSTIANABLE DEVELOPMENT

BY

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Abstract

The incidence of drug abuse has become a problem that affects every country across the globe. Studies have described a growing impact of drug abuse among Nigerian youths to the extent of being considered a moral decadent. The Menace of drug abuse is seriously threatening the youthful population. For instance, drug abuse/misuse does not only reduce the academic performance of students of higher institutions, it also impedes a healthy development of the nation since drug abuse is a threat to the life and dignity of users. Thus, the study examines drug abuse among Nigerian youth: overcoming challenges and promoting preventive strategies for sustainable development. The study is basically qualitative. It utilized existing literatures on drug abuse to highlight the dangers and consequences of drug abuse particularly among the Nigerian Youths. The sources which consists of books, journals, periodical, magazines etc, provides an insight into common causes and social effects of drug abuse. The findings of the study shows that drug/abuse and drug trafficking are on the increase among the Nigerian youth. It therefore concludes by recommending preventive strategies that can aid governance at all levels to curb the menace of drug abuse. Finally, it calls for governments at all levels to institutionalize good governance, transparency and accountability which will bring about attitudinal changes that will spur all families, groups, societies etc, to collaboratively join hands in curbing the menace.

Key Words: Drug Abuse, Youth, Preventive Strategies, Development

Introduction

The prevalence of drug abuse among youths has become an increasing public health and social problem in many countries. According to Abdullahi, (2016), drug abuse is the non-medical self administration of a substance to produce mood changing effects, intoxication or altered self image, despite the knowledge of its potential effects. It can also be described as the use of any substance to the point were it interferes with an individual's health, social or economic adjustment. Corroborating the above view, Adebayo (2017) averred that youth who engage in harmful substances show lowered commitment to education, declining grades, increased potential and high truancy rate. Suicides, homicides and accidental injuries severally have been linked to drug abuse among the youth. Also high prevalence of depression, development lag, apathy, withdrawal, drainage of family financial and emotional resources have all been reported among drug abusing youth, (Adediji, 2013). The frequent abuse of drug has resulted in an increased in number of delinquent acts such as rape, robbing, cultism, violent disorders and vandalism among Nigerian youth. Drug abuse has contributed to the set back of the society in Nigeria and has affected her national development because the youth is the life-wire of any progressing society. In many psychiatric hospitals in Nigeria, many of our youths are there undergoing treatments which are traceable to misuse of drug. Some youth are school drop-outs because they could not continue due to the rate of drug that has resulted to their insanity. Many youths are homeless, wanderers, derelicts, unemployed, rapist, thugs, and armed robbers and so on because they are drug addicts.

In our contemporary society, drug abuse is a moral decadence that has affected the growth of the Nigerian economy. Sociologically, youths who are into drug abuse affect peaceful coexistence of citizens, as those drugs tends to make them feel high that they degrade people around them. These hard drugs trigger youths to indulge in violence, thus disrupting the state of peace in the society. In addition, the background of a child could contribute to drug abuse by a child. Research has proven that a greater percentage of children from broken homes, wedlock, polygamous homes, troubled homes, etc. tends to push children into drug abuse. Children from such homes are not shown love and care, thus they resort to hard drugs for succor.

Similarly, some children who indulge in drug abuse imitate their parents, must especially the fathers. Parents who indulge in drug abuse act as bad influence on their words, as they would like to toe the parts of their fathers. Coupled with the fact that the high level of poverty in the country has equally pushed parents to go hustling for ends meets that they barely have time to look into the affairs of their children, some youths are emotionally stressed that they do not feel comfortable relating their feelings to

others most especially those older than them. Probably because they feel they will not give good counsel out of their problems. Thus, they report to taking hard drugs to ease their stress. The arising issues of the above are just a few of the various negative impacts of drug abuse on both the youth and the country at large; which is quite devastating and that is why national and international bodies are trying to eradicate this social menace. Objectively, the study was to determine ways of promoting national development through the prevention of drug abuse among youths. It will also examine the factors responsible for drug abuse among youths and the social consequences of drug abuse among youths.

From the foregoing, it is therefore imperative for both the government and non-governmental organizations to step-up on their plans and programs in other to bring a lasting solutions to the social phenomenon of drug abuse in our society, and that is why this study is meant to give an insight on how drug abuse can be prevented among Nigerian youths in other to promote national development, as mentally and socially sound young individuals make a great and formidable nation.

Conceptual Explanation

Humanity had always depended on herbs, leaves and plants to treat themselves from various ailments and their uses never constituted any danger because drugs that are correctly administered become medicine while the un-prescribed application becomes abuse. Therefore, drug according to Ogunbiyi, (2023) is a substance used for medicine purposes that changes the state or function of the body. It is also considered as a substance that modifies perceptions, cognition, mood, behavior and general body function. Similarly, Fama (2003) asserts that drug is a substance which is used for treatment or prevention of a disease in man and animals. Thus, drug alters the body functions either positively or otherwise depending on the body composition of the user, the type of drug used, the amount used and whether used simply or with other drugs at the same time. Based on those definitions, we can infer that when drugs are misapplied, they become or constitute abuse. Then, what is drug abuse?

Drug abuse is a situation where drug is taken more than it's prescribed by a certified professional. It could be seen as the use of illicit drugs, or the abuse of prescription or over-the counter drugs. It could further be defined as the deliberate use of chemical substances for reasons other than intended medical purposes and which results in physical mental, emotional or social impairment of the user. The abuse of legal drugs can happen when people by the manufacturer or purpose that are not legitimate. Drug abuse is the bad or wrong pattern of drug consumption which will not stop even if the individuals has knowledge and experience of the physical (medical) psychological and social consequences of the drug use. Mappes and Zambaty (2002)

see drug abuse as something often referred to as "any non-medical use of a drug that carries a serious risk of significant harm to oneself or others". In ordinary usage, drug is a pejorative expression that is often applied to any use of drugs that is seen as objectionable. By the means stated, any use of illicit drugs such as marijuana, is frequently considered drug abuse, because if this is done there is the breakage of law. Though many believe that it is the excessive use of marijuana and alcoholic consumption that is harmful, but the mild use or intake is not. They also opine that what is considered drug abuse can be in various forms or can take different shapes.

Drug abuse can be occasional, for instance drinking to stupor in an occasion, causing embarrassment/embarrassing scenes or becoming a nuisance. If such becomes frequent, there is the tendency that such an individual may become drug dependent. When an attempt is made to stop such individual when it becomes severe-may result into physiological withdrawal symptoms. When drug abuse result into a higher degree of physical and psychological dependency and severe withdrawal symptoms, it means the person has become an addict. These authors (Mappes and Zambaty 2022) have provided a clear and accurate definition of drug abuse as any non-medical use of a drug that carries a serious risk of significant harm to oneself or others". Others here may as well refer to the society at large. They also refer to the legal aspect of drug abuse to the society which leads to the breaking of law, showing that the effect of drug abuse is not only the individual addict or user, his/her family, but to the society at large.

Based on American setting, (Mappes and Zambety 2022) narrowed their treatment on the substances considered to be drugs in America such as Marijuana, cocaine, crack and heroin. But in Nigerian society there are other forms and categories of drugs and their abuse. They exposed other uses (may be positive) of drugs as psychoactive chemicals for recreation to achieve or enhance pleasure, enhance work performance and to stimulate creativity or in religious practice. The conceptualisation of drug abuse as reviewed above is considered meaningful to this study.

Prevalence of Drug Abuse among Nigerian Youths

The engagement of drug addiction and abuse by the Nigerian youth has become a tragedy because it has contributed to the set back of the national development in the society. Drug abuse among Nigerian youth is now a common phenomenon. Females are not exempt in this evil act. A recent research carried out by Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency, NDLEA cited in Adepuju, et – al (2022) shows that 15-20 percent of drug addicts are females while males constitutes about 50-55 percent all comprising of traders, students, unskilled workers and the unemployed.

The rate of drug abuse among Nigerian youths is shooting through the roof, endangering the productive potential of a vast youth population needed to drive a more vibrant economy.

Buba, (2023) averred that the drug problem in Nigeria has become so prevalent that it requires deliberate actions to nip in the bud. According to him about 14.3 million youths were involved in drug abuse in 2018, based on National Drug use survey and there are new signs that the figures haven grown higher five years after. Corroborating these findings, Atinuke, (2022) underpinned that the recent statistic by NDLEA revealed that 40percent of Nigeria youth between 18 and 35 years are deeply involved in the abuse of drugs. According to her, the statistic has become so worrisome and showed that the problem had reached an epidemic level in the country. Following her views, one could see that the increasing wave of drug abuse has formed a threat to Nation building. The rate at which youths are becoming addicted to illicit drugs had reached an alarming state.

What will the country Nigeria be like if 40percent of her underage youths are already into drug abuse and addict? The prevalence of drug abuse in Nigeria and the negative impact on public health and safety necessitate that all hands must be on deck to curtail the challenge in our country. Substantiating the above assertion, Ortokpa (2023), who surveyed from the angle of health professionalism, stated that the appetite for drug abuse among Nigerian young population is on the increase. According to him, the illicit drug trade in the country which has so much influenced in the high rate of drug abuse is fueled by factors which include Nigeria's geographic location, economic disparities, political instability and global demand for drugs. Citing the survey of United Nations population fund, he said that Nigeria has a youthful population with approximately 60% of its population below the age of 30. This demographic group represents a significant portion of the country's work force and has the potential to drive economic growth and development. However, a growing portion of that population is falling prey to the snares of drug traffickers.

The considerable increase in drug and substance abuse engendered the war against drugs, which was marked by the creation of two federal agencies in Nigeria. The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency in 1990 and the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control in 1993 (John, 2022). According to the above source, drug abuse is prevalent across Nigerian's six geopolitical zone of which, the South West, a zone of serious concern that comprises Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and the Oyo states, is reported to have the highest prevalence of drug and substance use (22.49 or 4,382,00 users) especially in Lagos and Oyo state. This zone is followed by the South – South, South – East, North – East, North – West and North central zones. According to John (2022), the reasons for initiation into drug abuse

includes low self – esteem, [peer pressure, the need for extra energy for daily activities, poor socio – economic condition at home and experimental curiosity. Thus, our study aim was to assess the prevalence and awareness of drug and substance abuse among the Nigerian youth and to suggest Preventive measures that will help the already existing measures and strategies which is not enough to curb the menace of drug abuse so that it gives way for sustainable development.

Risk Factors

1. **Social Acceptance:** Social acceptance is the process of being included and respected by other people. It is an act of accepting and embracing the person without any discrimination or judgment. According to Akande (2018), social acceptance is one of the risk factors that have contributed to youth's engagement in drug and drug related abuses. Human beings were made to live in groups and socialized he averred. Thus, they begin to show this trait from a very young age as they were taught in groups and gravitate towards forming cliques of friends. When they attain adolescence, however, the urge to fit into groups or hang out becomes stronger at a period where they begin to form own identities. Sadly, many young people lack mentor guides and thus, struggle on their own to fit in. to earn their place in the crowd they often resort to some vices as the in-crowd, usually involving drug use. In other cases, young people also resort to drug use in a bid to deal with the crowd. Rebellion is common among young people and drug use is one of its most telling characteristics. Either way, the implications can be disabling in the long term.

2. **Peer Group:** This is one of the common causes of drug addiction and abuse. It is a form of societal influence on the affected youth. Adepuji et-al (2022) averred that "peer group is a group of people of the same age or social status". A lot of evil like drug abuse armed robbery, rape, among our youths in Nigeria and beyond are caused by peer groups. Someone can be influenced to become a drug addict by his friends who are drug addict, some people are drug addicts today because they associate with drug addicts and they do not want to be called "Jew guys" by their friends;. Some people are compelled by their friends to become drug addict. One would like to be identified with his friends or peer group and when one is addicted to a particular drug, he or she will have the craving for that drug thereby losing the sense of direction in his other life.

3. **Economic Uncertainty:** Once upon a time, Nigeria was a place to be as a young man or woman with some form of education. Multinationals got the pick of the litter and high-performing students were assured of good jobs in Lagos and other

cities like Port Harcourt and Kano. Even the uneducated could earn a living at some of these companies or at local firms where hard work was readily rewarded with opportunity. The 1970s and 1980s seen such a distant time now. Today, unemployment is at record levels. Young graduates struggle to get jobs. Any sign of a vacancy or job opportunity is swarmed by applicants as evidence by the fiasco experienced during the Nigerian Immigration service's recruitment exercise in 2016. With such non-existent prospects and the state of the nation's economy looking more dismal with each passing day, young Nigeria are turning to drug to escape a harsh reality.

4. **Family Problem:** The parental background of a child can expose a child to all sorts of evil which includes drug abuse. this could be due to family problems like broken homes, polygamous family, poverty, cultural influence on children, having a father who is a drug addict etc. if a child has a father who is a drug addict, it is likely that the child will become a drug addict, "like father like son" as the child watches his father smoke cigarette, there is every tendency that the child will become a drug addict or smoker and from cigarette smoker he will graduate to other hard drug, (Ikechi G. O. Personal communication 2023). "I was a drug addict before because my father was a drug addict and several times, I used to see him snorting drugs into his nostrils, drinking the tablet form and injecting the drugs into his body. In an interview with the researcher a girl of 20 years, she said "I am a drug addict because I cannot behold and bear the enmity between my parents, any time they start their quarrel, I take drug to forget about them" (wodo I. C. Personal communication 28th June 2023). Some parents who engage too much in the struggle for survival tend to neglect their responsibility on their children. When parents face to carry out their responsibilities on their children, they are exposing them to evil like drug abuse and others. So many youths are drug addicts today because they were not bought up religiously or trained well by their parents.

5. **Experimentation & Pop Culture Influence:** Pop culture is an amalgam of tends and elements in fashion, arts, movies, television and music that have achieved mass appeal and becomes popular. In today's pop culture, drug use is hard to avoid more so in music the world's biggest –pop stars randomly discuss their prolific drug use in their songs, along with music videos where marijuana smoke floats popping prescription pills to deal with the pain.

6. **Brain Charge/Sensation:** Some people are drug addicts today, abusing drugs because they are seeking for sensation they went to "charge" their brain or feel high. This is habitually done by criminals for carrying out their criminal acts like robbery, raping, thugging etc with the abusing of drugs, they can carry out their

crime without having human sympathy, taking human beings as nothing because their brain have been charge and they can kill their fellow human beings easily. In an interview with a criminal at Owerri prison, he says "if I take a wrap, my brain go charge well for action, I no go be person again, and person no go be person for me again" (Chinedu,O]. I. Personal Communication 31ˢᵗ June, 2023).

Consequences of Drug Abuse
1. **Health consequences:** Drug abuse seems to have become a prominent social problem in Nigeria especially the youth. According to Newaiuu cited in Orisa – Ubi (2003:146), drug abuse leads to serious health problems for drug victims. Drug abuse has adverse effects on the brain, kidney, liver, pancreas, heart and lung, thereby making the vulnerable to disease. Corroborating the above view, (Adedeji, 2003) came up with a result that drug abuse may lead to other physical complications such as hepatitis, hepatic failure, tuberculosis in relation to alcohol abuse, infection and emaciation. He also averred that drug abuse may result to serious psychiatric implications; these include confusion, restlessness and sometimes serious abnormal behavior or outright madness. At least one out of the psychiatric case is due to delirious effects of marijuana. Besides statistics have shown that 70 percent of patients undergoing treatment for drug abuse in the nation's psychiatric hospitals are youth between the ages of 16-25 years. It can have severe health consequences both physical and mental, especially when it begins at a young age. Tackling drug appetite among the young population is essential to protect their wellbeing and ensure a healthy future generation.

2. **Education and Productivity:** Drug abuse negatively affects educational attainment and reduces productivity. Young people who engage in drug abuse are more likely to experience academic difficulties, drop-out of school, and have limited employment prospects. Addressing drug abuse among Nigerian youths is vital for enabling them to reach their full potential and contribute effectively to society.

3. **Crime and Social Consequences:** drug abuse is often associated with criminal activities, as individuals may resort to illegal means to support their addiction. This can lead to increase crime rate, including drug related violence, theft, and other form of illicit activities. By addressing this menace, Nigeria can reduce the societal and economic burden associated with drug related crimes.

4. **Economic Impact:** Drug abuse has a significant impact on individuals, families, and the country as a whole. The financial costs of addiction, includes health care expenses, lost productivity and increased law enforcement effort, place a strain on

the economy. By tackling drug appetite among youth of Nigeria, the country can mitigate these economic consequences and redirect resources towards more productive endeavors.

5. **Family Problem:** drug abuse as one of the causes of family because of drug abuse. A man who is a drug addict and who drinks to stupor can beat his wife and children to death especially when the children to death especially when the children are still tender. Such man cannot take care of his family. The society is at risk because of this menace called the abuse. Many of the victims are dying of blood transmitted disease like AIDS because most of them indulge in the exchange of unsterilized infection equipment for infecting of drugs into the bodies with this, the society is at risk because AIDS can spread in the society through them. They can contact AIDS through sexual intercourse or coitus because drugs urges for sex and someone can also contact from them.

6. **Violence/War:** drug abuse cause violence in the society. When one is engaged in the abuse, he can carry out any evil act. In the higher institution, most crises are raised by drug victims. If they are only cultists they can hold themselves and have human sympathy in time of crisis but because of the drug, they cannot restrain themselves, this can lead to violence and consequent maiming of lives, loss of lives, and property.

7. **Insanity /Death:** Drug abuse has disgraced and degraded our youths to the lowest. It is quite obvious that most of the Nigerian youths that are insane today were drug victims in Nigeria, the numbers of youth that are insane are more than that of old people. Not only that they are mad because of drug abuse but they are dying of it. Many of the youth are school dropouts because they have gone mad due to the drugs they have taken. A society that is losing her youths has no future and is in trouble for national development.

Preventive Measures against Drug Abuse

The problem of drug abuse among youths in Nigeria is one thing that does nobody or any nation good as it affects future and development of the nation. It is said that the youth are the leaders of tomorrow. Be that as it may the question therefore is what then can be done to problem of drug use and abuse among the youth with respect to national development. It is therefore the responsibility of all and sundry such as the government, policy makers, administers, community leaders, individuals etc. in this very fight against the use and abuse of drugs of drugs among youth. An idle mind, they say is the devil's workshop, youth have to be kept busy realizing their potentials in rewarding and interesting manner. Otherwise their potentials or energies which is at a peak in these formalize years may be vented through mischievous channels like drug

taking which harm both society and the individual. Greater availability of good educational activities, material and leadership opportunities for youths are necessary to keep the youth happily buy. This would help a lot towards solving the drug abuse problem.

Government should set up Rehabilitation centers to aid victims of drug abuse. In addition to this, there is also the need for agency in combating the so disintegration by way of public awareness and education. Community organization, health and social agencies must identify high risk groups and educates the people about the dangers of drug use, emphasizing vital importance of drug free life. Pamphlets and badges should be distributed to societies, communities, school, colleges and universities. Also entertainment and sport celebrities should also show disinterest or deglamorize drug abuse. Parents should strive to be or show good examples to their children and they should also be watchful of the company their children keep. Legislation should be enacted to penalize those companies especially transporters who do not implement misuse.

Similarly, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community Based organisations (CBOs) should encourage the sensitisation campaigns against drug abuse as well as engage in rehabilitation programs. Educational institutions at all levels whether public or private should organise workshops, lectures/symposium to enlighten the people on the dangers of drugs and substance abuse. Government policies targeted at developing the society are more often than not more paper work. Thus the government should ensure that through its policies jobs are created, social services are rendered and above all, its policies should be feasible and capable of implementation. Hospitals and clinic should be well stocked with genuine drugs and trained physicians put in place to ensure proper prescription of drugs while monitoring how the patients take such drugs to avoid over or under dosage tendencies which will lead to drug abuse. There should be a proper scrutiny and licensing of patent medicine stores and such should be operated by well-trained pharmacists. Alongside this, street drug hawking should be discouraged since this can promote accessibility to drug abusers.

Institutions like the National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies (NDLEA) and the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and control (NAFDAC) should be empowered to squarely deal with "Drug Barons" as well their traffickers, peddlers and conducts. This is because at times, their performance are undermined by the threats they get as well as the purported connections such barons and the traffickers have with people in higher authority. There should also be a proper monitoring of Trans border activities to curb the rate of illegal or even legal immigrants that are likely to possess such hard substance. Finally, the mass media should facilitate

government's campaign against drug abuse, and avoid such thrilling advertisement and jingles like those of tobacco and alcohol (liquor) etc. meanwhile, sensitisation programs should be channeled through this medium.

Conclusion

Drug abuse is still a menace and has grown to become global subculture whose effects is cataclysmic and cuts across every society, creed, or race. However, no individual is born an abuser, but the multifarious human activities have through learning, interaction and curiosity made man to develop this habit. It is empirical that drug abuse is more common amongst the youth especially in Nigeria. The habit develops as an attempt for instance to justify a curiosity in the daily interactions as man is a gregarious animal. To the individual, its effect can physiological and psychological, which gradually penetrate the society and affects all productive endeavors both socially and economically? As a menace, drug abuse has habitually become a means to an end which calls for individuals, families, groups, communities, societies and Nigerian government to collaboratively join hands in curbing the menace.

It is important to note that tackling drug abuse requires a long term commitment, adequate resources, and a multi-sectoral approach involving the government, civil organisation, health care providers, educators, families and communities. By combining these strategies, Nigeria can make significant progress in reducing drug abuse and its associated harms. However, if the preventive measures and strategies outline above are followed the effect of drug abuse will give way for Nigerian Youth to engage in sustainable development.

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THE THREAT OF GLOBALIZATION ON TRADITIONAL AFRICAN RELIGION

BY

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Abstract

Globalisation signifies the growing economic, political, social, and traditional relations across transnational frontiers due to improved speed of transport and communication; it is now easier to export commercial goods and political and traditional ideas from one society to another. It is also easier now to communicate and transmit information and ideas. This paper, therefore, is a search to outline and critically assess the threats of globalisation on African traditional religion. Data for the study was drawn from analytical method, which was critically analysed. The paper will reviewed African tradition, religion, and moral values which have continued to be affected by globalisation, mainly Western education, religion, urban development, and industrialisation, beginning from the slave trade through the colonial era until now. In the analysis, this chapter concludes that Africa is at the risk of traditional atrophy consequent upon the current logic of globalisation. The paper, therefore, proposes strategies for stemming the tide of traditional atrophy of the African tradition amid the purported rise of a global tradition.

Keywords: Globalisation, Traditional, Civilisation, Cultural, Religion.

Introduction

In international interactions, there is an interaction of traditions and, thus, a borrowing and diffusion of traditions amongst nations. This is in itself not unusual. But unusual

and unfortunate is the domination of one tradition over the other. This is an evil of forced acculturation (Kwame 23). This is true of globalisation which has generated a lot of controversy regarding the rise of a global tradition in which Western life is being adopted as the normal way of life. However, in assessing the threat of globalisation on individuals, nations, and the global world, many scholars, opinion leaders, political analysts, etc., have expressed divergent and dissenting views. While they all agree that globalization has a political, economic, traditional, and even religious threat on individuals, nations, and the world, they disagree on nature and extent. While some argue that it is all positive, some believe it has nothing but damaging threats. Yet others see it as both positive and negative (Kwame 16).

Be that as it may, this paper focused on the traditional threat of globalisation to Africa with particular reference to Nigeria. Concerning the nature and extent of the threat of globalisation, this paper is not oblivious of the pressure; instead, it argues that the threats of globalisation have been much more than its threats on Africans. Personal assessment reveals here that, if pressing measures are not taken, perhaps African tradition will soon run into extinction (Aborishade 22). However, this paper has made an effort to strategise on how to stem the tide of traditional atrophy of the African tradition in a rising global tradition.

If the various nuances and interpretations of the term globalisation reveal interaction and integration of the people and nations into a standard system, if the central idea of globalisation is interaction and integration, then the term globalisation is not new to Africa and the world. At various times and in various circumstances, Africa has interacted with the rest of the world. During the historical moments of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, colonialism, post-colonialism, and the present age of current globalisation (Nsibambi 54). Africa's experiences in economics, politics, and tradition have been problematic at these various times and circumstances, particularly her traditional experiences. What are these experiences? What must Africa and Africans do vis-à-vis these experiences? These and more shall engage the interest of this paper.

What is Globalization?

Globalization is defined as an "increasing integration of the world's economies, including the movement toward trade," (Mankiw 55 – 76). The concept 'trade' compares domestic price without trade to the world price in this definition. Fuller also analysed the increase of the traditional value consciousness as a source of the dynamic of tradition variance. Fuller concluded that:

> International marketing and communications systems
> create freeways for the mass import of foreign cultural
> materials – food, drugs, clothing, music, films, books,

> television programs, even values with the concomitant loss of control over societies, symbols, etc. myths. Such anxieties fuel more radical political groups that call for traditional authenticity, preservation of traditional and religious values, and rejection of the traditional foreign antigens. Big Macs become in-your-face symbols of American power – political, economic, and military over weak or hesitant societies and states (23).

The idea of global tradition would not be evenly applied in all African countries where the concepts of State and Nation mean different realities. In most African countries and even in some western countries like Belgium, the concept of nation translates as an ethnic group. Each ethnic group has its traditional specificity that defines the membership in that community.

The Intensification of Globalization

Globalization intensifies global social relations that link distant markets or locations. Robertson refers to globalization as "the compression of the world and intensification of consciousness of the world as whole," (54). Although globalization is "a quantitative shift toward a global economic system that is based on a consolidated global marketplace for production and consumption," its application creates more gaps between cheaper-labour countries and capital-oriented countries (Holm and Sorensen 34 – 45). Labour-economy-oriented countries are rewarded based on low production effort costs and high costs in buying this same product. In different situations, it is believed that it is not lower wages paid to export workers' work that makes labour-oriented economies poor. Instead, the market requirements of globalisation drive these countries into poverty so that any work conditions are much better than the alternative (Holm and Sorensen 8).

The Threats of Globalization

The above discussion is suggestive of a positive correlation that exists between globalization and variance. These variances can be identity argument, traditional variance, or economic variance. While an economic variance may be clearly identifiable and quickly resolved, a perception of traditional deprivation or identity domination may create more profound problems that are not easy to resolve. Lerche suggests that if the human needs and rights issues involved are not adequately addressed, the increase and intensity of social differences associated with globalization are likely to increase in the future (25). In this landscape and under the conditions of a

subject-oriented Western civilization, the negative perception of socioeconomic globalization is seen in African tradition as the latest and most intense consequence of man's collective "drive for power" because of adverse social outcomes and frustration caused by globalization on traditional beliefs of local society (Lerche 25). As an ideological tool, globalization is considered to be a "rather crude tool in the hands of the power centers of the industrialised world to gradually impose (under the disguise of economic liberalism) global hegemony and a neocolonial order upon the rest of the world," (Köchler 45 – 58). This is the consideration that most African nations have regarding globalisation. Therefore, instead of welcoming what may be the positive side of the practice of globalization, the social result and economic disasters that globalization creates make African nations question the goodwill of their practitioners.

Religion and Cultural Structure of Traditional African Society

When Karl Marx (cited by Ritzer) theorised religion as an ideology by referring to it as "the opiate of the people," in my view, he was also referring to the unrevealed side of the rationale of civilization (through the imported and imposed western religious practice) or modernity (Ritzer 53). Modernity/civilisation in which people's actions are motivated by their selfish satisfaction with their egotistical needs. For Marx, "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless condition," (Ritzer 42).Thus, in his class theory and by focusing on the "forces of production, Marx was able to predict historical trends that allowed him to identify where political action could be effective," (Ritzer 73). This conception is also found in the principle of economics that says: rational people think at the margin. This means "people do systematically and purposefully their best to achieve their objectives," (Ritzer 52). This also means that people would take a specific action only if the outcome of this action is of interest to them. One could infer that when exported to African countries, the hidden side of modernism was materialist interests and not only human or social development.

Civilization was just another concept of domination; imposition of incoming new tradition over traditional religious values. In the society studied by Marx, religion was used as an ideology of domination. Also, in the same framework, Ritzer indicates that "Durkheim studies were driven by his concern about the moral health of modern society," (78). However, religion was used as a vehicle of moral and spiritual values in African tradition. Children learn morals and other societal values from an earlier age through traditional religion and another socialisation paradigm. Myths and rituals were used in teaching children what gods accept or forbid. The word 'gods' is used here as a concept, a social force/tool for socialization, an abstract presence of an invisible, most powerful master who looks over everything. Because these 'gods' represent the will of

society, they are not to be used by individuals for worldly purposes. Society knows that these gods can positively or negatively punish and answer prayers. For example, while modern laws determine who is right or wrong in a dispute within a social group, the gods' law is individualized (Guillen 27). Since it is between an individual and a specific god, group members have no clash based on what they had done wrong.

The theory of socialization and social interaction teaches that humans are transformed in their social group through acquiring tradition and other gestures from parents and other social group members and social facts that happen in the environment in which the person lives (Guillen 25). In African tradition, collective socialization is essential in personality formation. While much of our personality is the direct result of our interaction with our parents (enculturation), the group socialization process (rituals and traditional religion in this case) can shape it in particular directions by enforcing specific beliefs and attitudes selectively providing experiences. That is how traditional African society was organised in developing the collective consciousness of the society. The traditional African education system needed to be incorporated into the new education system if the latter was to succeed.

When a formal education system incorporates local traditional values, it creates successful socialization that results in uniformity. Group members will develop the same social consciousness and adopt an acceptable uniform social etiquette. However, when an incoming culture (in this case, civilisation/modernism) seeks to replace the existing traditional value totally, it causes social frustration. It generates the maladjustment of group members to this new system, leading to the 'demise' of traditional society (Guillen 29). New behaviors that meet the new traditional values are persuasively created as they collide with the existing values. Like a volcano, this confrontational situation steers and spirals social variances. If the African system of modernity does not include its traditional system of socialization, civilization as we know it will always be a failure.

Strategies for Stemming the Tide of Traditional Atrophy of the African Tradition

A brief look at the history of African tradition as a continent would undoubtedly reveal that the entire region is rapidly undergoing a rudimentary phase of the Traditional Revolution. Indeed, this revolution is both positive and negative. Positive because some of the hitherto sacrosanct traditional practices depict nothing but irrational worldviews and belief systems, outdated customs and practices constitute a bane to the development of the populace in the region and are fast becoming unattractive and phasing out. It has indeed brought about a traditional renaissance. Negative, on the other hand, because our age-long-cherished traditions and valuable customs are rapidly

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going into extinction. If we lose what defines us in this so-called global integration (globalization), we are lost as a people and continent. It is already happening and has generated a crisis of identity amongst Africans and Nigerians.

As a response to this, scholars have written volumes stating and defending what defines us as a people. Senghor's Negritude, J. Nyerere's Ujamaa, and Izu Marcel Onyeocha's communalism, to mention a few are such efforts. It can be told with utmost guarantee and belief that appreciable progress has not been made because, as the saying goes, 'prevention is better than cure. When it is successfully restored, what defines Africans as a people will be seen and known by the world. That will save fellow Africans from the stress of searching for and defending their identity. How do we achieve this, the restoration of the indigenous/local tradition? This is the focus of this section of the paper. No doubt, Africa indeed needs a traditional renaissance. The contact of the Africans with the west through colonialism and globalization has shown several damaging threats. It is much more in magnitude than the benefit; the African people would have got out of such contacts. The swallowing up of African tradition by the western tradition has generated the erosion of cherished values and virtues of life amongst all Africans. George Ekwuru calls this the evil of forced acculturation (14).

Usually, in a standard wheel of traditional evolution, a gradual process of traditional mutual borrowing occurs when two traditions come into intensive contact. Each of the two traditions, consciously or unconsciously, tends to take something from the other. But in a case where one of the two traditions demonstrates a domineering posture over the other, the weaker one is lured into an extensive act of traditional borrowing due to its highly developed techniques and media of expression. This traditional borrowing process in the dynamic process of inter-traditional contact is called acculturation. In a normal process of traditional evolution, acculturation is considered an essential dynamic medium for cross-traditional diffusion and development. But in a situation in which the process of acculturation is forcefully brought upon society – a situation in which a highly developed society imposes some aspects of its tradition on the other, thereby forcing it to derail from its unique track of traditional civilization, leads to a situation of traditional disorder.

This is presently the African experience. Through heavy and sophisticated technologies expressed, for instance, in communication technologies of the internet, pornography, and other media advertisement, etc., western tradition has come heavily on African tradition, and the latter is ferociously gulping everything without caution. There is, therefore, an urgent need for a traditional appraisal of the African experience. Be that as it may, in providing the strategies for this traditional renaissance, the role of philosophy cannot be overemphasised. We shall bring to bear the philosophical tools of criticism and analysis as we chart the strategies for the much-needed traditional

renaissance that will save the cherished traditional heritage from extinction. However, for this to succeed, efforts should be made to remove inevitable 'cobwebs' in the traditional practices in African societies for a long time. Indeed, not all the traditional practices are worth keeping in this traditional evolution. There are aspects of the African tradition that have constituted a bane to the development of society and personality. There is no gainsaying that the primary goal of modern African societies is that of development.

According to Bodunrin, the key to realising this goal "in the contemporary world is science and technology," (34). Science and technology are defined by attitudes of the mind such as "freedom of enquiry, openness to criticism, a general type of skepticism and fallibilism and non-veneration of authorities," (Bodunrin 37). Hence, for Africa to develop, there is the need to jettison or modify aspects of traditional religion that impede the development of these attitudes. Part of the weakness of the traditional African religion is that it is authoritarian. As Wiredu observes, being authoritarian does not place much premium on curiosity in those of tender age or independence of thought in those of more many years (24).The traditional religion lacks the habit of exactness and rigor in thinking, the pursuit of systematic coherence, and the experimental approach (Wiredu 32). The absence of these qualities in Africa is mainly responsible for her scientific and technological backwardness compared to her western counterparts.

Wiredu further illustrates this point well by using the examples of a typical African mechanic and the traditional African practice of pharmacology. In these examples, he tries to establish the lack of a tradition of logical precision and accuracy, an essential prerequisite for scientific, technological advancement. The traditional African way of doing things stands as an impediment to development in Africa and hinders people's ability to benefit fully from technological advancement. Besides, the dogmatic acceptance of beliefs about the nature of reality, man, and society, which characterised many primitive traditions, also negates the cultivation of an attitude of rational and consistent inquiry requisite for the scientific enterprise. A good foundation in philosophy and, more specifically, logic is needed in at least our secondary and post-secondary school curriculum to rectify this. This would undoubtedly facilitate the cultivation of a spirit of rational investigation, rigor in thinking, and the tradition of logical precision necessary for development.

Another deficiency is that the traditional African religion is oral. As a result, it does not give much room for developing the features of the scientific mind already mentioned. This is how Hountondji puts it:

> Oral tradition favours the consolidation of knowledge into the dogmatic, intangible system. It is dominated by the fear of forgetting, of memory lapses, since her memory is left on its resources bereft of external or material support. This forces people to hoard their memory jealously, recall them constantly, repeat them continually, and heap them up in a pearl of global wisdom, simultaneously present, always ready to be applied, and perpetually available. In these conditions, the mind is too preoccupied with preserving knowledge to find the freedom to criticize it (89).

The above mentioned are some of the 'cobwebs' to be cleared from the traditional African religion to enable African people to come out of traditional ridicule, authenticate their humanity in the committee of nations, and contribute meaningfully to the global quest for development. On the one hand, we have seen what the critical and analytic tradition of philosophy can do about unattractive traditional practices. Subsequently, the strategies of traditional selectiveness and alignment can be recommended, and a common language can be promoted as the national language in the case of Nigeria, which is the immediate informational environment in the analysis of this paper.

Every society is known for and defined by a particular tradition or traditional practices. Tradition is not a universal concept. Tradition is society/geographically-based and, at the same time, dynamic. The destruction of a tradition destroys the society that such religion defines. No tradition can claim absolute sufficiency. There is something every tradition lacks but which it needs. Thus, the practice of traditional borrowing between and among traditions. However, in the process of traditional borrowing, there is a need for each society to have the proper traditional appetite guided by the rational needs of the society per time. The traditional needs of societies differ. Therefore, the need for societies to cultivate the proper appetite. This will help them rationally select the right traditions that conduce to their destinies and aspirations in traditional diffusions and borrowing. In the contact of the Africans with the west, not all their ways of life are traditionally harmless. For instance, traditionally, Africa cherishes and values communalism, an extended family system, respect for elders, purity, and modesty in dressing without revealing one's sensitive body parts (especially the women). Traditional Africa abhors the idea of unwed mothers, pre-marital sex, and public romance either by a married couple or unmarried partners, the phenomenon of foster homes, and the presence of street children. And these are virtues that are responsible

for moral decorum and decency in traditional African society and vices responsible for moral degeneration in the African society.

African society abhors and frowns at (with regards to those mentioned above), is instead what obtains as a normal way of life in the west? Sadly enough, these are fast becoming a way of life amongst Africans. In contact with the west, Africans have failed as a people to rationally select only the aspects of western tradition that can complement their society's quest for development. As it is observed, Africans have instead fallen victims to the irrational consummation of all of western tradition. The African society is fast running into traditional extinction if the tide is not checked.

Conclusion

A tradition denotes individual identity as it refers to a specific psychological environment (ethnicity is a western way to identify geographic location). In this way, the socialization process is unique and fits a group of persons who accept a well-defined interactionism process. The essentially western definition of traditions identifies a cultural transformation that is generated by the clash of traditions. The process of globalization, for example, allows two different traditions to either coexist or create a dynamic or transformation into a new and third type of tradition, one to be absorbed by the other. In its static state, tradition describes the identity of a defined social group.

The dynamicity state of tradition simply indicates a cohabitation/coexistence of two different traditions. This coexistence does not translate to either identity in this case. It is an acculturation of identity. Consideration is not shared by Bayart, who argues that tradition is static and not dynamic (7). People would keep or do not change their identity. With this consideration, Bayart supports the idea of mono-tradition. Although the identification is a product of tradition, the tradition of a human being is not to confuse with a personal identity that defines each individual as unique.

However, the idea of a mono-tradition or a global society would not help resolve social conflicts. "It is not surprising therefore that theories of international relations and conflict that focus on material concern or scarcity, which would denote a unique rationale in mediation process. Will be less sympathetic to the uses of tradition than will cognitivist theories of international relations or conflict," (Avruch 17). The traditional African conflict has to be resolved from a traditional African perspective and not from the imposition of the global tradition of globalization. A traditional ethic approach to westernisation would be more concerned with the rationale of scarcity. In

contrast, an approach of traditional relativism would reflect on "individual experience from which tradition is a derivative" of disputing/conflicting perception.

At this point, the positivism and idealistivism of economic globalization theory would less define the traditional globalization unless it translates the idea of imposition and colonization like in the North-South debate. In this debate, the North supposedly possesses all solutions to all social conflicts in the Southern hemisphere (the debate between modernism and traditionalism, which results in the westernisation of traditional culture). The concept of modernity is an obvious example used to discount any traditional meaning attached to the African production system. Modernity, in this case, is the same as "an evolutionist consideration that stressed the universal character of a single tradition, which different societies arrayed from savage to civilised," (Bayart 7).

On the contrary, however, I know a social group in Congo where a husband of a wife that is the most solicited by other men is proud of the choice he made on his wife since these solicitations are indications of his wife's beauty. With the arrival of missionaries, these solicitations were classified as sins and therefore became social offenses and bear not only a moral condemnation but also a court sentence. The "civilization mission" did not understand the inside satisfaction that both spouses get from the practice that it had just emptied. The traditional value of the practice was a positive factor in marriage stability that should have been a crucial element of traditional consideration of this social group by the missionary.

The need for a traditional renaissance of the African experience is a product of the current traditional evolution engendered by the traditional contacts of Africans with the west in historical moments of colonialism and globalization. This traditional contract has brought about forced acculturation that has left the rich traditional heritage of Africa in a precarious condition of imminent extinction. The need to have the proper traditional appetite will help every African select the correct tradition that conduces to their destiny as a people. The practice of traditional adaptation and alignment and the development and promotion of a common language are some of such strategies that will help in the right direction. However, it is not claimed that these are the only ways to achieve the quest for the true traditional renaissance.

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THE IMPACT OF MISSIONARY HISTORIOGRAPHY ON THE FORMATION AND GROWTH OF AFRICAN INDIGENOUS CHURCHES IN NIGERIA

BY

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Abstract

Theology in Africa is forever in motion. hence taking stock of theological issues and trends in the growth and development of Christianity, as a human activity, involves much more than simply believing certain propositions about matters of fact, such as the reasons for the emergence of African indigenous churches, which has turned a lethal for self-exoneration amidst the much problems facing Nigeria and the African continent at large. This study presents an evaluation of the reasons for the emergence of African indigenous churches in Nigeria. Using the historical method, the paper identified the desire to emancipate the church from imperialistic tendencies, the desire to indigenize Christianity, the role of charismatic leaders and evangelism: economic and religious revivals, educational reasons many respectable Nigerians and theologians alike who trace almost every problem in Nigeria to western missionaries and colonial masters have done well by exploring the root of the Nigeria's problem. However, their view portrays a veritable case of a simple self-exoneration taken too far. It is the type of self-exoneration that has badly stunted the progress of Nigeria as a country.

Introduction

Africa's theology is always evolving. Therefore, taking stock of theological issues and trends in the growth and development of Christianity requires much more than merely accepting certain claims about the truth, such as the causes of the emergence of African indigenous churches, which have become a lethal tool for self-

exoneration in the midst of the numerous issues Nigeria and the African continent as a whole are facing.

It is historical reality that colonial apparatus was used to evangelise Africa. Therefore, whether the European colonisers of Africa were driven by greed or profit, as maintained by Marxists, or were the natural flowering of humanitarianism, philanthropy, and evangelical piety, as claimed by those who preach the gospel of the white man's burden (Afigbo, 1975), or whether it came to do all, including colonialism, commerce, and Christianity—often referred to as the three C's—it will be tantamount to poor historical thinking to erase the numerous and comprehensive achievements of the missionary enterprise because of human short-comings and failures.

To claim that Christianity has evolved into the religion of civilisation and progress is not an overstatement. However, despite Christianity's widespread impact in Nigeria, Nigerian Christians (both educated and uneducated) have refused to forget the country's history of colonisation and missionary endeavor. They continue to uphold the Westernised version of Christianity, living under the influence of previous experiences and beliefs that the West forced on them via its justifications, theories, and explanations. As a result, they have been assigning blame in an effort to absolve themselves of the wickedness that is wreaking havoc on the African continent in general and Nigeria in particular.

It is well known that both Christianity and colonialism denied Africans the freedom to develop their religious and cultural identities and to express themselves, putting them under a condition of siege that is justified by concepts of cultural assimilation (Deezia, 2017). The colonial endeavor gave the missionary enterprise some kind of institutional and ethical legitimacy. As a result, there were many overlaps between the two initiatives, with the civilizing objective being the most notable. There is no question that the missionaries' dictatorship and haughtiness persisted despite the local congregation's complaints. The missionaries were unconcerned with the people's melancholy and discontent. In light of this, Mitchell argues that:

> What motivated the Aladura leaders and their followers was
> a desire to reform existing mission protestant Christianity
> and make it more relevant to the needs of the daily African
> life (Mitchell, 1966:85).

African indigenous churches did not appear in a historical or social vacuum. According to Ayegboyin and Ishola (2013), they were influenced by a variety of

spiritual, cultural, socioeconomic, political, and contextual elements. What has changed, however, when one considers the intensity of the fight and effort to indigenize Christianity? Are the aforementioned arguments still valid today? How much longer will Africans assign blame for their problems? Are Christian leaders today not victims of what they dislodge in the colonial era, thus causing more harm than the western missionaries?

Thus, in addition to exposing the scapegoat mentality among African Christians, this paper also provided a critical analysis of the causes behind the emergence of African indigenous churches in Nigeria.

What is African Indigenous Churches (AICs)?

The name African Indigenous Churches (AICs) is a catch-all phrase for a variety of movements that are difficult to categorize with just one word (Turner 1967). However, Turner (1967) refers to the African Indigenous Churches as those Churches that were founded in Africa, by Africans and primarily for Africans and which lack the substantial association with Western Christianity". It denotes the churches which emerged from within the mission-churches, beginning from the 1920s. They are also called: Indigenous Christian Movement, Aladura, and African Instituted Churches or African independent churches etc. Daneel gave a sociological oriented definition when he says:

> An AICs is a new movement arising from the interaction between a tribal community and its religion on one hand, and a heterogeneous foreign culture intruding with its (Christian) religion on the other … The AICs to some extent, diverged from both the Christian tradition and the African religious tradition and renewed, modified, and synthesized the two different religio-cultural traditions into a new religious system (Daneel, 1987:105).

These churches are believed to be independent in organizations, leadership, and somewhat self-supporting, and self-financing.

Reasons for the Emergence of African Indigenous Churches: A Critical Evaluation

The Christian and missionary presence in Africa predates the colonial occupation of the continent for nearly a century (Han, 2013). However, the colonial period, which may be traced from 1884, the year of the Berlin conference, until 1990,

"the year of Africa," essentially coincided with the astonishing phenomena of church expansion with a significant inflow of western missionaries in Africa (Hastings, 1979).

In other words, the practice of establishing overseas missions started in earnest in the eighteenth century, when religious revivals in Europe became increasingly popular with the general public. European evangelicals paid close attention to Africa as a location for repatriation and proselytisation, particularly following the abolition of slavery in England and the growing support for the abolishment of the slave trade (Harris, 1972). This European endeavor, which came from individuals whose cultures traditionally denigrated all things African, had a significant influence not just on Africans but also on attitudes and relationships between blacks and whites across the globe.

African culture did not find a home under colonialism. African cultures were frequently misunderstood by Western missionaries, who also distanced them from the gospel presented in European clothing. The "colonizers" were unaware that African culture had its own philosophy and values, which shaped how Africans lived. As a result, the missionaries' strategy for converting Africans to Christianity was focused on force (Akintunde, 2015). To be a "proper" Christian, Africans had to surrender all of their religious convictions. They saw everything about Africa as being demonic, paganic, and heathen. Worse yet, Africans were denied chances for leadership in Christianity while the missionaries maligned the majority of African beliefs and traditions.

Missionaries were driven to alter local institutions and conduct because they had a strong confidence in their own self-righteousness and the depravity of Africans. They also considered themselves as Christian agents of civilisation. This suggested that new values, objectives, and behavioral patterns needed to be taught to Africans. As a result, the missionary schools grew to dominate the mission's operations. The African culture and philosophy were either overlooked or misrepresented in the educational curriculum, which placed more emphasis on European history, culture, and philosophy. Ezna Chitando claims that this is the case:

> The demonization of most African beliefs and practices by the missionaries also encouraged Africans to seek alternative havens of belonging. Lack of leadership opportunities, personal ambitions, theological controversies and other factors resulted in the rapid multiplication of AICs (Chitando, 2004:117).

Chitando's submission is apt for other countries generally, and Nigeria in particular, that is, what operates in southern part of Africa, is relevant to the Nigerian situation. In some mainline churches in South Africa. Africans experienced racism, while many white Christians discriminated against blacks, and treated them as junior brother or sisters (Chitando, 2004). As a result of this experiences, the AICs broke away from the mainline churches and develop a theology cooked in an African pot (Upong, 1984), which takes into cognizance the African culture and practices. Hence, making theology more intelligible to African Christian and help them feel at home in their new faith.

Therefore, many African indigenous churches grew out of response to the failure of missionaries to relate Christianity to the Traditional Africans. In Nigeria, this emergence was part of African consciousness of their Africanness, part of their rejection of feeding African purely Europeanized Christianity. Hence, in 1888 the Native Baptist Church seceded in Lagos from the American Southern Baptist Mission (Barret, 1970). This was later followed by many more and much larger schisms such as the United Native African Church in 1891 from Anglican Church, the Cherubim and Seraphim in 1925, the Church of the Lord (Aladura) in 1930, and Christ Apostolic Church in 1931 etc. To be more specific, other factors responsible for the emergence of African indigenous churches includes:

1. **The Desire to Emancipate the Church from Imperialistic Tendencies:** The missionary support for colonialism was one of the key factors that brought about this nationalistic quest. The missionary leaders wittingly or unwittingly cooperated with their friends who were government agents, and by implication, become tools of colonialism and imperialism (Nwachukwu, 2015). Many of the Ethiopian types of indigenous and other separatist movements emerged when the fight for political independence among African nations was at its peak. The Ethiopian church movement in Nigeria was therefore the struggle for national identity and political independence.

However, considering the circumstances that prevailed at that time, as noted by Carl Gustavason, these missionaries left the pump and power of the mother church far behind and came, usually dressed in the most humble garments, relying only on their power of human personality and the word of God (Gustavson, 1995). He further argued that for anybody to view the missionary work in nineteenth century Africa and Nigeria in particular from only economic and colonial perspective is to under-value the powers of ideas:

> To assume that the religious expressions of the age of discoveries were purely a cloak for other purpose is to misunderstand the age completely…There remains the mood of an age that believed that salvation of the soul was all-important. It drew many thousands devout men to the fat corners of their earth, into the wilderness, and among savage tribes at extreme self-sacrifice and danger (Gustavson, 1995:49).

In other words, the ability of missionaries to do their work without the aid of colonial governments was utterly impossible. It was prudent for missionaries to work with colonial governments as little as possible to accomplish their goals. Charles Ryan disagreed with Ayandele's radical viewpoint in this regard when he described the missionary endeavor:

> …while admitting that missionaries were consciously or unconsciously, agents of cultural change, it must also be pointed out that they were not the only, or always the principal agents of those changes. Ayandele "Three C's-Christianity, Comers and Colonization-should not be seen as a simple package brought by the "white man" as if the white man race should be held jointly responsible for everything done by every white man that ever came to Nigeria. No doubt, some came to exploit and control, but generalization in this case, would seem to be grossly inaccurate. The traders, colonizers and missionaries frequently cooperated with each other and sometimes had dual roles but the separation of these roles and the motivation behind them, are important, for valid history (Ryan, 1987:211).

Any academic who dismisses the good effects of missionary work in Africa and Nigeria in particular, a foundation that they (Africans and Nigerians alike) have failed to build upon, would be engaging in intellectual dishonesty, regardless of the severity of their criticism.

2. **The Desire to indigenize Christianity:** In the church, there was a strong desire to liberate Africa from foreign rule. This basically resulted from the perception that the missionaries failed to comprehend or appreciate the elements that were fundamental to the African religious experience. The missionaries' unbiblical and racist actions have made the Africans long for a more pristine version of

Christianity that would please them both physically and spiritually. Therefore, it was necessary to add certain African characteristics, such as African music, dancing, utilising the local drums, and some other forms, in order to lessen the strangeness of Christianity to Africans (Deezia, 2020).

In other words, the missionaries believed that the gospel could not adequately be communicated in the native African tongues. Western-style greetings, congregational singing, reading of the Ten Commandments, prayers, scripture reading, sermon, singing, the Lord's Supper, offering, prayer, and finally the blessing made up the worship service. Because this methodical structure of worship and prayers remained constant, it was only relevant and necessary for those who had received a letter from the church.

In all religious activities and aspirations, according to Africans, four characteristics stand out: healing, prophecy, exorcism, and self-expression. These characteristics were conspicuously missing from churches created by missions (Nwachukwu, 2015). In the liturgical context of the mission-founded churches, the individual self-expression did not exist, and as a result, the individual was lost in the streams of communication and response since the churches did not pay attention to personal needs, desires, and problems. The African was unable to handle this. In African religion, the individual is at the core, and when that was gone, nothing was left. The churches that are thriving in Africa are those who acknowledge that this condition has persisted even now, according to Nwachukwu.

Though African indigenous churches have been able to distinguish between the gospel as a universal gift and the gospel dressed up in western garb, the question is how effectively such a discovery has enhanced the overall development of Christianity and the Nigerian society at large. It is evident that some Nigerian Christians even cause more harm than the European missionaries who were once denounced and asked to leave. For instance, worship tended to be more academic and didactic. In reality, maintaining church discipline and orderliness was mostly accomplished via worship, unlike today's churches, where nudity and mischief are shown.

Again, pastors and church leaders sought abilities from diviners in the name of prophecy, healing, and miracles, etc., in order to impress churchgoers, which resulted in cultic syncretism. Members consult diviners in addition to the church authorities to learn the meaning behind their experiences, deeds, and occurrences. In truth, some of the miracles are faked to attract more churchgoers. In other words, churches in Nigeria now fight fiercely not to win souls or convert people to Christ, but to recruit members so that they may brag about the revenue raised on worship days.

Because of popular culture, several of these congregations now go to theaters for entertainment or leisure. The preaching of virtue is progressively giving way to the preaching of prosperity. The origins of the money brought to church are not a point of contention between pastors and church officials. In this opinion, Peter Alawa bemoaned the following:

> In Nigeria, nobody asks the sources of one's wealth, if one has money the society honors the person and he/she becomes popular. Goodness involves discipline, hard work and process. But evil does not involve discipline, hard work and process but short-cut. (Alawa, 2015:52).

Young graduates from universities and polytechnics who were unable to find employment turned to flouting their own ministry by any means available as a consequence of this short-cut mentality and the search for wait and take solutions. This degree of lethargy demonstrates why Nigerians prefer to focus on the errors of European missionaries than to advance. Nigerians don't want to suffer, but they also want income without having to work hard, and it looks like church business is the simplest solution. As a result, they promote the gospel via commerce. They hire prayer warriors, provide wealth, blessings, and divine favor for sale or lease. The church is becoming a commodity in the market square as a result of this perilous awakening. As Iheanachor puts it:

> Today, most of the churches measures success in life in terms of wealth, prestige, and power, three key principles of stratification and social mobility in secular society. No wonder, in the churches, issues that concern with the rich resound high, while that of the poor is un- acknowledge or at best handled lackadaisically (Iheanachor, 2008:180)

In order to get them to donate money to the church, churches or church leaders and pastors give special consideration to the majority of Nigerian treasury looters and robbers by giving them reserved seats at the front and special recognition. This turns churches or church leaders and pastors into corporate beggars.

3. **The Role of Charismatic Leaders and Evangelism:** Another factor which stimulated the rise and growth of African indigenous churches, was the emergence of Charismatic Leaders like the ministry of William Wade Harris in Ghana and Ivory Coast, Simon Kimbangu in Zaire, Congo and Angola, Garrick Braid in the Niger Delta (Nigeria), John Appiah, Dyigbo, and Dawono etc. was a clear prove that God can reveal Himself to whoever he please, irrespective of your color, race,

and educational background. Hence, these leaders opted out of the mainline churches base on the claim that they received revelation from God.

However, the majority of the founders of these churches and top officials, self-ordained themselves as "Alpha" and "Omega;" they are held up as idols and revered as deities. Some of the leaders have given themselves titles, titles, and powers that are not supported by the Bible, such as G.O., Paa-pa, Daddy, Mummy G, Mummy X, and my Lord. They are hard to get to, and when they leave, they are accompanied by bodyguards and military men. As a result, people suffered the consequences of what the European missionaries had uprooted and denounced throughout the colonial period. According to this viewpoint, Onyenze says;

> These 'stomach-led ministers' who are mainly young graduates are known for their hoity-toity and flamboyant nature and big names as Reverend Doctor, Reverend Apostle, Bishop, Arch Bishop, Reverend Evangelist, Senior Prophet, Senior Apostle, Man of God, Prophet of God, Servant of God, Woman of God, General Overseer and so on… they are unmindful of heaven, God's righteousness and moral rectitude which are the hallmarks of Christian vocation. Their emphasis is on money, prosperity, and breakthrough, financial success and prophesies (Onyenze, 2017:133).

They often place more emphasis on material things than on God, which has historically had catastrophic results. Even pastors and church leaders commit suicide as a result of financial pressure. Instead of focusing on the saving word of God, they fight for promotions or request transfers to more lucrative positions. Christianity has lost the virtue of real service and discipleship because every minister aspires to be the General Overseer (G.O.) of his own congregation, where he is answerable to no one. Additionally, this has contributed to the growth of churches in Nigeria.

4. **Economic and Religious Revivals:** According to Aristotle's idea, inequality, especially the division of political and economic power, is the root of all revolutions. Economic suffering is the primary context from which movements arise. As a result, some of the indigenous African churches served as social protests against the colonial forces' plunder of tribe lands and other resources. Some people also think that founding a church is a good idea from an economic standpoint. Therefore, the missionaries were unable to monitor the growing religious movements that included administrative and consolidative functions as

these vivacious African revivalists swept the continent's territories and established native churches.

Despite any shortcomings, colonial authority had a good overall impact on Africa's natural resources and helped close the economic gap between the continent and the West. It also helped Africa flourish intellectually and materially. Igwe claims:

> Colonialism brought enlightenment where there was ignorance such that most if not all of the resources we lay claims to-all the oil, uranium; bauxite, etc became wealth because the white man identified them and explained their usefulness to Africans. These resources are still in abundance in Africa and much of these were never explored all through colonial rule. Yet Africa, even in the face of the examples of finished goods which the white man has presented as end products of these raw materials, is yet to either replicate any or evolve her own standard entirely different from the standard invented by the Whiteman if only to show the stuff she is made of (Igwe, 2012:49).

Without colonial exploration, Africa's riches would have remained untapped, necessitating additional development efforts on the part of Africans.

5. **Educational Reasons:** Knowledge, they said, is power, this implies the power to interpret and master One's world. Education for the Africans should indeed equip them with knowledge and skills to master their own environment and utilize the fruit of modern civilization to fulfil themselves as human beings. However, the kind of education that the Europeans brought did not accomplish this for the Africans. The duality in people's standing was brought about by the system, which was based on inequity. As the gap between the affluent and the poor widens, it is easy to see how individualism and materialism are remnants of colonial schooling, as opposed to the indigenous system's emphasis on rural areas and rural life. According to Rodney (1969), colonial schooling had an adverse impact on all Africans' sensibility and way of thinking. It gave them strange complexes that made them less African and more disconnected from their surroundings' demands.

The issue of achievement and opportunity inequality, student loan debt, and the perception of failure as seen today, however, cannot be directly attributed to white missionaries and colonial overlords. The missionaries were interested in imparting literacy. They created alphabet sheets, word lists, and grammars. Later, they produced whole dictionaries, textbooks, and manual translations of the entire old and new

testaments. Therefore, it is indisputable that these individuals provide the educational basis for Africans to flourish and create their continent. Africa has not only stagnated since the Europeans departed, but things have become worse than during the colonial period.

Universities in particular, which serve as the engine for progress in contemporary industrialized nations, have been reduced to intellectual cemeteries where ignorant ignoramuses celebrate the death of the mind (Odey, 2014). Therefore, if cheating on exams is accepted as the standard and the West African Examination Council (WAEC) has particular facilities where cheating is encouraged, we should hold the white missionaries and colonial rulers accountable. We should also place the blame on the white missionaries for the fact that recruitment in the educational system is now based on tribe, religion, and political affiliations; that lecturers now collect bribes (sorting), either in kind or in cash; that vice chancellors are now wealthier than the universities; and that directors, deans, and head of departments in Nigeria's educational system are now wealthier than the various parastatals they are leading. The problem is that none of the leaders who were meant to promote interests that go beyond a narrowly personal interest to goals that would lead to political stability, economic prosperity, cultural synthesis, and religious tolerance have succeeded.

Along with the mission churches, the white missionaries founded free schools. Today, some of these churches have founded colleges in an effort to not only combat illiteracy but also to generate jobs and provide admittance to those who choose to enroll. The issue is, how many of the impoverished churchgoers could really afford to send their kids to the schools that they all worked so hard to create via their offerings, tithes, and seed-sowing as churchgoers. Only students from wealthy families are allowed to attend Nigeria's most costly schools, which were formerly the last hope of the poor people.

Some Reflections: Towards the Way Forward

Many respectable Nigerians and theologians who attribute almost all of Nigeria's problems on Western missionaries and colonial overlords have succeeded in identifying the source of the country's issues. However, their perspective paints a clear picture of a straightforward self-exoneration gone too far (Odey, 2014). It is the kind of self-exoneration that has severely impeded Nigeria's growth as a nation. A sick person who refuses to acknowledge his illness is simply doomed to death.

In other words, should the missionaries also have responsibility if a Catholic does not see a member of the Anglican, Methodist, or other Pentecostal churches as a

brother or sister in the Lord? If the preacher of the word of God is teaching from the Bible, especially against all acts of injustice committed against the poor and the less fortunate by the powerful and wealthy, but at the same time demands that the poor who come to the church to cry out for help fill out forms with money before they can see the pastor, pay for prayers, sow sacrificial seed, and most importantly pay tithe and make endless offertory collections for the ostensible upkeep of the church. Therefore, the church will have to hold the Whiteman accountable for the true gospel's betrayal? Should we also hold white man responsible for Nigerian pastors being accused of raping church members, being charged with corruption, and being involved in murder cases?

Whether the white missionaries and colonial rulers were correct or incorrect, it is an escape strategy to place all the responsibility on them, according to the opposite side of the tale. Odey noted that the reason Nigerians are having such a difficult time is because they have not been able to manage and take advantage of the opportunities created by the impact of the presence of missionaries in Nigeria and the union of the North and South, just as they have not been able to manage the enormous wealth that God has given them. If they insist on holding the missionaries and the colonial accountable when Muslims slaughter their fellow Nigerians in Maiduguri, Kaduna, Bauchi, Gombe, Jos, Kano, Zamfara etc., will it also be convenient for Nigerians to hold the white man accountable for the devastating wars between the neighbouring communities of Umeleri and Aguleri, between the Jukuns and Tivs, between the Mokakeke and the Ife, between the Ijo and Itsekiri, between the Ogoni and Okrika etc? The irony of all these battles, according to Odey, is that they are not between the North and the South, which the gods of amalgamation were meant to have clubbed together against their will. They are situated between individuals who, ordinarily, ought to serve as their brothers' keepers.

Odey (2014) added that the Whiteman ventured out to explore the land, the sea, and space when he thought that his own environment was insufficient for him. That's what research is. He ultimately owned and ruled the whole planet. He created a device to warm himself up when he thought that the weather was unfriendly against him since it was too chilly. He created a device to cool himself down when he thought the temperature was too hot for him. The Whiteman developed the vehicle to shorten and simplify travel, the airplane to ease traffic congestion in densely populated areas, and many other innovations. As a result, the Whiteman views necessity as an advantage, a springboard, or a catalyst that motivates them to work to fulfil God's directive that humans should conquer the world and then modify it to their liking. Nigeria, on the other hand, is the opposite. Following the departure of the British, the Nigerian authorities began the true devastation of the populace and the nation.

It is true that slavery, missionary work, and colonialism all wreaked havoc on Africa. However, a lot of people over the globe have endured similar hardships and have managed to get up from the ruins of their sad pasts. As a result, a large portion of Africans have persisted in seeking scapegoats to blame for their problems in an effort to justify their debilitating backwardness. Such an argument, in Oyebola's opinion, is a sham since if our history had been as stable as other races', it would have been impermeable (Oyebola, 1982). In this respect, the paper made the case that the issue facing Nigeria and Africa as a whole is not the church or the specific political systems run by various nations, but rather the individuals who are in charge of these systems as well as those who are subject to them. It depends on the kind of individuals who use them and the information and insight they provide J. Krishnamurti writes:

> The individual is of first importance, not the system and as long as the individual does not understand the total process of himself, no system whether of the left or of the right can bring order in the world (Krishnamurti, 1978:16).

In other words, a church's viability relies on the kind of pastors and spiritual leaders overseeing it. Therefore, the individual is the issue, not the church. Nigeria's political system is insecure and unstable because of the kind of people that govern it, their knowledge or mentality, their ideals, and other factors. Ignorant individuals often equate to an ignorant system. In a similar vein, corrupt individuals result in a corrupt system, not the other way around (Okolo, 1993). The tight relationship between knowledge and behavior, which philosophers often emphasize, makes religio-political education in Africa and Nigeria in particular a top priority. Deezia (2018) noted that in order to act better—as Socrates taught thousands of years ago—people must know better. If we want equitable and stable societies to emerge from Africa, Africans—like everyone else—must understand and uphold such fundamentals as the nature of the common good, how it differs from private good, and other related concepts like the natures of society, among others.

Concluding Remarks

The issue is not that Nigeria has endured greater hardship than any other nation in the world due to the slave trade, colonial occupation, and missionary work, which have led to absolute dependence and underdevelopment. However, Nigerians' refusal to think is the issue. They give counting the "white man mistakes" greater emphasis. In other words, they put the errors of the past into constant battle, wasting prime chances to solve the issues of the present and endangering the future. The reason Nigerians make excuses is not because they have failed, but rather that they have

resisted progress and national development in the wake of decades of colonialism and missionary endeavor. The human spirit is said to be durable. Nigeria may once again become great via effort, drive, a change in perspective on values, advancement of the human race, and production.

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COMMON GOOD AS A PANACEA FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: AN ETHICAL EVALUATION

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Abstract

The concept of common good is crucial and pivotal for good governance and national development. A System of government is considered to be good when attention is given to provide amenities that are shared and beneficial for all or most members of a given society. Such governance must be legitimate, participatory, transparent and accountable, operate by the rule of law, efficient and effective in the use of resources, responsive to the needs of the people and promote equity and equality. In Nigeria, years of economic exploitation, mal-development and bad governance have continued to fan the embers of conflict and crisis in the country. To reverse this trend of bad governance and poor development, Nigerian Political Leaders must adhere to the core principle of "common good" which is achievable through citizenship, collective action and active participation to improve the well-being of the citizens in the country. This study contends that an application of the common good principle or philosophy can serve as a panacea for good governance and national development in Nigeria. The work posits that good governance, manifesting in areas of rule of law, transparency, accountability and citizens participation, among other things, are *sine qua non* for national peace and development.

Key Words: Common Good, Good Governance, National Development

Introduction

In modern day governance globally, the issue of good governance has assumed the front burner as an indispensable requirement for social, economic and political development; yet, good governance continues to elude the citizens and has become a big challenge to most countries, including Nigeria. Democratic governance with the underlying emphasis on the activation of the citizenry to realize the 'common good' has not taken root in the popular consciousness of Nigerians. Everyone appears to be for himself in Nigeria, it would seem that democracy has increased the culture of impunity in some high ranking government officials while political differences have fueled some of the violence that have erupted. Generally, governance, according to the World Bank (1989) is the exercise of political power in the management of a nation's affairs. This definition implies that governance encompasses the state's institutional and cultural arrangements, decision-making processes, implementation capacity, and the relationship between the governing apparatus and the governed. By governance therefore, it means the manner in which power is exercised by governments in the management and distribution of a country's social and economic resources.

The nature and manner of this distribution makes governance a bad or a good one it is significant to note however, that good governance, as a norm, cannot make sense unless it is predicated on the presupposition that the experience and knowledge of bad governance is possible and real (Ogundiya, 2010). This suggests that governance can be good or bad depending on the method of the management of a country's social and economic resources. In a democratic state, election plays wider roles such as, instruments of accountability, mobilization of the people and promotion of legitimacy among other functions. In short, credible elections produce security, development and political stability.

It is not an overstatement to contend that, the return of the country to electoral democracy in 1999 has not made significant impact on the economic, political and social well-being of the people. Despite all economic and social policies that have been implemented by successive administrators, Nigeria has remained laggard in economic, political and social developments. Subsequently, political instability, abject poverty, acute youth unemployment, heightened crime rate, poor health prospects and widespread malnourishment have been the main features of Nigeria's political economy (Ogundiya, 2010). The Nigerian state is a victim of brazen corruption, bad governance, cyclical legitimacy crisis, political instability, disregard for due process and the rule of law and abuse of electoral processes. All these retard development performance in Nigeria.

This paper takes a look at good governance within the context of "the common good" philosophy. The relationship between good governance and other key factors such as leadership and democracy are considered as critical to growth and National development.

In the view of Ogundiya (2010), governance is "the process that is employed to achieve the noble end of the state. Thus, governance simply implies the art of governing a people within a given territory or a state. It consists of two essential elements of the state, namely, the structure of the state and the procedures of the legislative, judicial and those of the executive and administrative bodies, at all the tiers of government". Governance according to Fagbadebo (2007), referred to the development and implementation of public policy through a broader range of private and public agencies, than those traditionally associated with government. Because government is increasingly characterized by diversity, power interdependence and policy networks, governance stresses the complexity of policy-making, implementation and accountability relationships between a variety of state and societal actors at all levels, locally, globally and regionally. In governance theory, the relationship between state and non-state actors become less hierarchical and more interactive. In this way, governance denotes "a highly fluid institutional and policy in which the powers and responsibilities of different actors and tiers of government are in flux" (Wohlmuth, 1997). In the context of this study, governance is conceived as the manner in which power is exercised to manage a country's economic, political and social affair at both the national and sub-national levels, for the common good of the masses.

Governance embraces all "the methods (good and bad) that societies use to distribute power and manage public resources and problems" (UNDP, 1997). Thus, good and bad governance are subsets of governance, depending on whether public resources and problems are managed effectively, efficiently and in response to the critical needs of all members of the society. According to UNDP (1997), "a system of governance is good when it satisfies these conditions. Participatory, meaning it offers both men and women a voice in decision-making, either directly or indirectly; it is legitimate and acceptable to the people, transparent and accountable, promotes equity and equality, operates by the rule of law (which means, legal frameworks are fairly and impartially enforced), responsive to the needs of the people and efficient and effective in the use of resources". In the view of Oluwa (20120, cited in Nwanegbo, Umara and Ikyase (2017), good governance is "a function of effective, visionary, transparent, trustworthy and credible political leadership, whose driving force is an improvement in the collective well-being of the citizens through well-conceived, effectively

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implemented economic policies and human development programmes". Some of the components of good governance are discussed below.

Transparency and Accountability

Transparency refers to an environment in which government policies and actions and the information relating to them, are provided to the public on an understandable, accessible and timely basis. Transparency could be accomplished when decisions made and their enforcement are achieved in a manner that is in conformity with extant rules and regulations. To guarantee a practice of good governance, "government policies are to be openly disseminated to the entire citizens as a way of developing confidence in their intentions". In short, the processes of decision-making, the ultimate decisions reached and government actions taken are expected to be made open and subject to checks by other organs of government and non-governmental organizations (Apaza, 2009; Gisselquist, 2012; Addink 2017). Thus, transparency makes open government possible and increases the demand for accountability. Closely linked to transparency is the concept of accountability. It refers to the degree by which political actors have the ability and willingness to demonstrate consistency between their activities and the constitution (Gisselquist, 2012).

A government is accountable when its leaders (both elected and appointed) are responsive to the demands of the governed. Respect for the rule of law and an independent judiciary constitute key mechanisms for enforcing accountability. Elected legislatures (a key component of electoral legitimacy) also constitute mechanisms for enforcing accountability through their oversight function. This institution of ombudsman, where it exists, is yet another instrument for enforcing accountability. An Ombudsman is commonly referred to as the 'citizen's defender'. Also, citizens can seek redress in the courts for acts of omission or commission by a government and its officials. Accountability emphasizes that, all actors, particularly those in government, business, voluntary agencies, civil societies, among others are to be made answerable to the public (Rotberg, 2004).

Rule of Law

The rule of law emphasizes that, it is the law that rules, not man. Thus, there must be emphasis on fairness to all, as well as impartial enforcement of laws and rights. Rule of law, underpinned by an independent court system, implies a predictable legal framework that helps to ensure settlement of conflicts between the state and individuals on the one hand, and among individuals or groups on the other. It also helps to protect and enforce property and contract rights. In almost every modern state, the supreme law of the land (or the fundamental law) is the constitution. Woleola (2017) posits that, the rule of law guarantees, equity, fairness and justice in the society.

It is also the impartial enforcement of transparent laws, regulations and codes, and the full protection of human rights, particularly those of minorities in the society.

Electoral Legitimacy

Electoral legitimacy is derived from periodic, open, competitive, free and fair elections that provide a mandate for the elected political executive to govern. The legitimacy of the political leadership is a function of the extent to which the elections are free and credible. Also, there is the legitimacy of the legislative body (parliament) whose members emerge from periodic elections that are sometimes the same as those that produce the leadership of the executive and sometimes the elections are exclusive. Free, fair and credible elections are essential because they help to ensure that every citizen participates in the government of his or her own country.

In the view of Ighodalo (2012), election is "part of the democratic framework in the society, that if properly put to use, will produce socio-economic and political development. Credible elections put the right people in government, manage conflict effectively and allocate resources efficiently". Thus, credible elections are necessary to stem the tide of political decay and corruption in the country. This is because, in the view of apologists of liberal democracy, once elections are gotten right, democracy is on its way to being consolidated and the consequence is the institution of enduring peace and security, development and political stability in the country. Therefore, periodic, credible and genuine elections are necessary and indispensable elements of sustained efforts to protect the rights and interests of the governed. As a matter of practical experience, the right of everyone to take part in the government of his or her own country is a crucial factor in the effective enforcement by all, in a wide range of other human rights and fundamental freedoms, embracing political, economic, social and cultural rights (United Nations General Assembly, 1992).

Efficient and Effective Service Delivery

Efficiency is primarily the process of doing things right, while effectiveness is the process of doing the right things (Cole & Kelly, 2011). Thus, the principle, as it applies to good governance, means doing things right and doing the right things within the society by the government for the well-being of the masses, using the resources available. The primary purpose of a public service, in a modern state, is the delivery of quality public goods and services to the citizens.

Efficiency embraces the long-lasting use of God-given resources of the society and most especially, environmental protection, while the principles of effectiveness

emphasizes the good use of the natural resources of the society by the government (Rotberg, 2004; Nanda, 2006; Rothstein & Teorell, 2008, Oluwa, 2012).

Administrative Competence

Administrative competence can be conceived as the capacity of a state's administration to perform the core functions of a modern state, as well as create an enabling environment for different actors, in promoting development in a state. Two of the factors widely acknowledged as assuring a competent administration are merit-based recruitment and promotion and an emphasis on professionalism and continuous learning.

A competent administration would be expected to ensure the continuity of the state, provide or facilitate the provision of quality service delivery and be accountable to both the political leadership of successive elected governments and the general public. The critical importance of a competent administration in the discussion of good governance in a modern state can be illustrated by the fact that, almost without exception, the incapacity of a state's administration to assure the continuity of the state is a strong evidence of a failed or failing state (United Nations General Assembly, 1993).

Civil Liberties

Civil liberties refer to freedom of expression, association and assembly. Freedom of expression, also known as freedom of the press (print and electronic) and freedom of association is concerned with political associations (political parties), civil society groups (for example, trade unions, community-based and faith-based organizations). The definition of civil liberties is most often extended to cover human rights such as the right to life and property for all citizens and specific concern for rights of children, women, the disabled and their marginalized groups in the society. The constitutions of many modern states have provisions with respect for civil liberties and the protection of human rights. Civil liberties also guarantee equity and inclusiveness. It covers the dignity of the human person, equal rights and freedom from any discrimination. This therefore, ensures that every citizen is given equal access to improve his or her lot and also to enhance his or her well-being in the society (Harrison, 2005). In a modern state, the enforcement of respect, for civil liberties and human rights is normally a key responsibility of the judiciary. Some countries, commissions or councils have been established for the protection of human rights (for example, Ghana, Malawi, Benin, Nigeria, Kenya, etc). More so, in many countries, civil society groups serve as agencies that help ensure respect for citizens' basic freedom. Therefore, a society's well-being depends on ensuring that all its members

feel they have a stake in it and do not feel excluded from the mainstream of society. A contrast with the component of good governance is done by given attention to a discussion of bad governance.

Bad Governance

Bad governance is "the absence of good governance and may not necessarily mean the absence of democracy. It is evident in the inability of a state to achieve or realize the essence of the state, at a particular time" (Ogundiya, 2010). In Owoye and Bissessar, 2009, cited in Coker and George-Genyi (2014), bad governance is "a symptom of institutional and leadership failures, explicitly manifested by its long list of dictatorial leaders, not free media and undemocratic elections". World Bank (1992) posits that bad governance has many features, among which are failure to make a clear separation between what is public and what is private; hence, a tendency to divert public resources for private gain; failure to establish a predictable framework for law and government behavior in a manner that is conducive to development, or arbitrariness in the application of rules and laws; excessive rules, regulations, licensing, requirements, etc. which impede the functioning of markets and encourage rent-seeking; priorities that are inconsistent and development; thus, resulting in a misallocation of resources and excessively narrow base for or non-transparencies in decision-making. According to Obadan (1998), cited in Ogundiya 2010), when these features occur together, they create an environment that is hostile to development, the authority of governments over their peoples tends to be progressively eroded, the economic cost tends to be high, including a diversion of resources to internal security and escalating corruption. Thus, bad governance is contrapuntal to a nation's socio-economic and political development. However, bad governance is more pronounced when a state fails (abysmally) to meet the needs of the society, even though it makes use of the best of all the resources at her disposal.

Wael (2013) posits that factors such as acute corruption and absence of accountability, the lack of effective institutional control, predatory coalition between the ruling party and business sector, lack of transparency of rules, laws and processes and lack of leadership by example, are the major features of bad governance.

Good Governance in Nigeria: Discussing the Paradox

Nigeria is one of the most blessed countries in the world with abundant human and natural resources. But sixty two (62) years after political independence and twenty (20) years of uninterrupted civilian regimes, the country remains grossly undeveloped and occupies a strategic position in the poverty index, acute unemployment and inequality index in the world. The expectation is that, the return of Nigeria to

democratic rule would bring the desired change it needs for the polity. On the contrary, Nigeria is still behind this sphere of human development. This has made many people still hold doubts on whether development is achievable under the present democratic dispensation, due to growing insecurity, poverty, corruption, political instability, unemployment, widespread malnourishment and poor health prospects, to mention but few, despite the growing oil revenue and economic potentials. The Nigeria's economic and political landscape is pervaded by corruption and abuse of office. Corruption, bad governance and low level of transparency and accountability have been major sources of development failure in Nigeria.

Corruption is viewed by Nwangegbo et al (2017), as the cog in the Nigerian wheel of progress and development, as both social and economic monsters are the cause of inequality and inequitable distribution of the nation's wealth among its citizens, a situation that is the root cause of disaffection among Nigerians.

It is worrisome however, that decades after the 'third wave' of democracy have blown across the continent of Africa, democratization in Nigeria has not produced the expected result. Rather than engender development and good governance, it has led to anarchy, civil wars, genocide, terrorism, political assassinations, ethno-religious conflicts and political instability. Omede and Ngwube (2017) affirm that the problem of instability exists and persists when the political system fails to engender, maintain and sustain the belief in its constituent members and its citizenry, which the regime defined as a constitutional order. The prevalence of political violence and gross instability in Nigeria is an empirical indicator of the low level of political legitimacy. Thus, legitimacy crisis is one of the most pernicious, endemic and most challenging problems confronting the Nigerian State and its leaders. It has manifested in different ways, such as ethnic and religious crisis, political disturbance, civil disobedience and so on. Also, Fagbodebo (2007) has rightly noted that, one of the major factors responsible for political instability in Nigeria is the failure of the political class to sufficiently adhere to the basic tenets of democracy and constitutionalism. In short, the failure of governance could expressly mean failure of political leadership. This supports the assertion of Achebe (1984) that bad political leadership has been one of the main obstacles to democracy and development in Africa. Post-Independence political leadership has been everything, but not productive; they have been distributive rather than productive in orientation, wasteful and corrupt in political and economic management. The problem with Nigeria has been described simply as that of poor leadership. Given the character of the country's leaders in contemporary timer, it is not surprising that there are threats to human security. This is not unrelated to the schism in the ranks of political leaders who lack the hegemony and discipline to engender socio-economic and political stability. Indeed, the best

governments are those who met their society in a condition of socio-economic and political nadir and are able to save the society or lift it up from doldrums to the positions of fame and prosperity.

In some countries such as South Africa, Zambia, Sierra Leone, Boswane, Tanzania, Ghana and so on, progress has been visible with the conduct of credible elections, alternation of power among political parties, expansion of the political and civil space with better observance of human rights and the rule of law, nourishing media and modest economic progress. Regrettably, Nigeria is neck-deep in a crisis of transition, in which there is large scale election rigging, the trend towards a one party state, marked with inter-ethnic electoral conflicts and political violence, the concentration and personalization of power and a new phenomenon of political dynasty in which leaders stage-manage power transfer to their children – all constituting ominous signs of a downward political slope in Nigeria's democratization effort. There is a huge gap between the demand and the supply of democracy and good governance in Nigeria; while the people yearn for and prefer democratic governance as the most viable alternative for constructing a decent society and assuring a better future, the supply of it by the political leaders is very limited and incongruent with the expectations of Nigerians.

In short, Nigeria's 1999 transition to civilian government was a product of long, turbulent period of military rule and failed democratic experiments. At the time of the political handover, many Nigerians expressed hopes for democratic dividends that would expand political liberties, prove the performance of government, encourage transparency and accountability among leaders and revive the ailing economy. The anticipated benefits of democratic governance have been slow to emerge and the new dispensation has failed to fulfill the expectations of many Nigerians. As it is, Analysts, commentators, academic scholars and average citizens in Nigeria express deep concerns about political violence, high court level of corruption, bad governance, leadership failure and economic deprivation.

All these suggest an absence of democratic governance. Indeed, Diamond (2008) avers that in real terms, there is no practice of democracy in Nigeria. For Agbaja (204) citied in Lindberg (2009:86), Nigeria is "a mere showcase of electoralism, a caricature of electoral democracy and what some others refer to as electoral authoritarian regime". In a similar vein, Nwigwe (2003) cited in Ogundiya (2010:205) contends that it would constitute a very difficult problem for political theorists to determine the classification of Nigeria's type of government. It is not a monarchy, even though there are so many monarchs in the polity-making positions. It is definitely not an aristocracy, because by its very definition, aristocracy means

government by the best. It is of course not democracy, because at least in its modern understanding, democracy is government of the people by the people and for the people. What then is it? If we go by St. Augustine's definition – government that Nigeria ever had could quality as 'Mafia Government'. The word 'Mafia' means government infested with power-drunken, less operative usually selected by their kind and of course, scarcely ever selected by the people. Even in the guise of multi-party election, those to rule are clearly predetermined and chosen, even before elections take place".

The above assertion is still forceful; the reason for Nwigue's (2003) conclusion is not far-fetched. In terms of outcome, Nigerians have not significantly reaped the dividends of democracy. Secondly, Nigeria's democracy has been violent-ridden and characterized by wanton destruction of lives and properties. Thirdly, and most importantly, the peoples' vote seems not to count in determining who governs as elections are rigged or its outcome determined before the poll (Ogundiya, 2010).

Good Governance as Key to National Development

Good governance considers the needs of the masses and manifests itself in all facets of society and the economy. Development cannot take place in an atmosphere of insecurity and unstable political system. It is in view of this that the World Bank has said that, lack of development is a direct consequence of bad governance, emphasizing that bad governance inhibits the growth of the economy. According to the World Bank (1992), bad governance has many features, among which are, failure to make a clear separation between what is public and what is private gain; failure to establish a predictable framework for law and government behavior, in a manner that is conducive to development; or arbitrariness in the application of rules and laws, excessive rules, regulations, licensing requirements, and so on, which impede the functioning of markets, and encourage rent-seeking; priorities that are inconsistent with development, thus, resulting in a misallocation of resources and failure to provide amenities which serve the common good of the masses.

As Obadan (1998) argues, where all these problems exist, there is little or no room for development. Thus, bad governance hinders socio-economic and political development anywhere in the world. There is no doubt that national development can only be achieved where there is good governance and stable polity. Thus, Todaro (1986) asserts that, there is a positive correlation between good governance and national economic development. Since governance in Nigeria and much of Africa has been pathetically bad, it is not surprising that national development has been correspondingly very slow, especially where there has been a long period of military interregnum, as was the case in Nigeria. Ogbu (1998) argues that inept political leadership and lack of organization constitutes a stumbling block to national

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development in Africa and the rest of the Third World. He says that these two variables provide a useful framework for appreciating and analyzing the internal dimension of the problem of national development in Nigeria and the rest of Africa. Ogbu argues further that the task of defining and pursuing national goals is carried out only by a relatively few political leaders who represent a small percentage of the total population of the country. The active involvement of the intellectual class will go a long way in defining appropriate goals and objectives and in also charting a clear course for development.

Poverty and unemployment rates are very high in Nigeria and the rest of Africa, as a direct consequence of bad governance. Statistics show that 70.8% of Nigerians live below the poverty line of $1 a day and up to 92.4% live below $2 a day (The United Nations International Children's Fund, 2003; World Bank, 2006). The high rate of youth unemployment constitute 75% of Nigerian youths who graduate form tertiary institutions year by year and contributes to insecurity and high rate of crimes in the country.

The springing up of the Boko Haram sect made up of idle Muslim youths in Nigeria is not unconnected with the usual frustration arising from unemployment. Public Policies such as Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution (GR), Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), The Peoples Bank, Better Life for Rural Women (BLRW) and the Family Support Programme (FSP), and other such policies have failed to improve the living standard of the people in the country, largely because of gross mismanagement of resources and official corruption.

For all these problems to be addressed, good governance is indispensable. Part of Nigeria's problem is that the country's development objectives and strategies have more often than not been set externally, and therefore not capable of addressing the peculiar problems and needs of the country. This problem has now been compounded by the phenomenon of globalization. There is an urgent need to create a virile but flexible workforce that can initiate development momentum in the new world economic order, that is driven by globalization. This underscores the need to create a congenial atmosphere for enduring good governance in Nigeria and the rest of the Third World countries that are saddled with the problem of underdevelopment.

Conclusion

Good governance is about performance and conformance. Good governance and development performance are indivisible. Without the core fundamentals of good governance – without transparency and accountability, the rule of law, electoral legitimacy, efficient and effective service delivery, predictable administration, civil

liberties and participation and consensus-orientation, no amount of funding and charity will set a country on the path of prosperity.

In Nigeria, the root cause of weak economic performance has been the failure of public institutions to live up to the expectations of the masses. The deteriorating quality of government, epitomized by bureaucratic obstruction, pervasive rent-seeking, weak judicial systems and arbitrary decision-making have seriously hampered, socio-economic and political development in the country. These conditions are derived from increasing incidences of massive corruption among government officials and 'money-bag' politicians, flagrant misuse of executive powers, lack of transparency and accountability, absence of openness in public formulation, absence of people's participation in issues that directly impact on their well-being. To progress from bad to good governance and from weak to strong development performance, Nigerian political elites must adhere to the core fundamentals of good governance, without which socio-economic and political development will continue to be an illusion. Therefore, democratic governance thrives where there are periodic elections based on universal suffrage; elections conducted are free, fair and credible; where freedom of speech, association and publication is allowed, where there is acceptance of opposing views; where majority rule is maintained; where government and its agents adhere to the rule of law, where the process of elections is competitive among political parties; where individuals are allowed to freely make their choices and succession process is smooth and not problematic. Ultimately, the policies of government should serve the common good of the massed by alleviating the existential needs of the citizens.

Recommendations

For good governance and development performance to be feasible in Nigeria, the following recommendations should be considered:

- For Nigeria to move out of the cocoon of underdevelopment she is presently entangled in, transparency and accountability, rule of law, electoral legitimacy, efficient and effective service delivery, administrative competence, civil liberties and participation and consensus-oriented must be guaranteed.
- There is urgent need for good leadership, one that is honest, development-oriented and capable of creating and nurturing institutions. This will go a long way to promote good governance and strong development performance.
- For better government responsiveness, civil society actors who have all the capacity to compel the Nigerian elites to be accountable, should brace up for the challenge as agencies of accountability and engine of economic growth and development.

- There is need for a good legal framework and sound anti-corruption policies free from impressive language in Nigeria. This will go a long way in reducing the perception of government as the instrument of the elites to acquire and retain power, at the expense of the people. Also, a culture of tolerance and accommodation should be embraced by stakeholders in the political system.
- Nigerian government should intensify effort to address the interests of the poor across the country. This is because, poor people who lack education, good health and shelter might not be interested in voting during elections or bother about whether or not a government is transparent and accountable

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EXAMINING BIBLICAL LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT: AN EVALUATION

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Abstract

This essay commences with the examination of the original language of the Old Testament. It further surveys some of the characteristics of the Old Testament languages as well as identity some literary forms in the Old Testament and finally, it will discuss at least two literary forms in the Old Testament and concludes with wisdom literature, summary and conclusion.

Introduction

The Bible is a popular Book which today, is translated into many languages. Such languages include; Greek, English, German and some Nigerian languages like Yoruba, Igbo, Ijaw, Edo, Efik, Ibibio, Idoma and lately Hausa. However, the people of the Old Testament spoke neither English nor any of these Nigerian Languages. The Old Testament was therefore written in the language which the Old Testament people read and spoke. Similarly, the Old Testament was written in the literary forms familiar to the people of that age. Our Bible comes in two parts, namely the Old Testament and the New Testament. But at the time the Old Testament was written, the New Testament had not be written. We may then ask: what was the original language of the Old Testament? When the Old Testament was originally collected and written, what were its literary forms?

The Old Testament Bible is made up of about 98% of the Hebrew language. Hebrew is a Semitic language written from the left to the right. It comes from the same family of languages and shares many common words with Arabic language. Gorman, M. (2008).In the Bible times, Hebrew was written with only twenty-two different consonants without any break between the letters even at the end of a line. The vowels were either memorized or filled in from the context. A sample would look something like this: THLRSSMSHPHRDSHLLNTWNT ("the Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want"). Aloo, M. (2015).

While the Old Testament Bible is made up of only about 2% of Aramaic Language. Aramaic was a dialect that was derived from Hebrew, Phoenician and other Semitic languages. It was spoken by many of the people in Palestine and replaced Hebrew as the common language of the Jews of the later inter-testament period. It was probably the language Jesus spoke at home. Although the differences were greater, Aramaic was to Hebrew what Pidgin English is to English. It used the same alphabet, similar grammar and lot of the same vocabulary. If one could speak Hebrew, he could understand at least some Aramaic. Mckim, D. (2007).About half of the book of Daniel (Chapter 2-7) was written in Aramaic. Also about three chapters of Ezra (4:8 -6:18; 7:12-26) and one verse in Jeremiah (10:11) were written in Aramaic. There are also additional Aramaic expressions found both in the Old and New Testaments.

The Language of the Old Testament

Most of the Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew. The rest was written in Aramaic. The two languages were used in those days by the inhabitants of the present day Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon and the Arabian Peninsular. Hebrew and Aramaic languages were used in all the lands west of Babylon and Assyria. In the period of the monarchy (10th – 6th Centuries B.C.), Israelites spoke and wrote in Hebrew. (Rowley, 1976).

Old Testament works produced before the exile were in Hebrew. The Babylonia exile quickened the colouring of the Hebrew language with Aramaic; this means that Old Testament books written before the exile were written in Hebrew, while Aramaic was used for those written after the exile. (Rowley, 1978).According to Greenberg (1962) Aramaic texts in the Old Testament include two words at Genesis 31:47, a verse at Jeremiah 10:11; Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26, and Daniel 2:46 — 7:28. Apart from these texts, and sporadic instances of an occasional Aramaic word here and there, the rest of the Old Testament is written in Hebrew.

The Old Testament has a three-fold division into the Pentateuch, prophets and writings. The Hebrew names of these three sections respectively are; Torah (law), Nebiim (prophets) and kethuhirn (writings). By adding vowels to the initial letters of the three words, i.e. TNK, we produce the single word Tanak or Tanack. Thus, it is the name given to the Hebrew Old Testament. Torah (Law) is made up of all the books from Genesis to Deuteronomy. Nebiirn (Prophets) comprises the books from Joshua to 2 Kings. Kethubim (Writings) are made up of the rest of the books of the Old Testament arranged as follows:

a)   Poetic Writings - Psalms, Proverbs and Job

b)   Festival Scrolls - Songs of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther

c) The Historical Collection - Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah

d) Apocalyptic - Daniel

According to Stacey (1979), the Greek Old Testament translated for the Greek speaking Jews is called the Septuagint (LXX). It is believed that this translation was done by seventy Jewish scribes in Egypt. For orthodox Jews, the Old Testament written in Hebrew and Aramaic remains authentic. The English Revised Standard Version (RSV) which is presented for the most examinations is translated on the outline of the original Hebrew and Aramaic Old Testament. Palmer, T. (2013).

Characteristics of Hebrew and Aramaic Languages

These two Old Testament Languages differ from the language we speak or write.

The following characteristics distinguish the two languages:

a) All their letters are consonants: b g d h w ...

b) Vowels are made up of dots and dashes written inside, above and below the consonants. Some of the vowels are:

c) Writing is from right to left e.g.

d) The same letter appears in two different forms even within a single word.
    e.g.

    I.   M =

    II   P =

    III   L K=

Literary Types of the Old Testament

For Soggin (1980), there are many literary forms in the Old Testament. They include; myth, legend, saga, other stories, genealogies and lists, history, secular and cult songs, prophetic oracles, apocalyptic visions and wisdom. The literary forms are stated below:

a) Myth is a common language especially in the study of religion. In ordinary usage it may mean a rumour, an unfounded story, impressive but false story, extra-ordinary story etc. In religion it has a technical (special) meaning. The religious myth has the following features:

    i.   It is a story representing events that keep on recurring in the experience of men, for example, the cycle of the year, the seasonal appearance of flowers, eclipse of the sun etc.

    ii.   The story is staged outside time and space, often in the world of spirits.

    iii.   It is dramatized or recited in worship at shrines. Currid, J. (2006).

Myths were common all over the ancient Near East. The ancient Hebrews were familiar with the myths. The Hebrews borrowed the myths of their faith or belief in one God Almighty. In this way, they borrowed the myths in Genesis 1—2 from the Babylonian creation epic called Enuma Elish. Other stories in Genesis 3:11-26 are myths borrowed and adopted though few could have originated from Israel. The important point is that the myths in Genesis 1:11-26, stress the Hebrew faith in Yahweh. The Old Testament myths are not rumours or false stories. They have the form of stories dealing with the sovereignty of Yahweh and his dealings with his people. (Soggin, 1980).

b) Legends are also used commonly to mean unreliable stories. But the Old Testament uses legends in a different (special) way. In Old Testament, the legends are narratives that are rooted in the world of men. They concern human beings in a real but distant past and often in a known geographical area. The Old Testament Legends have historical (core or Nucleus) basis. They explain some features of the present life, often by recounting how they came into being. The legends affirm present beliefs and values. There are no generally accepted distinctions between Old Testament legends and saga. In any case, legends have especially religious significance, while saga deals with the ordinary. Bethel for example, depends on Jacob's ladder (Genesis 28:10-22). Gilgal depends on the story of Joshua's setting up of memorial stones (Joshua 4:20-24). There are no less than three legends relating to circumcision (Genesis 17; Exodus 4 and Joshua 7), some stories of great religious leader like Samuel, Elijah could be considered here. In legends, historical elements are sometimes mixed with moral and theological teachings. (Greenberg, 1962).

c) Saga is a long narrative with historical nucleus. Legends and sagas have identical meanings. But while legends have specific religious connotations, saga has not. The Sodom narrative is an etiological (story given reason) explanation of saline formation around the Dead Sea (Genesis 19). The story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4 has to do with two different ways of life. Abel stands for semi-nomadic life while Cain stands for settled life. Israel's relationship with the Ishmaelite's is explained with the story of Abraham and his two wives Genesis 16. Other sagas tell of tribal heroes like Ehud, Gideon, Deborah and David.

d) **Other Stories:** There are other stories that do not fit into any of the categories so far mentioned. Various attempts have been made to classify them such as fables, fairy tales and fiction. They are really stories larger than life but lack the dignity of the legends. For example, the accounts of Sampson's exploits in Judges 15:1-16:3 are exciting.

Fables are moral tales in which animals and plants are chief actors. The parable of Jotham in Judges 9:8-15 and Jehoash's message to Anazziah in 2 Kings 14:9 are the only exceptions. There are magical elements as in the story of Moses miraculous staff (Exodus 4) Elijah's mantle (2 Kings 2:8) and Elisha's unique powers. (Rowley, 1976).

e) **History:** Much of the Old Testament reads like history: You have been told some of these stories under saga and legend. In the period of the Kings (Monarchy) a new style of writing came into being. That was the work of court scribes or recorders. This new kind of writing prompted an official record of important events like the acts of Solomon in 1 Kings 1 Kings 6 - 8) come from such records.

The difference between history, legend and saga is significant. History is more reliable since it depends on known sources. It has its own weakness like bias, but it is a more advanced form of writing than saga and legends.

The earliest piece of history in the Old Testament is the succession narrative in 2 Kings 9-20. The author was probably an eye witness and his interests were political rather than religious. Its purpose is to validate Solomon's succession to the throne (see 1 Samuel 16:14-2, Samuel 5:25). The Book of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings, seem to be historical. There is a similar record in 1 and 2 Chronicles. Roland, K. (1969).

f) **Law:** Every society has its law meant to regulate affairs. Some laws are meant to check evil and wickedness, protect the weak, poor and the widow. In Israel, there are laws dealing with personal injuries, theft and damage to property, marriage and family life. Some of these were borrowed from the Canaanites and adopted to suit Israelite belief in Yahweh. These are the Old Testament Laws that are conditional. Examples of this type of law are in Exodus 21: Deuteronomy 15:12-18; 22:13-29. Laws of this kind were built up on the basis of past experiences. They were administered by the elders of the tribes at the city gate. A. Alt calls this type of law casuistic law. The same Alt identifies what he called the apodictic law. This type of law is unconditional. Such laws are set out in short and straight-forward commands:

Thou shalt not steal, Remember the Sabbath day..., Honour thy Mother and father... some are in curse form e.g. Cursed be he, who... Example of this type of law could be seen in Exodus 20:2-17; 21:15; Leviticus 18:7-17; Deuteronomy 27:15-26. They are expressed in series of short commands of ten or twelve. These series were recited periodically at the sanctuaries to help the Israelites renew their promises under covenant. There is a third category of laws dealing with priestly-duties, clean and unclean. In early days these laws were short and simple; but by the time the Old Testament was compiled, they had become longer and complicated. We find such laws as priestly laws in Deuteronomy 14; Ezekiel 40-48; Leviticus is mainly a Book of the priestly law, especially chapters 17-26, usually called the Holiness Law. (Stacey, 1979).

g) **Secular Songs:** The Israelites liked singing especially during festivals, marriage, harvests and even at work in the fields. There are few examples of these in Old Testament; and much of what have come down are in the religious context. Numbers 21:17, for example, was formally a work song but has come down in religious tone, other examples of secular songs are Mariam's song (Exodus 15:21), women's Song in 1st Samuel 18:7; The Song of Deborah in Judges 5 belongs to this type. The song of Songs was originally a collection of love Songs, but owes its inclusion in the Old Testament to its interpretation in terms of Yahweh's relationship with Israel. The best examples of Secular Songs in Old Testament are the Psalms (the Psalter) which have been adopted for religious functions. The Royal wedding song (Psalm 45) escaped the process of adaptation. Driver, S.R. (1905).

h) **Cult Song:** Songs taken from cultic setting are to be found here and there in the prophetic books (Jeremiah 14:7-9 19-22). The Psalms provide many of them. There are songs of Praise to be sung at festivals (Psalms 145- 150 there are individual thanksgiving songs (Psalms 30, 92, 116, 118 and communal laments (Psalms 44, 74, 79, 80 and 83). The most is the individual lament (Psalms 3, 5, 6, 17 etc.) Eugene (1966).

There is a large number of royal Psalms linked with various occasions in King's life as marriage, coronation and battle (Psalms 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 101, 110-132). There are the Songs of Zion (46, 48, 76-87) and the enthronement Psalms (47, 93, 96-99).

i) **The Prophetic Oracles:** Few of the oracles came from the lips of the prophets whose names the prophetic books bear. The book of Amos provides some of the best examples of short, direct oracles of which the prophetic books are made. Few

of the oracles were written down at the time of their utterance. These utterances were remembered, passed on and later collected by the disciples of the prophets.

Then the collection were edited into books. In this case, you should regard a small book of visions found in Amos 7. 1-8, 8:1- 2, 9:1-4, and at least one collection of sayings passed down in chapters 1-6 as originally independent collections whose nucleus (core) could be traced to Amos. The report in the third person (Amos 7:10-14) must be a later addition by disciples working with Amos' ideas. Merrill (1981).

At this stage you are not required to analyse the prophetic works. You should however note that all the prophetic books contain: the original oracles of the prophets themselves. Additions to their oracles are either by their disciples or by a group of biblical historians called the Deuteronomists.

j) **Apocalyptic Visions:** An Apocalyptic is sometimes regarded as a successor to the prophet. The word apocalypse means revelation, Strictly speaking, Daniel 7-8 and Zechariah 9-14 apocalypses in the Old Testament are Apocalyptic written and not uttered. It claimed to recount the details of the visions concerned with approaching crisis and the end of the world.

k) **Geneanologies And Lists:** The Old Testament preserves list of nations, cities and persons. The genealogies are very important. They stress the deep sense of national unity in Israel. Mc Cain (2002)

There is a census in Numbers Chapter 1, another in Numbers 26. 1 Chronicles attempts to give a complete genealogy of Israel from Adam to Saul. Ezra Chapter 2 as a list of those who returned from exile. Nehemiah chapter 3 has a list of those who helped to repair the wall.

l) **Wisdom Literature:** Outside Israel, the spirit of this literary form is anthropocentric. In Old Testament it is not only anthropocentric, but also theocentric by adaptation. Two types of wisdom are viz; prudential wisdom and reflective wisdom. The one which comes in form of pity sayings, parables riddles, prohibitions and pieces of advice is known as prudential wisdom. The book of proverb is a good example. Reflective wisdom considers the anomalies, contradictions, and discrepancies in life as if it appears to question God. The book of job probes the issue of innocent suffering as a good example. Stuart, D. (2001).

Summary/Conclusion:

- The Old Testament was originally written in two languages;

- The two languages are Hebrew and Aramaic;

- The two languages are different, in many ways, from the languages we speak and write today;

- There are many literary forms in the Old Testament

- The literary types include: myth, legend, saga, prophetic oracles, secular and cultic songs, apocalyptic vision, law and wisdom.

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RETHINKING INDIGENOUS RELIGIOUSPRACTICES AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IN EKPEYE ETHNIC NATIONALITY OF RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract:

This research examined the indigenous religious practices of Ekpeye ethnic nationality of rivers state. It recognized religion as an indispensable phenomenon which had controlled and determined every portion of lives and properties in Ekpeye. The Ekpeye indigenous religious practice is such that is very unique and exert powerful influence in the use of charm, juju (ill), and shrines and in the use of open and secret juju summoning. The research x-rayed Ekpeye religiosity generally using descriptive design and structural functionalism theory with the aim of examining the practices and influence of deities, charms and juju on the indigenous people of Ekpeye land. While the data were collected qualitatively, the study recommended some level of religious constrain and practices in the worship of deities.

Keywords: Religion, Indigenous, Ekpeye, deities, shrine and juju.

Introduction

Religion is universal but is not universally practiced in the same way (Nabofa, 1980). While some encourages development, others hinders It. The Ekpeye variant is a distinct form of demonocracy (Ikpirijor, 2007). This was also the findings of Max Weber in 1905 when he studied India, China, Babylon and the West in his protestant

ethics and the spirit of capitalism. Similarly, Robert Bellah in 1957 also discovered that the Japanese Tokogawa religion promoted the early development of Japan. Generally, in the Ekpeye perspective, every community has a god (Ele) with five major and other minor deities that are being worshipped. The deities of Ekpeye claim ownership of people, farmlands, forest and waterways. All the deities that were brought from the ancient Benin and the contemporary ones are very active exercising a continued control over the people. They place taboo on many aspects of social, economic and political lives of Ekpeye indigenes (Ekine, 2013).

Given that indigenous religion is the root of culture and the determining principle of every life, Opuku (1978), opined that in Africa, religion is life and life is religion. This assertion is the fulcrum of the numerous shrines, Juju, totems, charms and medicine-men (dibio) that had become bedrock of every activity in the land. There is an inherited mentality of priesthood, untold traditionalism and increase in secret invocation and summoning as a strong interplay of supremacy in the forces of nature. This research discussed specifically, Ekpeye religious beliefs and practices, religious organogram, Wolo deity, the worship of Obochi and scared days in Ekpeye in sociological perspective.
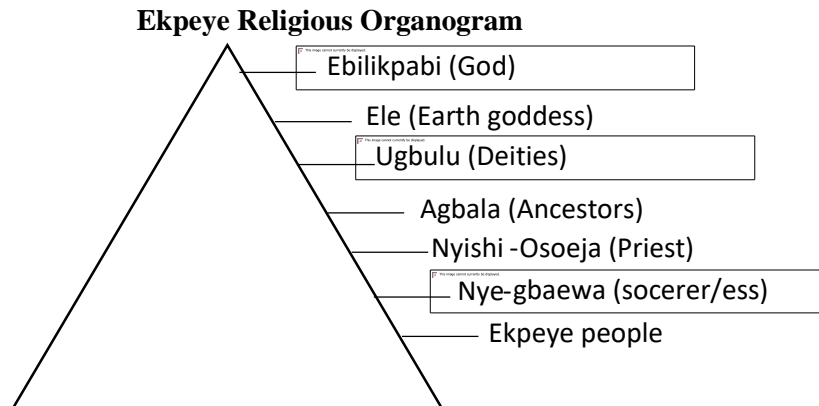
Theoretical Framework

The foundation of this research is built on structural functionalism annotation and affirmative interpretation of social structures. It holds that each social structures, institution, custom and belief has a specific function it serves towards the maintenance, stability and continuity of a particular society. Structural functionalism explores the existence of social institutions such as religion in terms of the needs the institutions meet in the society (Nwosu, 2014). Structural functionalism is explained in Talcott Parsons Structure of Social Action (1937) and the Social System (1951) which concentrated on the structures of society and their relationship to each other. Akikibofori (2018) added that those structures were seen as mutually supportive and trending toward a dynamic social equilibrium. As already established, religion is a social component capable of contributing to the society same way the Ekpeye indigenous religion had instituted in its own way the maintenance of law and order.

Ekpeye Religious Belief and Practices: This research observed that Ekpeye indigenous religion, belief and practices are the origination of the ancient Benin where the Progenitor (Akalaka) hailed. Generally, the ethnic nationality believes in the supremacy of God (Ebilikpabi, Ida-Nyekpokpu and Chineke Nyebeli Oligwe). Next to Him is the multitude of smaller gods referred to as Ele and Ugbulu. Others are Agbala (Ancestors) and mediators such as Nye-Osoeja, Nye-Agbewa and Nyedibio. The most

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prominent of these is Ele the earth goddess (Oguzor, 2011). This annotation correlated with Burns (1972) observations as cited in (Oguzor) 2011:68 thus:

> "It's important to realize that the existence of a supreme being is appreciated practically throughout the Country…. However, more attention is paid to minor deities, good or evil, who are considered to have greater interest in human affairs. But even these are held to be spirits, and the images which the people venerate are but the representation of the spirits, not the gods themselves. In most cases there is a tribal god, a lesser god for each village of the tribe, a household god for every member of the family. Add to these, a god or devil for every striking object of nature, for every river or stream, for every hill or grove and for every large or remarkable tree and it will be understood how remarkable is the African's mythology" (Burns, 1972).

Ekpeye Religious Organogram

Ebilikpabi (God)
Ele (Earth goddess)
Ugbulu (Deities)
Agbala (Ancestors)
Nyishi -Osoeja (Priest)
Nye-gbaewa (socerer/ess)
Ekpeye people

Source: Researchers Field Work, 2023.

God: He is the Ebilikpabi, Ida-Nyekpokpu and Chineke. The Ekpeye tradition is based on the central belief in God as the Supreme Being and that He is responsible for all the creation. This great God is the creator of heaven and earth. He gave lives to human beings, animals and plants. In Ekpeye Custom, God is the Custodian of all created beings, spiritual and physical.

Ele: Next to the almighty God is the Ele deity. She is the most prominent of all gods. The Ele is the earth goddess and is in all Ekpeye towns and villages, she is in charge of a particular town or village. Ele controls all gods, with her chief priest known as Nye

SoejaEle (Mr. Obutor Alidike a respondent), stated that every Ele priest is usually from the family that first founded and owned the land where her shrine is located. The chief priest performs the sacrifices when Ele is consulted, worshipped or appeased. Ele is capable of influencing the destiny and fate of man. Similarly, in Ikwerre, (Wosa, 2004) opined that some divinities are regarded as being more important than the others, for instance Ali Elele, is regarded as the most important among Elele divinities, Ohua Omudioga is also seen as the highest divinity of the land. This ranking is determined by the efficacy and function of each of the divinities.

Ugbulu (Deities): they are the gods and goddesses of Ekpeye that occupied the 450 major shrines. In Ekpeye lexicon, Ugbulu is juju. Traditionally, they have human husbands, wives, sons, daughter's, priest and messengers and other functionaries which are most times possessed Ikpirijor, 2007). Similarly, Onuoshi in Ubimini and Ayichi in Egbeda functioned likewise while Ishiacheri and Wodezi do not care to be propitiated (Wosa, 2004). Comparably Amadi & Wotogbe (1993), enlisted the total of 26 divinities in Ikwerre land. To underscore the effects of divinities on the life of the people, market days were meant for the worship of these deities. Some are Ahuo Ahia Ezi in Omudioga and Eke Omaa in Elele, Aya Oshi Ahoada on Izu. The people observe the holy days by staying away from work and stay in the shrines. They are prohibited from going to farm or any vocational activities. The Ugbulu sacred days are used for sacrifices. ForIgbanibo (2005), deities are seen as having divine status or nature. The deities or divinities are the lesser gods which have local or traditional significance. They are worshipped by inhabitants of a particular locality, traditional area, lineage, village, family or Clan. Sometimes individuals also own shrine (e.g 'Egbunta Shrine' in Ukpeliede Community Ahoada West L.G.A) is a personal deity. The proliferation of deities in Ekpeye land is a challenge to Sustainable Development Commission (2011) agenda 2030 target of making sustainable cities and communities. Igbanibo (2005) upheld this when he stated, "equally, individual's own allegiance to the gods of their communities or tribes to which they belongs". It may be termed as lesser gods, which have local or traditional significance only. These gods are been worshipped by inhabitants of a particular town, localities or traditional areas. Thus, deities are local gods. While individuals posses their own gods as well as household gods, they equally own allegiance to the gods of their communities or tribes to which they belongs. Different people and tribe tag these gods with different names. Similarly, the use charms and amulets vary from the different type of gods and the ancestors. Deities are grouped under the lowest of super human powers. These are either worn or hung on the house for protection. The lesser gods are regarded as the children and spokesmen of the Supreme Being. Unto which they derive- their powers. However,

God manifests himself through the lesser gods. Equally, God executes his plans through them and leave them to do his will. These lesser gods are regarded as more approachable than the supreme God, thus they are seen as mediators between man and God. The deities have definite cult and are appealed to in their own right. People usually attribute evil doings to the lesser gods, instead of the Supreme Being for he is always good. Deities are spirits possessing astonishing powers, which sometimes are to the advantage of man, while others to his detriment. In Ikwerre, Amadi and Wotogbe Weneka (1993) observed "Paramount and common to all Ikwerre divinities is the protective function".

The gods accept libation and prayers but are very gender and age restrictive (Wosa, 2004). Women in Ekpeye can only become either the wife or daughter of a deity. At all instances, even when she manages to marry a male human being she remains a wife to a deity.

These deities in their numbers in Ekpeye tradition are allotted accommodation, a shrine and appealed to in their own right, using any desired thing for sacrifice. For Nabofa (1980: 62 – 63), these divinities have no absolute existence of their own, because to the Africans, the world is under a unitary theocratic control and government. While attesting to the postulation of Igbanibo, (2005), Nabofa (1980) added that the divinities are sons and daughters of God, each with its own local name which is descriptive either of its function or power e.g., Jakuta (Yoruba), Soko-egba (axe of God, Nupe) and Amadioha (Etche). They are ministers in the theocratic government of God and are intermediaries, and Channels. Little wonder why the name of the Almighty God would first be mentioned before any sacrifice is offered. In most shrines, pictures of Jesus Christ are placed alongside the particular deity's own. This assertion is visible in Ikata community Ahoada East L.G.A where an Ubochi priest placed side by side his god image and Christ. Technically, divinities are only means to an end and not end in themselves (Igbanibo, 2005). Every tribe in Nigeria is a home to several divinities and there is no kingdom that is not host to a deity or more.

Hence, Elechi Amadi and Wotogbe-Weneka (1993) exclaimed. "Thus far our excursion into the realms of the gods. We are in a position to agree with E.B. Idowu when he said that West Africa is the home of divinities". The Ekpeye certainly do not lack in this regard (Ikpirijor, 2007). Churches may seem popular and even forward-looking, but when the truth has to be known, when the desperate widow has nowhere else to turn for justice, when orthodox medicine fails and ancestors beckon, when "the mouth of the frog is full of water and it can no longer croak," the Ekpeye man returns to his divinities. The seriousness of this claim is borne out by the fact that there are instances, where divinities have killed their priests or priestesses for perverting the truth. The fear of death acts as a check on moral lapses of priests and priestesses of

divinities in Ekpeye land. These spirits inhibit the natural world, sky, earth, land, rivers, lake, trees, forest and houses. Igbanibo (2005) categorized nature spirits (Ugbulu) into sky and earth spirits. Nature spirits is sub-divided into two namely sky spirits and earth spirits. They are associated with people, particularly with natural objects and forces. Some are seen as been created by God initially as spirits. But others are regarded as human beings of the distant past. Example is we can therefore see nature spirits as widely being related to natural objects and forces. Sometimes, people attach human qualities or personal characteristic to those objects and forces of the universe as if they were living. Nature spirits of the sky are associated with objects and forces in the sky. These include the sun, the moon, stars, rainbows, rain, storms, wind, thunder, and lightning etc. People see these spirits occupy and control them. Although some African Societies are of the opinion that those spirits operating on these forces of nature are major ones in charge of the stronger forces of the sky. They are divinities or deities and their origins class for different legend. Divinities and other sky spirits are solely responsible for matters concerning or affecting large communities instead of individuals. In some places they are offered sacrifice; and offerings to appraise them, in order to help them in relating their desires to God. At time people ignore them and make their supplication directly to God. Most African do not believe their existence rather they believe the heavenly forces are actual works of God himself. Although, some Africans do not acknowledge their existence, thus pay less attention to them in terms of prayers and sacrifices among others. Instead they see them as basis for stories and myths. Sometimes they settle them as an avenue of explaining the mysteries of the forces of nature connected with the sky. The explanations of these things are not scientific but religious (Igbanibo, Ibid). Nature spirits of the earth are associated with things and forces of the Earth like the sky. They are those forces and things closer to human life. According *to* African belief, they are the earth, hills, mountains, rocks, frees, water, forest, rivers, takes, etc. People assumed that these things are been occupied or moved by living beings which are normally invisible to people. They are approached in human terms as if they can be pleased or softened. Nature spirits of the earth are graded in different categories with regards to their level of divinities. The regards people have for Earth spirits varies from place to place. For example in some places people may attribute spirits to forests, lakes and rivers, but not to rocks and mountains. Igbanibo (Ibid) noted that Africans started having direct link with non-living things (Inanimate) and forces of nature via spirit of the Earth. Thus people fabricate ideas of their own on things around them and make their colleagues to see them as scared, divine and as a deity. Thus, they make sense to people and fits into their experience of life. Some of these are Ologbe in IduEkpeye, Ekegbushi (Ukpeliede), Ogboli (Ogoda), Wolo (Okogbe) and Obochi.

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Traditionally, each of Ekpeye communities has not less than five (5) major shrines. Likely, Ekpeye ethnic nationality has over four hundred major (400) shrines. Out of these and prominent among them is Wolo Deity of Okogbo Ekpeye. According to Ikpirijor Andrew "this demon claimed to be the ruler of the demons in Ekpeye land. Wolo had become a way of life. To people, including me then, the fear of this demon was the beginning of wisdom. My people gathered at the shrine every four days. Every Ewhor, my people gathered to worship this dreadful demon" (Ikpirijor, 2007: 25). Wolo belongs to the Agwolo family of Okogbe and was feared all over Ekpeye and neighbouring Clans. Agwolo is very advanced in shrine business and when one talks about idle worship and shrine Courts, Agwolo comes to mind, and it was from Agwolo that others took their cue. The atrocities in shrines in Ekpeye land were largely replicated from Wolo. Because of the demonic prowess, Agwolo family though the least but the most respected. Agwolo that owns Wolo and Umulewhor that own "Alikpo" a second juju in the hierarchy of demonic prowess, ran Okogbe in "democracy" Ikpirijor (2007).

Wolo shrine court was one of the greatest features of the idol. Many hours of the worship day in the shrine court were devoted to dispute settlements. The average Ekpeye man would say all the truth he know about a matter if it was at the shrine court for fear of death. Of the two types of summons "Egba Ukpedhi Ekpedhi" and "Egba Imeh", the second was the dangerous one, it's the secret summing. In the first type of summon, one would be given notice of hearing, while in the secret summon one would not be informed. All that was needed for the secret summon according to (Chief Alidike, an interviewee), were materials for invocation which always included a red cock and dog. Once the invocation was done, in no distant time, a minimum of two or more death tolls would be recorded in the victims household before any would know the causes and sequences of death. Most times, the demon starts its attack with the brightest of the said household before the victim his or herself. It is bitterly regrettable, a dreadful thing of nihilistic annihilation for any household knowingly or unknowingly to fall into the trap of any shrine in Ekpeye land. it is an experience that is better been told than to witness. It is also the very reason responsible for the constant lost and dearth of elitism in Ekpeye.

Ikpirijor (2007) listed the following as offences to Wolo: Hunting around the lake, Monkeys from a sacred bush straying to a nearby bush or farm land and any of them was killed by a hunter, Monkeys from a sacred bush straying to a road and is killed by a motorist, Refusing an invitation to the shrine for some number of times, Refusing to fulfill a shrine court judgment, Fishing at or near the lake, hitting a bull on a road within the town, Marrying a woman already married to any person in Agwolo, Marrying any female relation of Agwolo, One refusing his wife from bowing to the

will of the demon, A family farming close to the lake, Cutting down economic trees near the lake, Collecting anything from the forest for use, a member of any family taking part in burying a victim of Wolo, maltreating any shrine court messenger and any functionary of the shrine court committing immorality with a woman visiting the shrine.

Wolo War Zone: Wolo has a place called war zone. Any person who offended the demon made himself and family a war zone. And as such the owners of Wolo (Agwolo), were not suppose to have any association with such families. No girl or man is permitted to marry or form a family in a war zone. No man from Agwolo family is expected to marry a divorcee. Young men from this family were to marry only young unmarried girls. If a young man from this family (according to an interviewee, Alidike), proposed to any girl who gave a nod, irrespective of where she came from, it is an offence for her parents to refuse her the marriage. It is immaterial that the young man did not have money to pay the bride price. The demon takes over the case. To Wolo, the girl in question was a wife already to his son, the young man who made the proposal. The young man would bring the unfortunate girl to his house whether he paid the bride price or not. Whatever the situation, the families of the girls had no choice but to acquiesce to the whims of Wolo, defiance means death.

The deity keeps a close eye on a man and woman who cohabited as husband and wife. After they have had one or two children, he take over the ownership of the woman as husband, while the man she cohabited with remained only but her lover. Hence, the demon meddles in people's marital affairs. Hence, the nature of Ekpeye religion is such that demons interferes, intimidate and encroaches in people fundamental human had family rights. Instead of going to law court, Ekpeye people prepares shrine courts to seek justice. These juxtaposition alongside the tenets of Sustainable Development Goal better explain the nature of quagmire Ekpeye is into. It defiles the cook book and very unbookish that August Comte religion which ended in 1300 just started in Ekpeye, a strong and dreadful institution.

Furthermore, one deity that is worshipped in every Ekpeye village and town is the Ubochi diety. Oral tradition has it that Obochi is the deity that makes rain. The worship of Obochi pre-dates the coming of the white men into Ekpeye land. It is said that epidemics broke out in Ekpeyeland in the past during the rainy seasons and the death toll was so high that diviner priests divined that the epidemics were spread by ubochi which needed to be appeased. The diseases associated with ubochi are small pox, chicken pox, measles and influenza. These diseases were not known by these names then and had no cure in the past. The sacrificial items used in the appeasement

of the ubochi spirit differed from village to village depending on what diviner priest divined. The annual land cleansing.

Ceremony used to send ubochi back to what is known as "Udu-mini". This ritual is performed at the end of the rainy season and beginning of the dry season. It is a very elaborate ritual with much dancing and drumming. This public worship is done around December. In fact early December, all priests, medicine men, diviner-priests, the Nye new ele, and family elders assemble in the village square. On the chosen day, each head of a household, family elder etc. arises early in the morning and invokes the protection of the gods. A typical invocation goes thus:

> Chukwu-Obioma, ele the earth goddess, spirit of our ancestors. I invoke you to be around us this day as we cleanse ourselves and our lands and seek for protection for ourselves and our family. If I have cursed any woman to die in child birth, if I have prevented the progress of others, then let me not see a new day after this sacrifice but I have not done any of the above acts, then let the gods intervene favorably on mu behalf and shower prosperity, good health and long life on my family and let all those who have planned evil against me not succeed.

After such an individual supplication, all and sundry then moves to the village Ele shrine where the priests of other deities, Nye soejaele and diviners are already gathered. In the sacrificial basket placed in front of the shrine, grasses brought by family heads, elders, etc. are put into it, in addition to one plantain banana bunch, and one he-goat. The Nyesoejaele (the ele priest) will carry the basket round the shrine four times. All the priests, family elders each with the "Owor" of their Obodo will be led by the ele priest to pour libation to the gods of the land.

Juju summoning: In the case of proving innocence, guilt or dispute settlement the typical Ekpeye man prefers and conducts oath taking, ie swearing of juju and or juju summoning. In the Ekpeye intelligence report, Cadet Newington (1933) writing in Oguzor (2011:8) stated that "juju and swearing of juju (Udhi Ugbulu) was the final appeal in all cases. It was their form of trial by ordeal and was considered a certain method of obtaining justice, accurate and truthful information…." Usually, people swore by juju to either prove their innocence when accused of a wrongful act. Also, some evil minded persons could secretly go to invoke the wrath of a juju deity (Ugbulu) on a particular person without the person knowing about it. This is the secret summoning (Udha Egba ime) and the most dangerous. It is the summoning for killing.

Umazuke Andrew (an informant) stated that in Ekpeye secret summoning, the victims are not informed or given the option of coming for judgment. Hence, many Ekpeye sons and daughters have died through egbaimeugbulu (secret summoning of juju) (Oguzor, 2011:83). Another form is the open summoning Udha Egba Ukpedhi ekpedhi with Ihugbogo and other communities heralding these spiritual activities comparable to those of India. Ekpeye richness in African science is prompted by its numerous dibios. Ekpeye is rich in culture, human and natural resources but what has strived very well is its indigenous religion.

Sacred Days and Worship of Deities

Since the desires of man and prayers are endless to the gods, when properly worshipped the gods respond to ameliorate the human condition. Thus the people believe that the gods give children to barren women, and ensure safe delivery, they increase crop yield, they grant longevity, they aids the champion wrestler, they make the trader rich and from the throes of terminal illness they pull the dying back to health. For the believer, these and more are possible. The traditional acts of worship of the various deities are an integral component of Ekpeye traditional religion.

The Ekpeye native week runs for four major days; eke, udhie, izu, ewho. All the Obodo deities had one holy day they were worshiped. The priests observe the holy days of their gods by staying away from work and stay in the shrines to attend to people who might come to seek the favor of the gods in their affairs. On the holy day of the ele deity, people were prohibited from going to farm. It is a taboo to do any farm work on such day. In most Ekpeye villages, market days have been fixed on such holy days taking advantage of the fact that people stay at home. Also in all communities in Ekpeye land, as a mark of reverence, a particular day within the Ekpeye week days is considered sacred against any vocational activities; on such days the people abstain from farm work in that part of their farmland and stay back at home. The sacred days are used to offer sacrifices in the community. It is a holy day in such village. The customary worship is attended by all adherents including visitors from other villages whose days of worship fall on a different date. Similarly Elechi Amadi and Wotogbe Weneka writing on Ikwerre sacred days, stated thus: In Obio (Apara group) there are five market days: Mmakara, Riagbo, Nnim, Eberi and Asoragbo. The Evogroup in Obio also has five market days with the same names except that Namake now replaces Asaragbo. The rest of Ikwerre has four market days: *Irie. alio. Nkwo* and *Ekne.* These are the same as Igbo market days. One is tempted to conclude that the market days in Obio conform to the Original Ikwerre Calendar while the rest of Ikwerre must have borrowed the Igbo four-day system. Nearly every market day is sacred to one divinity

or another. This is contrary to the general belief that only ekne and Riagbo are the sacred days. Aho is the sacred day for Ogbagorogoro of Ogbakiri; Nkwo for Nnckwe of Oduoha, Ogbakiri; Irie for Ruhnueli of Ozuoba and Ekne for Ojukwu of Rumuosi. Riagbo is the sacred day for Ali in Ohio; Nmin for Mininkwo of Oromeruezimgbu; Eberi for Igwuzurulia of Rumuosi; Mmakara for Ojukwu of Rumuokwuta. Asaragbo and Namake appear in our study so far to be the only days not sacred to any divinity. Some divinities have two or more sacred days, for example, Wemeribe of Ubimini for whom Nkwo, Ekne and Irie are sacred. An interesting and obviously modern departure from the foregoing is Mini Ochamba of Rumuokwurusi whose sacred days are Wednesday and Friday (Amadi and Weneka, 1993).

Basically, sacred days are days of worship and strenuous activities are forbidden. One may go to the farm to pick up food but not to work. For the priest it is a day of cleaning and decorating the shrine and offering sacrifices. Those who flout the rules come to grief, if not immediately then certainly later. On sacred days like Eke (Ekpeye) Ekne (Ikwerre) people are not permitted to die. Death on a sacred day is close to being abominable and is usually construed to mean that the deceased led a bad life and has been punished and disgraced by the gods. As a way out relatives sometimes do not disclose deaths on sacred days. They shift the death one day backwards or forward. Certain periods or seasons in the year are sacred to some divinities. A typical example is the new-yam festival season which is sacred to the yam divinity. In the traditional Ekpeye worldview, private worship includes daily private supplications made to the gods by individuals in the privacy of their home. The individual holds a tumbler full of native gin and librates invoking the protection of the gods from evil spirits, seek healing of an illness. Such invocations are done either late in the night or early in the mornings. In the absence of gin chewing stick waste is used mostly in the morning. There are differences in the procedure of public worship of the *ele* deity from that of the different family (Obodo) deities. The public worship of the Obodo deities is done every ewho-uchi throughout the year (except during Ogwu-ede festival). On such days at about ten O'clock in the morning, the priest opens the shrine and sits inside awaiting other worshippers. When such worshippers arrive, Kola nut, alligator pepper, and native gin are eaten. At time songs are sung and libation is made to the deity. In this worship only members of the Obodo take part. At the beginning of the year just before the farming season the priest will make supplications to the deity imploring the deity to enhance fertility of the land for the crops. This is done by librating. After harvesting the crop, the priest and worshippers will on a particular day give the deity his or her portion of the newly harvested crop. This is called *"ubeshibhidhi"*.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The indigenous religion of Ekpeye is the origination of Akalaka (Ekpeye progenitor) who hailed from the ancient Benin. Ekpeye traditional religion acknowledged God as the Supreme Being with multitude of other god's as deities. These deities that inhibit the farmlands, rivers and lake also have their shrine buildings within the communities. From the available indices, the relationship between Ekpeye people and the various deities are disadvantageous. Therefore to find a lasting, the research recommended caution in religious dogmatism. That since Wolo and Obochi alongside other deities as professed are against civilization, and had never brought development should be given less attention. The multiple sacred days of worship and sacrifice should be used for productive ventures.

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RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AND SOCIAL COHESION IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF DEBORAH YAKUBU

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Abstract

The paper examined the problem of religious differences and Misunderstanding and its effect on social cohesion, which has also brought about a bridge in religious dialogue and continues to make it impossible for any form of social cohesion. The problem is that political privileges have covered the essence of justice and caused impunity all over society especially the contemporary Nigerian society. The paper analyses the lynching of Deborah Yakubu and other similar cases, the fierce treatment of Islamic adherents and the phobia it has constituted; the theme of injustice and neglect on the part of the judiciary, legislative and executive arm of government. The main thrust of this paper is to awaken the spirit of dialogue through social cohesion. Using qualitative method and descriptive approach, with newspapers and magazines reports as well as official records in government publications, findings are that society can never enjoy its essence until there is a round table discussion by religious scholars to tackle the issue of the differences that has accompanied insurgency and terrorism. The work concluded that social cohesion is important for every member of the society to feel safe and have a sense of belonging rather than living in constant fear and terror. Also interfaith dialogue is important for the economic and global growth of any nation and

until humans come to agree that their religious crux of the nation needs a review then society will continue to battle with ignorance and diverse pogroms.

Keywords: Social, Cohesion, Religion, Dialogue.

Introduction

Social cohesion and Religious dialogue wouldn't be a subject to be coined if there is no binding force between them speaking of religion and society. Society has faced turbulence, disquietudes, uprisings and lots of controversies in the history of mankind, owing to religious fanaticism, sentiments and misunderstandings. If we decide to take a ride back in time, we will be alarmed on how religious moves have brought more destruction to man from time in memorial. Talk about September 2011 (9/11) a time in history that even the unborn must come to hear of as it has left an indelible mark in the hearts of men and has demonstrated the power of religion and its vigorous effect on society. 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, tolerance and therefore, without moderation (Nmah, 2004). According to Fromkin (2004) the direct cost of September 11 attack has been estimated at 27.2 billion US dollars and indirectly at 500 million dollars. This shows that religious fanaticism has over the years evolved into terrorism as seen in the problem of insurgencies facing different states all over the world. These terrorist acts have brought about decline, inflation and overall economic epilepsy which have also affected negatively the well-being and social relationship of citizens.

Innocent mark (2020) wrote that today, Nigeria is not at war with any neighbor yet the state of insecurity, killings and kidnappings in the country especially northern part of Nigeria is to say the obvious quite alarming, frightening and ominous. We cannot pretend to be at peace in the society especially when our religious language is diverse and our values are a problem to our religious difference; and although ecumenism has been on the lips of religious leaders since the eighteenth century, even within the same religious space, there are still varieties and constant squabbles. It is high time religious bodies come together and galvanize how to deal with a common threat rather than causing disputes among themselves. Great social thinkers such as Karl Marx, Engels, Nietzsche, Lenin and David Hume have postulated the 'death' of religion in the face of philosophy, economy and improved standard of living condition of humans. The argument holds that suffering and social hardships make religion relevant in the society. Marx in fact, canvassed for the abolition of religion because it is illusory to genuine human happiness, yet religion can never die, it is inherent in man and the opium at which people find consolation and connection to their maker (the Supreme

Being).The very reason that society is where it is, is because man still has religion at his beck and call. Even society itself is a makeup of the religious life of the people and to balance religion and society, there must be religious dialogue if society must not lose its core purpose which is cohesion.

Theoretical Framework

This work is underpinned in the Emile Durkheim functionalist theory of sociology, which is based on social cohesion, social equilibrium, regulation, and organization. The theory was adopted in examining the killing of Deborah Yakubu the student of the Islamic school, who supposedly blasphemed against The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and was burnt to death. Emile Durkheim's functionalist theory emphasizes that society is seen as a bounded, self maintaining system while social institutions and practices are seen in terms of their functions in performing a social requirement and must be understood in terms of how they contribute to maintaining the social whole. Functionalist sociologists look at how social equilibrium is maintained and how society meets its needs and requirements in particular. Following this theory in the light of the present time, Religious dialogue is a necessary tool to curb the excesses of religious fanaticism in the country especially in order to contribute towards social wellness; as the rate of insurgency and social crimes is on the rise in society. Obviously, this is a problem owing to the fact that society should be about cohesion and not disparity. The core values of society are according to this theory everything that has to do with unity and development and it works as one is the opposite of the other. This means that without social cohesion there would not be religious dialogue, and without religious dialogue there won't be social cohesion.

The study also adopted the destructive theory of conflict according to Adedoyin, Adedayo (2015) which is characterised by violent features which undermines established or consolidated relationship and threaten necessary mutual understanding in society. This theory bounces back to the grievous analogy that with the rate of damage caused in the society today, it will only take like minds through Religious dialogue to foster social cohesion.

Conceptual clarifications

Religious Dialogue

Religious dialogue has two words "Religion and dialogue" and we shall discuss them separately for the sake of clarity. Religion has been scholarly defined by lots of writers, but for the sake of this study, we will take the definitions of Clifford Geertz (2000) and that of Paul Tillich (1963). Geertz (2000) holds that "Religion is a system

of symbols which acts to establish powerful, persuasive, and long lasting moods and motivations, by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic. Tillich (1963) understands religion to be the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, a concern which qualifies all other concerns as preliminary, and a concern that in itself provides the answer to the question of the meaning of our existence. These definitions hold one thing in common which is the personality of individuals being a strong force to the continuity of religion. Here man himself strives to believe in a particular course and holds on to this course to answer all questions shrouded in mystery. In the same vein ensures that he is consistently making progress in establishing what he believes. On the other hand Omonokhua (2012) opines that: dialogue is not about judging, weighing or making decisions; but about understanding and learning. Dialogue dispels stereotypes, builds trust and enables people to be open to perspectives that are very different from their own. Dialogue is one sure way to heal memories and wounded hearts. In dialogue, education, formation, awareness and understanding are words.

Interreligious dialogue is a conversation between two or more people with different religious traditions in order to express their opinions freely and to listen to the other respectfully. The primary purpose of such dialogue is for each participant to learn from the other and to recognize why the other holds a particular religious opinion. Interreligious dialogue occurs at four levels: knowledge, action, spirituality, and morality. It is a dialogue on religious subjects by participants who acknowledge one another as part of different religious traditions and groups. In addition to the word "interreligious," interfaith, inter-world views and intercultural dialogue are among the set of widely used concepts to refer dialogue among members of different religious traditions.

Social Cohesion

We understand a socially cohesive society to be one in which institutions exist that foster norms of cooperation between distinct ethnic, religions, and other identity groups, including non-discrimination, such as in the labour or capital market; and non-violence, whether it be via low-level, spontaneous communal conflict such as riots, assassinations and pogroms (Varshney 2003, Brass 2006, Wilkinson 2004), or more institutionalized forms of intergroup struggle such as terrorist activities or civil war.

Until society come to an understanding, there may not be any opportunities for religious dialogue. The society itself is the womb by which religion grows and it is nurtured, and it is society that gives birth to the existing religious cultures (in that society). We will not also forget that society contains people, relationships and

institutions and it is society's obligation to take care of this constituent. Scobie (1975) in defining sociology rightly puts in that "in essence, sociology studies the structure and composition of groups". It looks at the pressures and tensions which operate with them and the function and the purpose of their existence. It also examines institutions and society as a whole, not only in determining the structure and composition but examining the function that each institution may have within the society. Geoffrey asserts here that the institutions that make up the society are not just visible but functional, and that religious institutions play a vital role to shape the society as it assimilates into other institutions like politics, economy, education etc. The role of religion cannot be overtly emphasised and for every member of the society to speak the same religious language, society must literally come together to deliberate in order for peace and harmony to occur.

According Manca (2014) "social cohesion refers to the extent of connectedness and solidarity among groups in society. It identifies two main dimensions, the sense of belonging of a community and the relationships among members within the community itself. It stems from a democratic to establish social balance, economic dynamism and national identity, with the goals of founding a system of equity, sustain the impulses of uncontrolled economic growth and avoiding social fractures".

Social cohesion is a social process which aims to consolidate plurality of citizenship by reducing inequality and socio-economic disparities and fractures in the society. It reflects people's needs for both personal development and a sense of belonging and links together individual freedom and social justice, economic efficiency and the fair sharing of resources, and pluralism and common rules for resolving all conflicts. Stanley (2003) defines social cohesion as the willingness of members of society to cooperate with each other in other to survive and prosper.

The Thin Line between Multiculturalism and Social Cohesion

Social cohesion is not synonymous with multiculturalism. While there are some parallels, multiculturalism is a civic project to bring people together and generate social cohesion. Some might understand social cohesion to mean a sense of homogeneity, a form of strict unity, yet common bonds do not automatically imply a similarity of language, ethnicity, religion or lifestyle. Promoting social cohesion is not a wistful imagination of past assimilation practices. social cohesion involves building shared values and communities of interpretation, reducing disparities in wealth and income, and generally enabling people to have a sense that they are

engaged in a common enterprise, facing shared challenges and that they are members of the same community.

Analysing the Lynching of Deborah Yakubu

According to Ogbuechi (2016), the incessant religious conflicts have hampered national development as well as encouraged suspicion, reprisal attacks, disunity, acrimony and rancor among the adherents of these religions, there is no doubt that religious conflicts have turned some parts of this country into a war zone. On May 12th 2022 Deborah Yakubu a twenty-two year old student in her second year was gruesomely murdered in the name of blasphemy news had it that she was stoned severally by her angry course mates and then burnt without recognition after this evil act, the murders celebrated their evil and were boastfully chanting "Allahuakbar" (God is great), according to George Adimike a reporter they were brainwashed fundamentalists who projected the worst of the fallen human nature onto religion, producing a loveless faith which proves to be a dangerous ideology. He further stated that the depth of depravity of abusing the name of God calls for reflection and in truth there is no time humans commit evil so brazenly than when they do so in the name of God.

As bad as the actions of Deborah's murderers are, they become mild when compared with that of the Sokoto state government which openly displayed its complicity and endorsement of their criminality. The state is charged with the responsibility of providing security and safety for the people, but it is not only to protect Deborah, it has shown that it does not value the deceased, even in death. Deborah attended a government owned college where the state is supposed to be fully responsible for her security, yet she was murdered I cold blood under the state government's watch. the government did not only refuse to take responsibility for her death, it did not officially commiserate her family; no visit to her parents, no letter of condolence and the height of it all was that her father had to pay a sum of one hundred and twenty thousand to recover her body for burial. It's very unfortunate because so many other cases like this have occurred and the government is also not interested in making the perpetrators pay for their crimes. They are more interested in being politically correct and allowing the sleeping dog to just lie down.

Two things emerge from Deborah's case. Neither the government, nor the police were interested in pursuing the case, otherwise why would Nigeria Police; Sokoto state command declares wanted the four principal suspects in the murder These people with known identities. They appeared in viral video of the killing and boasted about their action yet the police was looking for help to get to them (the killers).

Similarly, the two suspects allegedly involved in the incident who appeared at a Sokoto chief Magistrates' court were charged with "criminal conspiracy and inciting public disturbance" imagine! Deborah was stoned to death, her body was burnt, yet they were not charged with murder. All that the Sokoto state government could do was to press charges of public disturbance of peace and act of criminality.

The ingenuity lacking on the part of the legislative, judicial and executive sector to deal with cases like this, especially when the offenders are of an echelon description is overwhelming, Nigerian leaders have mastered the act of using religion to bamboozle the citizens. Some of them know what is right but they allow their followers to wallow in ignorance because of what they stand to gain.

Impunity has become the order of the day, and the destructive effect is psychologically demanding. people no longer feel free to settle and work in some parts of the country because they are scared for their lives, even the national youth service programme that was supposed to foster cohesion within the country has no effect as every year core members apply for redeployment from any state that threatens their lives and general well being; it is in fact devastating that Deborah's case is not the first of its kind yet no majors have been put in place to alleviate such practices. Lasisi Olagunju, in his article titled, "The North's Tadpoles and Deborah Yakubu", showed us other instances of killings in the name of blasphemy against God executed by the northerners. he made it clear that Deborah's case was not the first and unfortunately may not be the last; according to him, there was a teacher Christiana Oluwatoyin Oluwasesin, at Government Day secondary school, Gandu, Gombe state, was killed by her own students on Wednesday, March 21, 2007. She was accused of blasphemy. Like Deborah, she was flogged, stoned and her body set on fire by her students and up till now, nobody has been punished for her murder. Her husband Michael later in an interview was revealed that their 10 months old baby would have been killed also for but for the king act of a Samaritan that smuggled him away while disguising in "Jelbah". The house where the baby was being kept was already surrounded by the mob that killed his mother and thought he didn't deserve to live.

A 24 year-old Adie Grace Ushang, graduate of Education administration from the University of Calabar was killed in Borno State for wearing Khaki trousers. She was from Obudu, Cross River State and was in Borno for her one-year compulsory national youth service in July 2009. By August 4, 2009, she was dead. Her killers "took offence because she was wearing her Khaki trousers; the official uniform for the youth service".

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In June 2016, a plastics seller Mrs. Bridget Agbahwe was also beheaded by a mob in Kano's Wambai market. She was also accused of blasphemy. Her husband reportedly witnessed the mob slitting her throat. Unfortunately, in these cases there are no records of anyone being punished and from all indications, the murderers of Deborah have escaped justice, thirty four lawyers are representing just two suspects in court and if they ever get punished, they are likely to get light sentences, and these types of killings may still continue if there are no religious interventions.

They will encourage their followers to beg for food in the name of Almajiri, justifying it as a cultural thing but will never allow their own children to be part of that begging culture. They will sanction kid marriage in the name of religion but send their own daughters abroad in pursuit of good education. They will allow murders in the name of religion because they need the perpetrators to keep voting for them in elections. The Sokoto government's action has only confirmed the selfishness and the wickedness of the Nigerian political elites. These abusers of religion manifest their virtue-deficit and miserable lives by stripping life of its sacredness and emptying death of its mystery. Under the bondage of primordial instincts, unrestrained habits and unbridled ego, they monger fear and invest in bloodletting, in order to win converts. In their struggle to own and control the earthly kingdom, they misrepresent religion and destroy harmony in the society. With their principle of deceit taken a notch higher, they celebrate and mainstream their proclivity for evil in God's name."

Religious Dialogue and Social Cohesion

Religious dialogue is possible as it is evident in records, especially the dialogue between African traditional religion and Christianity held at Ibadan consultation. This meeting according to Adegbola (1976) dealt with the issues of enculturation; acculturation and indigenization. He further stated that this movement which led to interactions among religious scholars has strengthened the relationship between Christians and African traditionalists.

The footprints of blood in our land, calls for a conversation on religion, the need for a new appreciation of the crux of religion cannot be overemphasized, especially in today's world, instead of religion being a beacon of hope and agent of unity, it appears to do the opposite such that to some people it is a force of evil. Deborah's death makes urgent the need to remind all religionist that the essence of religion is love not the opposite. Dialogue which is a mutual respectful listening and discussing between two equal partners in order to achieve understanding and balance while acknowledging existing difference; should be taken into consideration. The interreligious dialogue between Islam and Christianity is based on related, theologically founded positions. It is specifically connected with the typology of the Abrahamic roots, that is, the belief in God. The dialogue between both religions is to be seen simultaneously in the context

of geographic proximity and continuous historic encounters. Representatives from both sides have stood opposed to each other in various constellations during the course of history, from armed conflicts to peaceful coexistence and even alliances.

According to Kshama Pandey (2016), it would be understood that the future of interfaith dialogue does not entirely depend on the history of Christianity and Islam. In his words "the Christian and Muslim civilization are geographical neighbours, and there is the long diversified history of frequent tension, acute rivalry, armed conflict, military alliances across religious lines, (as well as) peaceful cultural exchange economic traffic and occasional cooperation, some would have us believe that the past of these two civilizations necessarily fixes their future".

One other relevant challenge to Christian-Muslim dialogue is sensitivity of the identity on theological grounds, especially in majority populated areas of both Christians and Muslims. Doubtlessly, Christian and Muslims are the largest community of the world population since the advent of Islam especially in contemporary area where the Muslims comprise about 25% and the Christians 31% of the world's population. It means that both religious communities are more than half of the existing population of the contemporary world. In this regard both communities are proud of this and sensitive to their religious identities. Bakari and Yahya (1995) in their Islam in Kenya posit that: Christian-Muslim relations have been an issue since the historical rise of Islam, more than fourteen centuries ago. From the beginning there have been two dimensions to the equation. The first is related to practical living together of individuals and communities of the two faiths, and the second to theological challenges. These include questions of Christians self identity and self expression in relation to Islam as well as those of understanding its significance. These issues have engaged Christians through the centuries. This aggressive identity issues have arisen some questions on religious understanding and peaceful coexistence on the majority of community. For example, this complaint is common in Muslim countries from non-Muslim minority in Christian Europe and Hindu India; that their identity is being vanished from mainstream of socio-economic and sociopolitical spheres. They do not have trust on the majority group.

Fr Musa's work placed in proper context the nature of the current crises and violence in Nigeria. The tension can never be viewed by one particular prism: and for all interested peace builders; these elements most are placed at the table: The historical dimension, the political dimension, the religious dimension and the Ethnic and Economic dimension: All these points were extensively discussed by the author. He provides an insight that should be at the front burners of discussions in all major inter-religious focus groups. The book itemizes some of the contentious issues that have

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always generated heat in our polity and systems when he addressed the historical dimension of the conflicts in Northern Nigeria: In 1987 the Donli Panel identified 15 key complaints from the memoranda it received. These complaints provide a useful summary of the various issues between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. They are as follows (1) Nigerian's membership of the Organization of Islamic Conference; (2) The secularity of the nation; (3) Sharia (4) Dismemberment of the Nation (5) Religion to Education (6) Breaking up Kaduna State (7) Religious Militancy (8) The Role of the Federal Radio Cooperation (9) The Role of Traditional Rulers (10) The Role of the Police (11) The Recruitment into the Police and Army (12) The Location of the Places of Worship (13) The location of hotels. Authentic dialogue can dare to address some of these issues; although difficult but possible. Most times dialogue programs are devoid of real issues that affect the ordinary citizens. In his research, he examined the great effort in history to revive the old friendship and alliances between Muslims; Christians and other Faiths through the formation of global and local bodies.

It is important to note that just as there are Islamic phobias ravaging the society, Christians also have their exceptions. It is believed that Muslims hold fast to their doctrines because they are in percentage less than Christians and do not have the support of the first world nation's, hence the intimidating status of Christianity indirectly forces Muslims to always come out in their number to execute judgment and fight for their God. As O'Brien while discussing dialogue stated that in an Islamic state, Christians are bound to study some part of the Holy Quran at school. The punishment for blasphemous remarks about the Holy Prophet of Islam (SAW) is death. This has negatively affected inter-religious dialogue. Similarly, non-Muslims could be witnesses of any incident in the court of law, but they could not be equal to the Muslims. In short, according to him the government of Pakistan has tried to implement Islamic law in the country. If it is so, then people of other religions are bound to follow Islamic system of life. Khalid Jameel, the director of the department of publications of Karachi University said "we should not have dialogue with these Christians because the western powers are supporting them, and they are well organized in their political, economic and defensive systems. This goes a long way to how insincere the both religions have been, in the process of coming to agreement; they lose the essence and are lost in the quest for superiority.

Religious dialogue should be based on equality. The dialogue is useless if we do not reach up to their level of growth, advancement and development. Dialogue can only be possible if the participants are open-minded. They should not try to convert each other. Both Muslims and Christians should learn about each other's religion as much as possible. They should remain respectful to each other. The controversial issues must be avoided in dialogical discussions. Muslims and Christians should train their scholars in

all fields of knowledge and their adherents. The importance of any particular religion for its followers must be accepted. Only these conditions can lead to a fruitful dialogue. Islam is the religion that first of all started dialogue and taught the principles and conditions for it. It is obligatory for Muslims to prepare themselves according to Quranic teachings and propagate the message of Islam. It must be made clear that Islam is the only religion, which guarantees world peace, brotherhood, tolerance, human rights and religious harmony. Mbon (1993) opined that interreligious conversations should be held from time to time. If cordial communication is maintained among the religions in dialogue it will bring about inter-religious harmony since religions that communicate together are more likely to live harmoniously. Resolution of conflicts is always faster when people can talk about their differences. Forum for dialogue crates forum for discussing other issues, which may be of common interest to the parties.

Key Ways to Foster Social Cohesion
Since religious dialogue can only be possible where there is social cohesion, then society must structure it in such a way that it will be able provide the correct atmosphere for dialogue. Thus specific steps are to be taken in other to foster social cohesion which includes:

Social membership/national citizenship: this is when every individual of the society is given a clear sense of belonging in the community and nation. This is necessary to establish clarity around the basic rights and obligations which govern social interaction.

Fairness and equity: different societies have different levels of tolerance for inequality and for variations in equality of opportunity and social mobility. Such norms change over time, sometimes rather rapidly. This implies that at every level of the political and economic advantage, no member of the society should be left behind.

Security of access to livelihoods and basic services: Social insurance cushions individuals against a relative loss of income or wealth; social assistance may intend to ensure that no individual can dip beneath a social floor; a guarantee of livelihoods may be accompanied by a degree of guarantee of certain basic services; education can be a key instrument for building a common national identity. The role of the state is critical to and cuts across these three issues: it legitimizes national membership/citizenship (and the conditions of access for outsiders), and it embodies national norms around fairness and to different degrees, ensures individuals/household access to basic livelihoods and services.

Community policing: A philosophy and organizational strategy that promotes a partnership-based, collaborative effort between the police and the community to more effectively and efficiently identify, prevent and solve problems of crime, the fear of crime, issues of physical safety and security, social disorder and neighborhood decay in order to improve the quality of life for everyone.

Community resilience: The ability of a community to withstand, respond to and recover from a wide range of harmful and adverse events. This can only be possible when there is social cohesion.

Community security: This is when there is the mutually desirable goals of protecting local residents of, and visitors to, an area from threats posed by anti-social behaviour, social disorder, crime and terrorism.

Community-targeted approach to terrorism: Counterterrorism policies and practices that, driven by the security priorities of a state, target communities for intelligence-gathering and enforcement activities to detect suspected terrorists and thwart their activities, especially active plans for attacks.

Data mining: Searches for and processing of personal data according to the presumed characteristics of suspects. Hard-to-reach individuals in the community who have been hard for the police to reach and/ or engage with because they are, for instance, afraid or distrustful of the police, hostile to the police, or have no wish to have any contact with the police.

Intelligence-led policing: An approach to policing that is clearly based on the collection, analysis and dissemination of police intelligence to inform and direct the deployment of police resources and police interventions. This contrasts with police approaches that rely heavily upon individual officers' suspicions or hunches about unlawful or suspect behaviour to influence police interventions.

Conclusion

The multidimensional nature of religion gives it an impact on all facets of human life such as psychological, social, emotional, economic and even spiritual. This makes it susceptible to be used as a source of violence, chaos, conflict and destruction by some persons in the society. This is so because religion deals with matters that people hold dear to their hearts leading to a high level of religious intolerance. This can be partly blamed on the insincere teachings of some religious leaders and the sheepish followership of dogmas and authority figures by some religious adherents that are not in tandem with the real teachings of the various religious practices in Nigeria. The paper posits that religion is not the problem rather the misuse of religion for selfish gains by religious practitioners has become the bane of religion and social cohesion

which the Nigerian society is still grappling with. Agreed that it is inevitable to avoid certain degrees of frictions and conflicts in a diverse society like Nigeria, one thing that is sure is that Nigerians do not hate themselves. On a daily bases, millions of Nigerians interact and comingle on common lines. They intermarry, form business partners, become political allies, and engage in philanthropic activities across religious and cultural divides. What truly matters, is the ability of religious bodies and their adherents to manage their diversity and ensure social cohesion through inter-religious dialogue and ecumenism irrespective of their religious ideologies. This is can only be possible on a table of dialogue.

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THE CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF KARL MARX THEORY OF RELIGION FROM THE NIGERIAN PERSPECTIVE: A PHILOSOPHICAL EVALUATION

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Abstract

Throughout history, religion has drawn the interest of numerous academic fields. This implies that religion has been viewed from different perspectives. These include functionalism, and conflict theory of Karl Marx. In the process, such issues as protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism in Western Europe came to the fore. Significantly, Karl Marx in a seminal work drew the attention of the whole world of the exploitation and the dehumanization of the masses (proletariat) by the ruling class which he referred to as the bourgeoisies. Religion, therefore, serves two main purposes as an opiate: first, it dulls our awareness of our suffering; second, it deceives us into believing that our suffering is the result of a divine plan or cosmic law (such as God's will or karma), rather than the product of material historical forces, as it actually is. In Marx's view, once workers finally overthrow capitalism, unequal social relations will no longer need legitimating and people's alienation will dissolve, along with any need for religion. The paper adopted the descriptive method. The paper observed that, the importance and utility of anything will frequently also influence its worth. In light of the aforementioned, can religion be dismissed as a minor facet of human existence? Why is the religious aspect of life so significant? What is the contemporary relevance of Karl Marx theory of religion from the Nigerian perspective? The challenge of this paper is borne out the fact that the relevance of Karl Marx theory to the contemporary

Nigerian society has not been sufficiently explored in academic literatures. As such, this paper focused on Karl Marx and the implications of his thought about religion on contemporary Nigeria.

Key Words: Alienation, Opium, Religion, Nigeria

Introduction

Throughout history, religion has drawn the interest of numerous academic fields. It is now a topic of study for anthropology, philosophy, sociology, psychology, magic science, political science, economics, and medicine, among others. The proponents of these disciplines came to various conclusions regarding the evolution, nature and role of religion in human existence, just like the six inquisitive blind men and the elephant in the Indian myth (Lawrence-Hart & Deezia, 2023). The process has not ended but continues to occupy the attention of intellectuals who strive to unveil the nature, role and further dimensions of religion. This implies that religion has been viewed from different perspectives. These include functionalism, and conflict theory of Karl Marx. In the process, such issues as protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism in Western Europe came to the fore. Significantly, Karl Marx in a seminal work drew the attention of the whole world of the exploitation and the dehumanization of the masses (proletariat) by the ruling class which he referred to as the bourgeoisies (Cline, 2015).

Although Karl Marx did not publish a specific monograph on religion, his analyses of religion are very significant. He can be said to be the first sociologist of religion. His interpretations of religion are mainly being drawn from Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction (1844) and German Ideology (1845). Marx was highly critical of religion. For him man makes religion, religion does not make man (Marx cf. Tucker 1978). Marx considered religious sentiments as all other social institutions as a social product. He proposed that religion reflects society; therefore, any criticism of religion must ipso facto be a criticism of society itself. It is essentially a projection of social relationships involved in the process of production. He proposes that religion does not reflect man's true consciousness. Religion, as Marx sees it, is a false consciousness; religion is the product of men, the product of those in power - those who control the productive process and people fail to understand that religion is man-made. Religion comes to divert people's attention from their miseries, which are the consequences of exploitation. He states that religion is only the illusory sun, which revolves round man as long as he does not revolve round himself (Pals, 1996). And he

argues in a truly socialist communist society all illusions and distortions of reality disappear and need for any religion ceases.

Marx argues that the teachings of Christianity and its emphasis on heaven as a reward for godliness while on earth is only a ploy by the ruling class to manipulate the masses into docility. The promise of heaven if they remain obedient is to stop the masses from revolting against them. Thus, he describes religion as opium of the people. Opium use to calm human beings and also make them subservient and submissive even in the face of oppression. Lenin (1977), a close associate of Marx described this as a ''spiritual gin''–an intoxicant administered to the masses by the ruling class to ensure their perpetual subjugation and oppression. Lenin (1977) contends that this mystical fog was created by the ruling class to ensure that it does not get overthrown by the masses. Anything that is found to be worthless can be thrown away with ease.

However, the importance and utility of anything will frequently also influence its worth. In light of the aforementioned, can religion be dismissed as a minor facet of human existence? Why is the religious aspect of life so significant? What is the contemporary relevance of Karl Marx theory of religion from the Nigerian perspective? In attempt to answer the above raised posers, this paper focused on Karl Marx and the implications of his thought about religion on contemporary Nigeria.

Karl Marx's Biography and Philosophy

The German Jew Karl Marx was one of the most important and influential theorists in the history of social thinking. Heinrich (Heschel) Marx, a Jewish attorney, gave birth to Karl on May 5, 1818, in Trier. Karl was only six years old when the entire family converted to German Protestantism and was baptised into the Lutheran Church in August 1824. Marx's early years were influenced by both Christian and Jewish religious practises. Marx was not antagonistic to Christianity when he was a young man. Marx's early work, *The Union of Believers with Christ,* which was published in 1835, is a clear indication of his commitment to Christianity. Marx discussed the underlying connection that might lead Christians to love one another in that book. He also noted that unity with Christ could result in inner elevation, solace in grief, peaceful trust, and a heart open to human love and everything wonderful and noble, but only for the sake of Christ and nothing else. Marx later transitioned from faith to atheism, from adherence to Christianity to militant atheism.

Marx spent a year at the University of Bonn studying philosophy and law, when he also engaged in some drinking and duelling. He was able to avoid serving in the military due to poor health. He transferred to the University of Berlin, where he immediately fit in with its vibrant cultural scene, before he started taking his studies

seriously. The institution was a fantastic hub of learning in a big metropolis that itself served as a meeting place for academics, politicians, and serious thinkers, some of whom had very radical viewpoints. At the period, the philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich von Hegel had a colossal influence on Berlin and the majority of other German universities (1770–1831). Marx must be understood in light of Hegel's philosophical framework, but this is not an easy concept to convey in layman's words. Later, we'll need to go back to it. Hegel was an idealist, a thinker who determined that mental things—ideas or concepts—are fundamental to the world while material things are always secondary; they are the physical manifestations of an underlying universal spirit, or absolute idea. Hegel was the first to resolve the age-old philosophical question of matter and mind. This idealism system required a response from any thinker in Germany who wanted to be considered seriously. Marx achieved this by associating himself with a group of intellectuals known as the Young Hegelians, who were both followers and detractors of their teacher. Also known as left-leaning Hegelians, they maintained that while Hegel was correct to recognise the conflict between matter and consciousness as essential, his solution was actually the exact opposite of reality. The domain of concepts and ideas that are so significant to intellectuals is the realm of mind, but in reality, it is merely a reflection, like the colour red in an apple, of a universe that is basically material in nature. Marx vigorously advocated this viewpoint. His doctoral dissertation, which focused on Democritus and Epicurus, two very "materialist" ancient Greek philosophers, was finished in 1841.

Marx's later thinking was philosophically anchored by this overarching tenet, which states that material forces, not mental notions, constitute what is really genuine about the world. It specifically underpins two themes that came to the fore as his ideas evolved: (1) the conviction that economic realities shape human behaviour; and (2) the claim that class struggle, or the ongoing conflict between those who own things, typically the rich, and those who must work to survive, typically the poor, is the central theme of human history.

Because of his affiliation with the Young Hegelians and his own more radical opinions, Marx was unable to pursue his dream of becoming a university professor. As a result, he decided to pursue a career in journalism. He started by writing for a German political publication before relocating to Paris, where he researched the writings of French social and economic theorists and started to thoroughly develop his own beliefs. In actuality, this early time was his most important moment as a thinker. Marx published a collection of his most significant political essays and philosophical treatises between the years of 1843 and 1850, a span of around seven years during which he relocated from Paris to Brussels and back to Germany. These included *On the Jewish Question* (1843), *Toward the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right:*

Introduction (1843), *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844), *The Holy Family: Or a Critique of All Critiques* (1845) and others. He developed his overall materialist theory of human nature and destiny in these texts. In them, he also outlined his major beliefs on law, morals, philosophy, religion, economics, politics, and history and society. The motto on the banner of one of the journals he edited gives us some insight into the broad viewpoint he adopted: "The reckless criticism of all that exists" (Marx, 1971).

Karl Marx's Theory of Religion

The social-scientific debate about religion has been dominated by three fundamental points of general consensus for the better part of the 160 years or so since Marx wrote his foundational manuscripts in the early and middle of the 1840s; these points, of course, take different forms in a wide range of analyses. They are: (1) "that religion is false and harmful"; (2) "that religion is doomed"; and (3) "that religion is an epiphenomenon (Stark and Finke, 2000)." Marx obviously held each of these beliefs rather seriously, and his critique of religion is frequently seen in the context of the first of these beliefs in particular. Marx undoubtedly found religion to be destructive in its justification of the division of work and the extreme inequities in wealth distribution that characterise the capitalistic world. The social principles of Christianity justified slavery in antiquity, exalted serfdom in mediaeval times, and, when necessary, also know how to defend the oppression of the proletariat, even though they may do so with a pious face. According to him, the emergence of capitalism did not change this function of religion in any way.

> The social principles of Christianity justified slavery in antiquity, glorified medieval serfdom, and, when necessary, also know how to defend the oppression of the proletariat, although they may do this with a pious face. The social principles of Christianity preach the necessity of a ruling and an oppressed class, and for the latter they have only the pious wish that the former will be benevolent… The social principles of Christianity declare all vile acts of the oppressors against the oppressed to be either just punishment for original sin and other sins, or suffering that the Lord in his infinite wisdom has destined for those to be redeemed (Karl Marx, 2002: 186).

Therefore, religion serves two main purposes as an opiate: first, it dulls our awareness of our suffering; second, it deceives us into believing that our suffering is the result of a divine plan or cosmic law (such as God's will or karma), rather than the product of material historical forces, as it actually is. Marx sees this as the key issue, and most readers do indeed take away this as his fundamental point on religion. However, Marx's claim that religion "is the opium of the people" is surrounded by other intriguing notions that are neither developed further in his writings nor given anywhere close to the same level of attention by his interpreters. Let's think over this remarkable passage in more detail here:

> *Man makes religion*, religion does not make man. Religion is indeed the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man who has either not yet won through to himself or has already lost himself again. But *man* is no abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is *the world of man.... Religious* suffering is at one and the same time the *expression* of real suffering and a protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of a soulless condi-tion. It is the *opium* of the people (Marx, 1975:142).

The statement that "human beings make religion" is obviously a reference to Feuerbach, but Marx is also making an important connection to the foundation of his humanistic philosophy: that "human beings are by nature the creators of themselves and their own reality, that is, their species-being." Marx also means that religion is a symptom of our alienation from our species-being when he says that it is "the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man who has either not yet got through to himself or has already lost himself again." This alienation is the root cause of the suffering that makes people turn to religion to begin with. Thus, while our opium somewhat lessens our suffering in this "heartless world," it also shifts our attention away from people and toward God, further separating us from what we should be as a species.

Often overlooked in Marx's famous critique of religion is the notion that religion is not only "the *expression* of real sufferings" but also "the protest against real suffering." It appears that Marx believed that religion had little to give in the way of "revolutionary praxis" or any practical means that could assist transform the world. However, Marx never bothers to explain what he exactly means by the phrase "protest" here. Like several important Marxist thinkers after him, Marx's close friend and frequent coauthor Friedrich Engels deviated from Marx in this regard, writing at some length of the function of religion in challenging the social order in Central European

history (Engels, 1959), ideas that are echoed by the twentieth-century German Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch (Bloch, 1972). In a similar vein, the great Italian communist thinker Antonio Gramsci saw some revolutionary potential in popular religion (Gramsci, 1978), while the Polish-born German Marxist theorist Rosa Luxemburg called for an alliance between socialism and the church (Billings, 1990). Karl Marx (1818–1883) was a social philosopher who adhered to a materialist philosophy. Marx believed that the dynamics of society were determined by the relationships necessary for its members to engage in in order to generate their means of subsistence (Kunin, 2003). Expanding on the theories of Ludwig Feuerbach, he believed that religion was both an ideology that hid the true nature of social connections and a byproduct of alienation that served to alleviate people's present pain. He saw it as a transitory aspect of human culture that would have vanished once class society was abolished.

However, these assertions were only made in reference to his historical examination of the interactions between European cultures, political structures, and their Christian religious traditions. Marxist theories had a significant impact on how people understood society and came to conclusions about it, including the anthropological school of cultural materialism. Many professionals in the field have never accepted Marx' explanations for all religions, always, in all forms, and everywhere seriously, yet a sizable portion acknowledge that Marx' theories may explain some aspects of religions (Pals 2006). According to some recent research, the conventional interpretation of Marx's analysis of religion is accurate, but it is also only one side of a dialectical explanation that takes both the disruptive and pacifying aspects of religion seriously (McKinnon, 2005).

Marx argued that religion is a human invention devoid of any supernatural component and that it is the self-consciousness of a man who has failed to recognise his true nature and potential. As a result, Marx claimed that the fight against religion is also a fight against the world, of which religion is the spiritual undertone. ― Religion is that world's overarching theory, its encyclopaedic compendium, its popularised logic, its spiritualistic point *d'honneur,* its fervour, its moral sanction, its solemn supplement, and its all-encompassing source of solace and justification. Karl Marx believed that religion was primarily an outcome of a class society. His general thesis of alienation in class society includes his views on religion. He saw religion as a manifestation of class interests as well as a result of alienation.

It is regarded as a tool for the manipulation and subjugation of the socially inferior subordinate class, as well as a form of protest against oppression, resignation, and solace. Religion is the opiate of the people, according to Karl Marx's (1848–1964) classic statement; he employs the metaphor of the depressive drug to imply apathy,

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lethargy, and a dulling of the senses. Marx used the phrase "false consciousness" to describe the tendency of an oppressed class to accept the dominant ideology of the ruling class, so legitimising oppression. Religion lulls people into this false consciousness. Marx felt that people were at the mercy of nature in pre-class civilizations. Primitive peoples had limited influence over the natural world and little understanding of how it worked. As a result, they made efforts to influence nature through magic and religion. Marx claimed that as class division permeated society, humans entered a state in which they were powerless to influence the forces affecting them and in which their comprehension was insufficient.

It was emphasised that the social order is considered as something set and given that governs and affects human conduct in class society. But the behaviours and conduct of the people who make up society constitute the social order. In the sense that they uphold it via their own acts, it is really their invention. In class society, less fortunate people feel excluded. The destitute came to have a confused understanding of reality. Although perceived as such, human goods are actually the work of external factors. They assume a separate reality that is perceived as determined by spirits rather than external forces like human behaviour. Marx further pointed out that while Christians believe that God created man in his own image, the reality is that God was made in the likeness of man. God, who looks to be an all-powerful and perfect creature, is projected with human abilities and capabilities.

Marx believes that because religion is a result of estrangement, it is a misrepresentation of reality. Therefore, criticism of religion also includes criticism of the society that fosters it. The most significant section of Karl Marx's critique of religion may be found in his *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right,* which is a highly condensed version of his broader method. It is worth quoting exactly as follows:

> The basis of irreligious criticism is: *Man makes religion,* religion does not make man. In other words, religion is the self-consciousness of man who has either not yet found himself or has already lost himself again. However, *man* is no abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is *the world of man,* the state, and society. This state, this society, produces religion, *a reversed world-consciousness,* because they are a *reversed world.* Religion is the general theory of the world, its encyclopedic compendium, it logic in a popular form, its spiritualistic *point d'honneur,* its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn completion, its

universal ground for consolation and justification. It is *the fantastic realization of the human essence* because the human essence has no true reality (Marx, 1964:41).

The struggle against religion is therefore, mediate the fight against *the other world,* of which religion is the spiritual *aroma. Religious* distress is at the same time the *expression* of real distress and *the protest* against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the *opium* of the people. The abolition of religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is required for their *real* happiness. The demand to give up the illusions about its condition is the demand to up a condition which needs illusions.

Because religion is a by-product of a reversed reality, it is a "world-consciousness" in reverse. We notice the categorization of religion as mostly ideological in this assertion. Marx defined ideology as a school of thought in which people and their circumstances are viewed as being inverted because, in a class-divided society, where we view ourselves as being essentially determined rather than as determining agents, and where we are, in fact, to some extent, determined by our social creations, things are flipped. Initially, it was the forces of nature that were mirrored in this way; however, when social classes developed, societal forces also were deified. Karl Marx came to the conclusion that religion serves as both a source of universal solace and the populace's opiate.

Karl Max portrayed religion as a reflection of society. According to him, all religions reflect the fact human lives are controlled by external powers over which they have no control. They are influenced by external forces that control their daily life where the terrestrial forces assume the form of supernatural forces. Marx made a contrast between primitive religions and modern religious. According to him, it was the power of nature that controlled man in primitive society, where as in modern world, it is the forces of social systems, which exercise its external domains.

Marx claims that instead of men's consciousness determining their existence; it is rather their social being that determines their consciousness. He notes that it is economic forces that lead human beings to construct the illusion of God. The "moral sanction," "the solemn completeness," and the "universal base for comfort and justification" are all terms used to define religion in this passage. The sorrow of this world is expressed via religion, like the sigh of the oppressed. But it's also a protest against suffering. Marx, according to Pals (2006), similarly believes that religion is merely an illusion. He claims that faith in a god or gods is a positive byproduct of the

class struggle and should not be disregarded, but should instead be mocked. Marx notices a similarity between social-economic activity and religions. There is estrangement in both. Religion artificially imbues mythical, extraterrestrial beings we call God with moral principles that are normally part of our everyday lives as humans. Similar to how religion deprives us of our human merits and gives them to God, the capitalist system deprives us of our labour and authentic self-expression and provides it to those wealthy individuals who can afford it as a mere commodity. Real (economic) distress is oppressed by religious distress, and religious distress is protested against. Marx may, however, draw a lot of criticism because religion encompasses more than just materialistic concerns. He disregards the significance of religion in a person's spiritual existence.

Religion as the Opium of the People

Opium is a yellow-brown, addictive narcotic drug obtained from the dried juice of unripe pods of the opium poppy, *Papaver somniferum*, and containing alkaloids such as morphine, codeine, and papaverine. The opium of the people or opium of the masses (German: *Opium des Volkes*) is a dictum used in reference to religion, derived from a frequently paraphrased statement of German sociologist and economic theorist Karl Marx: "Religion is the opium of the people." In context, the statement is part of Marx's structural-functionalist argument that religion was constructed by people to calm uncertainty over their role in the universe and in society (Lawrence-Hart & Deezia, 2023).

Marx used the phrase to make a structural-functionalist argument about religion, and particularly about organized religion. In his view, religion may be false, but it is a function of something real. Specifically, Marx believed that religion had certain practical functions in society that were similar to the function of opium in a sick or injured person: it reduced people's immediate suffering and provided them with pleasant illusions which gave them the strength to carry on. In this sense, while Marx may have no sympathy for religion itself, he has deep sympathy for those proletariat who put their trust in it.

However, Marx also saw religion as harmful to revolutionary goals: by focusing on the eternal rather than the temporal, religion turns the attention of the oppressed away from the exploitation and class structure that encompasses their everyday lives. In the process, religion helps to foster a kind of false consciousness that emboldens cultural values and beliefs that support and validate the continued dominance of the ruling class. It thereby prevents the socialist revolution, the overthrowing of capitalism, and the establishment of a classless, socialist society. In Marx's view, once

workers finally overthrow capitalism, unequal social relations will no longer need legitimating and people's alienation will dissolve, along with any need for religion:

> The abolition of religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is the demand for their *real* happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to *give up a condition that requires illusions*. The criticism of religion is, therefore, *in embryo, the criticism of that vale of tears* of which religion is the *halo* (Marx, 1973:88)

Marx's Philosophy and the Critique of Religion

The mention of concepts like ideology and superstructure finally gets us to the topic of religion, where Marx's fundamental viewpoint should no longer be shocking. In reality, there are not many topics on which he is as succinct or direct. He claims that religion is just an illusion. Even worse, it is an illusion with unquestionably negative effects. It is the most severe illustration of ideology, a belief system whose sole objective is to offer justifications—really, excuses—for maintaining social structures in the manner in which the oppressors prefer them. In actuality, economics controls religion to such an extent that it is useless to evaluate any of its theories or beliefs on their own merits. Of course, these beliefs vary from one religion to the next, but as religion is always ideological, its particular form in one culture or another ultimately depends heavily on the nature of social life as determined by the material forces that dominate it at any given time and location. According to Marx, faith in a god or gods is an unfortunate byproduct of the class struggle and should be scornfully rejected as well. No other thinker in this book—not even Freud—discusses religion with quite the same sardonic disdain as Marx does.

Clearly, there are deeper causes for the established animosity in this mind-set than just conceptual dissonance. Young Marx made the first strides toward a vehement rejection of religion. He stated his atheism in no uncertain terms from the beginning. It is difficult to determine if this original viewpoint was motivated by social, intellectual, merely personal, or some combination of these factors. He may have disliked his father's weakness in accepting Christianity in order to save his law firm, and he most certainly had little love for the Prussian villages' militantly Christian, frequently anti-Semitic culture. However, his complete rejection of believing went beyond his dismissal of Christianity. He adopted Prometheus's motto, "I loathe all the gods," as his own in the preface to his PhD dissertation, adding as his justification that they "do not recognise man's self-consciousness as the supreme divinity" (Marx, 1973).

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Simple atheism is one thing, but a comprehensive intellectual crusade to expose religion's fallacies is quite another. Until the 1840s, which was, as previously mentioned, the pivotal decade in his thinking and the time when he read the significant writings of Ludwig Feuerbach, a man closely associated with the Young Hegelians in Berlin, Marx did not start to develop an explanatory account—what he called a "critique"—of religion. Feuerbach, like the others, was first a student of Hegel but eventually changed his mind and became an outspoken opponent of idealism. His critique of traditional religion, *The Essence of Christianity*, made headlines in 1841. He shocked German opinion with two additional works that then launched a simultaneous attack on the almost equally sacrosanct system of Hegel while the raging debate over this book was still ongoing (Marx, 1964a). Unsurprisingly, Feuerbach instantly rose to cult status among the more extreme students in German colleges.

Feuerbach's main thesis was not difficult to understand, despite the fact that he also wrote in the complex philosophical terminology of the time, which discussed "awareness" and "alienation." He claimed that both Hegel and Christian theology commit the same fallacy. When speaking about mankind alone, both refer to some extraterrestrial being, such as God or the absolute. Theologians who follow Christianity take note of all the characteristics we most prize in other people—ideals such as goodness, beauty, truthfulness, wisdom, love, steadfastness, and strength of character—then go on to take those qualities away from their human owners and project them onto the screen of heaven, where they are worshipped—now in a form distinct from ourselves—under the name of a supernatural being called God. The same is true for Hegel. He observes abstract concepts like freedom, reason, and kindness and feels the need to "objectify" them by saying they are actually manifestations of the absolute, of some supreme spirit that apparently manages the world's affairs invisibly. But even this is incorrect. Rationality and freedom are essentially descriptive terms for aspects of our own inherent human existence. So both Hegelian theory and Christian theology are guilty of "alienating" our awareness. They incorrectly attribute to God or some other alien being known as the absolute what is rightfully human.

When he read these arguments of Feuerbach, Marx found himself completely convinced. In fact, they merely expressed in greater detail the view that he had already begun to adopt. He hailed Feuerbach as "the true conqueror of the old philosophy of Hegel" and described his books as "the only writings since Hegel's … which contain a real theoretical revolution" (Marx, 1964a). And in his own *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction*, written a year after Feuerbach's book, he followed him almost to the letter: "Man, who looked for a superman in the fantastic reality of heaven … found nothing there but the *reflexion* of himself." He then added: "The basis

of irreligious criticism is: *Man makes religion*, religion does not make man" (Marx, 1964b).

Feuerbach's arguments were convincing, but Marx identified two areas where they could be strengthened. First, Feuerbach actually has no response other than a meaningless generalisation when asked why people refuse to take credit for their own achievements, why they persist on calling themselves sad sinners, and why they want to give all acclaim and glory to God. In essence, he tends to claim that this is just the way humans are; it is human nature to be estranged—happy with God but dissatisfied with ourselves. For Marx, this will not do. He maintains that there is a true solution to the alienation issue, and it fairly jumps out at us the instant we do so from a materialist and economic standpoint.

Marx notes a similarity between socioeconomic and religious activities. There is estrangement in both. Religion substitutes a fictitious, alien person we call God for the moral principles that naturally exist in our normal human lives. Another manifestation of our inherent humanity that capitalist economies take advantage of is our productive labour, which they also artificially turn into a tangible good that other people may buy, sell, and own. In the first scenario, we cede a component of who we are—our virtue and sense of self—to an entirely fictitious creature. In the other, we are equally willing to give our labour for only pay in exchange for other goods that money can buy. The capitalist system deprives us of our labour and authentic self-expression and throws it, as a mere commodity, into the hands of those—the rich—who can afford to buy it, just as religion deprives us of our human virtues and gives them to God. This undesirable combination is not merely a coincidence. Remember that the superstructure of civilization includes religion. The foundation of it is economic reality. In reality, the alienation we perceive in religion is really a manifestation of our deeper fundamental discontent, which is always economic. The apparent isolation in religion is only a reflection of humanity's actual, underlying economic and material alienation.

In light of this, it is simple to comprehend why religion appeals to so many individuals on such a deep and enduring level. It meets the emotional requirements of a disenfranchised, dissatisfied mankind better than anything else in the social superstructure. Marx states it in the following famous passage, which, depending on the reader, is either among the most despised or revered of all of his writing:

> *Religious* distress is at the same time the *expression* of real
> [economic] distress and the *protest* against real distress.
> Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a

heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the *opium* of the people.The abolition of religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is required for their *real* happiness. The demand to give up the illusion about its condition is the *demand to give up a condition which needs illusions* (Marx, 1964b:67).

It is unclear how much Marx knew about the use of opium in his day, but he was aware that it was a narcotic and a psychedelic that reduced pain while also inducing fantasies. And according to him, that is exactly how religion affects the lives of the impoverished. Through it, the dream of a supernatural paradise where all sorrows end and all oppression disappears lessens the suffering individuals experience in a world of terrible exploitation. Are the poor without jewels? No matter; the gates of Heaven are inlaid with pearl. Are the oppressed without money? The very streets of Heaven are paved with gold. Are the poor jealous of the rich? They can read Jesus' parable of poor Lazarus, who died and went to father Abraham, while the soul of the rich man who ignored him in life traveled directly to Hades at his death. To "fly away" one day and go home to live with God, as the old Negro spirituals declare, is to enjoy in the next life a well-deserved consolation for all of the sufferings endured in this one.

Marx argues that what makes religion such a wickedly pleasant industry is simply this unreality, this jump into an imaginary universe. After all, having a religious addiction is no different from having an opium addiction if the reality is that there is neither a God nor a supernatural realm. Pure escape, that is. Even worse, it is inherently detrimental in the fight against exploitation in the world. If the impoverished are completely content with the idea of the next world, what efforts will they ever make to improve their situation? If their hope of heaven leaves people with no greater desire to alter their lives than the "sigh of protest" we find in otherworldly rituals and ceremonies, how will they organise, plot their attack, and launch their revolt? Religion causes people to look upward at God when they should be looking downward at the injustice of their material and physical circumstances.

Marx provides his other advance over Feuerbach in precisely this context. Feuerbach's main flaw is that, like most philosophers, he wants to limit himself to the life of the mind; he is a passive commentator on the state of humanity. He makes the very valid observation that people turn to religion because they feel isolated. However, observation alone is insufficient. Feuerbach and other intellectuals need to be made aware that the goal of studying the problem of religion is to identify an effective solution, not only to provide a fresh topic for discussion. A key component of Marx's communist programme is his emphasis on action, which contrasts with the merely

theoretical concerns of many thinkers in his day (and ours). According to his final renowned *Theses on Feuerbach,* "The idea is to transform the world; the philosophers have simply interpreted it in various ways" (Marx, 1964b).

Therefore, the main benefit that religion provides the oppressed is escape. It provides something much better for those who are not enslaved and are fortunate enough to possess the means of production. Religion offers the philosophy and the framework of ideas that the underprivileged can use to remind themselves that all social structures should remain in place. God wants the labouring poor and the owning affluent to stay in their current positions because that is where they belong. In the past, religion has served to provide a divine defence of the status quo and of life as it is today. Marx claims that "Christian social concepts" were used to justify slavery in antiquity, glorify serfdom in the middle ages, and, when required, to defend the oppression of the proletariat, despite their pitiful outward appearance. Christianity's social doctrines emphasise the importance of a ruling and an oppressed class, and all they have to offer the latter is the pious hope that the former will practise charity. According to Christian social doctrine, all heinous crimes committed by oppressors against oppressed people are either just retribution for original sin and subsequent transgressions, or they are tribulations that the Lord, in his infinite wisdom, imposes on those who have been redeemed. Christianity's social teachings advocate for timidity, self-disrespect, abasement, surrender, and despair (Marx, 1964b).

Marx's assessment of religion is unwavering, as these caustic remarks amply demonstrate. He views faith in God and some sort of celestial salvation as more than just a delusion; it is a paralysing, enslaving delusion. By diverting the precise feelings of rage and fury needed to spark a revolt into fantasy, it paralyses workers. They are pleased on earth because they expect heaven. Religion encourages oppression by giving a belief system that claims that poverty and unhappiness are truths of life that regular people must just accept and embrace. Religion also imprisons people. The fact that Marxism does exhibit variations in ideology, similar to those seen within a wide economic system like capitalism or a religion like Christianity, must be emphasised in this context notwithstanding the weight of Marx's initial remarks and judgments on these subjects. For instance, in his *Foundations of Christianity* (1908), Marxist historian Karl Kautsky and Engels both recognised that, in certain ways, the growth of Christianity in the ancient world could be understood as the expression of a proletarian revolutionary struggle against privileged Roman overlords. Theologians in Latin America have used Marxist ideas and analyses to build a potent movement of protest against economic inequality known as "liberation theology" in recent decades of our own century.

Although more religiously sympathetic versions of Marxism have emerged, it is doubtful that Marx himself would have given them much consideration. Given that his own final judgement is both dismissive and disdainful, he would have questioned why anyone would even attempt such salvaging attempts. Despite his rage, it is notable that Marx does not attempt to portray religion as the main adversary of communist, as religious people frequently have done with respect to communism. And the reason for this is that, in his opinion, religion, despite all of its sinful deeds, does not actually matter all that much. There is no need to begin frantic crusades against it despite the fact that it undoubtedly supports the oppressors since it is simply not that significant. It is not the actual sickness; it is only one of its symptoms. It belongs to the top layer of society, not the foundation. The base is where the oppressed will actually fight. The appeal to reject their illusions about their situation is a *call to abandon a condition that requires illusions,* as Marx characterises their plight in one of his trademark reversals of phrase (Marx, 1964b). He has complete faith that the attack on those conditions would be successful in due course. And when it happens, religion will "wither away" completely on its own, just like the state and everything else in the superstructure of tyranny.

The Relevance of Marx's Theory of Religion from the Nigerian Perspective

Marx says that religion is meant to create illusory fantasies for the poor. The poor are dominated and ruled by the ruling class, which owns the forces of production. The economic realities that keep them suppressed - prevent them from finding true happiness i n this life. So religion gives them the illusion that this is correct or true because they will find true happiness i n the next life. In the existing social system the people are i n distress and religion does provide solace. Thus Marx says religion masks the actual social reality; provide them temporary relief, just as people who are physically injured receive relief from opiate-based drugs. Here Marx compares religion to opium - a sedative substance (Pals, 1996).

A sedative only helps to forget the pain for the time being, it fails to fix a physical injury. The pain could be healed only if one solves the underlying causes of the pain. Similarly, religion does not fix the underlying causes of people's pain and suffering - instead, it helps them forget why they are suffering and causes them to look forward to an imaginary future and accepts the social system in its existing form. It thus prevents working to change circumstances. The worse is as Marx puts it that the "opiate drug" i.e., religion is administered by the oppressors who are responsible for the pain and suffering or the actual oppression.

Religion in Marx's opinion soothes the pains of oppression as well as act as an instrument of oppression. It dulls the pain of oppression, for example, in Christianity, by promising a paradise of eternal bliss in life after death. The appeal of Christianity to

the oppressed classes lies in its promise of salvation from the bondage and misery in the afterlife. The Christian vision of heaven can make life on earth more bearable by giving people something to look forward. Religions also make a virtue of the sufferings produced by oppression. They preach that those who bear the deprivations of poverty with dignity and humility will be rewarded for their virtue in afterlife, in a way making poverty more bearable. Another way of religion to appease oppression is the offer of supernatural intervention to solve the problems on earth. Members of religious groups such as Jehovah's Witness live in anticipation of the day when the supernatural powers will descend form on high and create heaven on earth (Haralombos 1981) anticipation of this future can make the present more acceptable. Thus religion often justifies the social order as well as the oppressed state of the people within it. It perpetuates the inevitability of the social arrangements and social stratification by pronouncing that the poverty and misfortune are divinely ordained as punishment for sin.

Religion not only legitimises oppression, according to Marx, but also acts as an instrument of that oppression. It acts as a mechanism of social control, maintaining the existing social system of exploitation on reinforcing the class relationships. It also discourages people from attempting to change their life by justifying their miseries in this worldly life. It offers an illusion of hope in the hopeless situation and it prevents the thoughts of overthrowing the system. It distorts reality and produce false consciousness, which blinds the members of the oppressed class to their true situation and their real interests. In this way it diverts attention from the real source of their oppression and so helps to maintain ruling class power**.**

While it seems that as long as the oppressed are so content or satisfied with the status quo, the ruling class will continue to capitalise on the religion-mindedness of the majority of the people to exploit the people. The leaders still have the option to change their leadership styles and greed voluntarily to move Nigeria to a better place. Of course, Nigeria may continue to suffer the corruption and injustice by applying religious principles devoid of radical inputs. For example, in the political space, we can see manipulation or usurpation of economic resources by the High class or the oppressors (the politicians) while the oppressed bear the effect of their heartlessness, greed, frauds and exploitation without opposition. The masses and less privileged have resigned to fate without agitation or protest; can be traced to the religious beliefs of the majority who so much believe is Divine retribution while waiting for Divine changes. In reality, religion is actually serving as opium on the Nigerian masses who make little efforts or no adequate effort to bring about political and economic changes.

However, According to (Cline, 2015) Christians account for 50.8% of the Nigerian population. This translates to the fact that Christianity has a significantly strong presence in Nigeria. Yet, vices such as violence, jealousy, envy, corruption, abortion, prostitution, stealing, child trafficking, kidnapping, adultery, fornication, hatred, 'academic terrorism', wickedness, exploitation and victimisation, greed, perversion of justice and many others are still very visible. Given this, Chima (2015) maintains that the greatest scourge facing Nigeria is not HIV/AIDS or other forms of challenges but hypocrisy fuelled by ignorance. Majority of those who are confessing Christianity don't seem to know what it takes to be Christians, hence, their inability to demonstrate Godly virtues that would have led Nigeria to greatness.

Marx maintained in his time that Christians were heavenly conscious and their desire to enter the kingdom of God after death was so strong to warrant his description of religion as the opium of the masses and it prevented the proletariats from revolting against the bourgeois. Dwelling on Marx, Christians were enduring victimisation, oppression, exploitation and other forms of injustice because heaven was their target. Also, they were avoiding fornication, revolting against any constituted authority, involving in the embezzlement of public fund, divorcing their spouses, engaging in fornication or adultery, hatred and other vices which are regarded as sins because they cherished eternity.

The above mentioned atrocities are not only prevalent among Christians in contemporary Nigeria; they are now regarded as the normal ways of life. Thus, any pastor who preaches against these sinful ways of life becomes the enemy of many Christians and his Church will be deserted for Churches that provide comfort zones for sins and iniquities. This shows that the quest for eternity in the time of Marx has been replaced with worldliness in contemporary Nigeria.

Karl Marx's period was associated with medieval era and there was a strong spirit of conformity to the dictates of the Church. But In contemporary times that are characterised by enlightenments, the spirit of conformity seems to have been replaced with disobedience.

It is upon this background that the idea of Karl Marx on religion in contemporary Nigeria is highly debatable. This finds an easy explanation for the following reasons. Relevant literatures are replete with protest, rancour, anarchy and leadership tussles in many Christian institutions across Nigeria. Some situations in some Churches have degenerated to: litigations in the courts of law, death of many Christians and brake away for the establishment of Churches by the aggrieved Christians.

Moreover, the mode of operation of business transaction of many Christian organisations is not different from the capitalists. In fact, some are worse than many capitalists in the present day Nigeria. Before any wise person can adequately engage in any business transaction with a Christian or a pastor in Nigeria today, he or she must think twice, otherwise, he or she may regret the idea.

In other words, the emphasis has been shifted from eternity to materialism or prosperity. Although prosperity is the plan of God for Christians, but when prosperity is sought for to the detriment of holiness and righteousness, as evident in many Nigerian Churches today, it becomes an issue of concern and a major problem to national development.

Criticisms on Marxian Approach to the Study of Religion

Marxian theory of religion is not without criticisms. Let us see some of them here. Marx draws most of his religious interpretations from the study of Christianity, the religion he was most familiar with. He is not taking into consideration the religions in general although his comments do hold for   other religions with similar doctrines of a powerful god and happy afterlife; they do not apply to radically different religions. It is possible to say that in this matter he was influenced by Hegel, who thought that Christianity was the highest form of religion and that whatever was said about that also automatically applied to "lesser" religions - but that is not true.

Another flaw of this theory is that he argues religion is wholly determined by material and economic realities. Not only is nothing else fundamental enough to influence religion, but also influence cannot run in the other direction, from religion to material and economic realities. This also proved to be false because if Marx were right, then capitalism would appear in countries prior to Protestantism because Protestantism is the religious system created by capitalism - but we do not find this. The Reformation comes to 16th century Germany, which is still feudal in nature; real capitalism does not appear until the 19th century. This caused Max Weber to theorise that religious institutions end up creating new economic realities.

Some argue with evidence that Marxian propositions about the role of religion in the society must be limited to the operation of religion at certain times and in certain places. So also one shall not restrict to the idea that religion i s only dependent upon economics and nothing else, such that the actual doctrines of religions are almost irrelevant. Instead, we can recognise that there are a variety of social influences upon religion, including economic and material realities of society. By the same token, religion can in turn have an influence upon society's economic system. The contemporary period witnessed the breaking down of the communist society that Marx

talks about. It is also true that religion never disappeared in the Marx's communist utopia.

In spite of a number of problems with his ideology and personality, Marx's theory of society and of religion, while in many ways controversial, has nonetheless provided great insight into the functioning of society. Whatever one's final conclusion about the accuracy or validity of Marx's ideas on religion, we should recognise that he provided an invaluable service by forcing people to take a hard look at the social web i n which religion always occurs. Because of his work, it has become impossible to study religion without also exploring i t s ties to various social and economic forces. Even for those who find it difficult to accept his political views, his social theory based on the interaction between the social infrastructure and superstructure has been and continues to be an important departing point for the sociological approach to the study of society and religion.

Religion, according to Karl Marx, is opium that is especially damaging to oppressed peoples. In his opinion, religion frequently subdued the populace by providing solace for their difficult lives here on Earth: the promise of salvation in a perfect afterlife. For instance, white slave owners in the United States during the time of slavery prevented black slaves from practising their original African religion while urging them to convert to Christianity. Slaves were encouraged to obey their masters through Christianity; they were convinced that doing so would result in salvation and eternal pleasure in the hereafter. Christianity may have calmed some slaves and lessened the wrath that frequently ignites rebellion, when seen from the perspective of a conflict.

Even though we concur with Marx that religion can be used as a tool of oppression, we do not share his belief that religion emerged out of feelings of alienation. This is false and deceptive since religion's fundamental essence goes beyond phenomenological observation. Man is basically a religious animal, despite the fact that it has also been argued that he is a political animal. Man is born with natural religious feelings. This is supported by man's perception of the "numinous," which is his concept of the transcendent reality that confronts, captures, and dominates him.

Marx's claim that religion will disappear in a classless society is unsupported by history and is thus unfounded. Religion cannot pass away on its own. Even when it is outlawed, religion can nevertheless flourish. Marx should have conducted a comparative, socio-historical study of religion to see if it has always and everywhere showed similar tendencies, despite the fact that religion can serve as the sacred guarantor of oppression, deprivation, social injustice, and the marginalisation of the masses. Marx's use of social science to analyse this was seriously flawed. Marx made a

grave mistake when he said that religion makes poverty bearable by promising a better society in the future. Marx and his adherents cannot dispute the reality that poverty is, to some extent, a difficult aspect of human existence. The social benefits of justice, fair play, equity, and self-abnegation are almost universally preached by religions.

Marx rushed to the conclusion that religion had no social relevance. Religious organisations are frequently seen distributing humanitarian supplies in places affected by war. Modern man can attest to the reality that religion has given humanity food, healthcare, a place to live, education, and culture in many parts of the world. Africans all around the continent still recall the beneficial effects of Christian missionary endeavour. This is why I agree with Wotogbe-Weneka that:

> had they lived today, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and Tai Solarin, as well as their fellow classical and modern denigrators of religion, would have rescinded their earlier claims of religion as "the opium of the masses," "religion is comparable to a childhood neurosis," and "Nigeria is dying today because of religion," (Wotogbe-Weneka, 2012:35-37)

In light of this, religion is now viewed as an independent variable that makes significant social contributions to justify its existence in the 21st century of increased global competition among social institutions around the world, as opposed to being dismissed as useless and dependable by Karl Marx and his fellow notorious denigrators of religion (Wotogbe-Weneka et al, 2021).

Two issues with Marxist theory need special attention, especially if we narrow our attention to the theory of religion as it was previously described. First off, Marx does not truly give a study of religion as a whole but rather an analysis of Christianity and other religions that place a strong emphasis on the existence of God and an afterlife. This may be partially attributed to Hegel's influence, who considered Christianity to be the best form of religion and believed that everything he stated about Christianity inevitably applied to all "lesser" religions. This was Feuerbach's stance, and as we saw, Marx closely adheres to his interpretation. But more importantly, Marx's thought is more concerned with the culture and economy of Western Europe, which is of course the traditional home of Christianity, than it is with world civilisation.

When Marx describes religion as an opium-like escape for the poor from economic suffering and oppression, he is primarily thinking about Christianity. Of course, we could envisage a Marxist interpretation of, for example, the Hindu idea of

rebirth, which also gives people hope for a better life after death, or the teachings of some Buddhists who emphasise the joys of pure nothingness above the sufferings of the here and now. The religions of ancient Greece and Rome, which gave promise of an afterlife on conditions completely at odds with Marx's: immortality for the rich and powerful and a meagre existence in the shadows for the common people, however, do not lend themselves to the application of Marx's thesis. Marx also claims that the phenomenon of alienation, which gives rise to religion, emerged only when private property and the division of labour were introduced to human society. It would appear to follow that before all of these things, there was a point in human history when there was no need for religion and no evidence of it even existing. The thought that this was true at some remote point in prehistory is conceivable, but there is no historical evidence to back it up. There is also no proof that contemporary tribal peoples, whose way of life frequently resembles Marx's conception of an original communism, are devoid of religion or even show a lesser propensity toward it than other groups.

It is quite difficult to imagine how Marx's revolutionary social programme could ever attain the goal of a fully classless, peaceful community if this is a true representation of it. Marx appears to presume that the vast majority of workers will have only one point of view on any significant social problem, one that is entirely shaped by their terrible status as the oppressed class. But why should this be the case in all cases? Some communist leaders predicted that workers in each of the European countries involved in the war would genuinely reject to fight their fellow workers in hostile countries when World War I broke out. However, this clearly did not occur as workers in France, Germany, and Britain learned that the bonds of language, nation, and culture were stronger than any potential inter-class allegiance.

Conclusion

The thrust of this paper is the attention it has drawn to Karl Marx's critical and academic viewpoint on the place of religion in society, and Nigeria in particular. Karl Marx, a well-known sociologist, provided his perspective, which was highlighted. Religion is a phenomenon that permeates all aspects of society. It provides solutions to the most important questions, including why we are here, why we succeed or fail, and why we die. Religion, in the view of Marxists, reduces the likelihood of mass political action that could abolish capitalist tyranny and restructure society.

The paper, however, argues that religion as opium of the people is no longer wholly applicable to many Nigerians. This is in the light of corruption, nepotism, strife, and different degrees of intolerance which have found their way into the Church in contemporary times. To worsen the situation, the yearning for eternity which is the bedrock of Christianity which the early Christians pursued rigorously has been

replaced with the crave for materialism in recent times. In a nutshell, Christianity of the time of Karl Marx has lost its fervour and could no longer be termed the opium of the masses, at least in Nigeria of today.

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EVO INDIGENOUS RELIGIOUS SECURITY SYSTEM: A PANACEA FOR THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

The security and developmental challenges in Nigeria have garnered global attention due to their escalating severity. With security issues in Nigeria intensifying at an alarming rate, the nation's progress is increasingly hindered by daily threats. These threats span a wide range, including armed robbery, kidnapping, clashes between herders and farmers, human trafficking, money laundering, Boko Haram insurgency, militancy, cult clashes, attacks by unknown gunmen, banditry, and communal boundary disputes across its 36 states. Despite various measures implemented to address these challenges, they persist without significant improvement. Given the failure of conventional approaches, there is growing interest in exploring indigenous solutions, particularly Evo indigenous religious practices, to address Nigeria's insecurity. Historical evidence suggests that traditional mechanisms such as divination and oath-taking were effective in promoting peace and security in pre-colonial communities, indicating their potential relevance in the present context. This study adopts a phenomenological research method to investigate the feasibility of employing indigenous methods to mitigate Nigeria's security challenges and facilitate national development.

Key Words: Security, insecurity, religion

Introduction

Security challenges in Nigeria have emerged as a significant impediment to the state's development trajectory. The escalating tension suggests an imminent threat of a severe humanitarian crisis, particularly the specter of widespread hunger. Daily headlines recounting security breaches and loss of lives underscore the unpredictability and pervasive nature of the crisis. Compounding the issue is the alarming trend where

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perpetrators openly announce their intentions before launching attacks, yet law enforcement agencies appear unable to leverage available intelligence to safeguard citizens and property effectively.

The Niger Delta region, in particular, has become a hotbed of insecurity, necessitating urgent intervention to foster an environment conducive to development and good governance. However, the existing security apparatus, inherited from the colonial era, has proven inadequate in addressing contemporary challenges.

This paper contends that embracing indigenous security mechanisms offers a viable alternative to the shortcomings of the colonial-era system. Drawing from historical precedents, wherein indigenous religious deities served as arbiters of justice, fairness, and protection, this approach promises to restore peace and facilitate socio-economic and political development. In the pre-colonial era, these indigenous religious security mechanisms played a pivotal role in maintaining societal harmony and fostering progress.

In the pre-colonial era, cases of defilement were adjudicated by various indigenous deities based on their respective jurisdictions. The earth goddess, for instance, presided over matters related to land defilements, taboos, and sanctions, ensuring the integrity of the community's resources. Similarly, water spirits and other environmental deities were entrusted with maintaining the harmonious and orderly development of society.

Under the auspices of these indigenous religious deities, communities enjoyed a profound sense of peace and security. Incidents of social, economic, and political unrest, which plague the nation today, were virtually non-existent. The fear of facing repercussions from the deities acted as a potent deterrent against transgressions such as theft, violence, and property destruction. As a result, individuals were compelled to uphold communal values and respect the rights of others, thereby fostering a cohesive and prosperous society. By advocating for the revival of indigenous security practices, this paper aims to stimulate discourse on innovative solutions to Nigeria's security crisis. Embracing traditional values and community-centric approaches can offer a sustainable path towards restoring stability and fostering inclusive development.

Evo people

The Evo people are an integral part of the Ikwerre ethnic group in Rivers State, Nigeria. Presently, they reside within the bustling urban center of Port Harcourt. Their territory extends from Iriebe in the east to Atali in the north, Rumuodomaya in the west, Elelewon and Woji in the southeast, and Rumuomasi in the south. With an

estimated population of 343,406, the inhabitants primarily consist of Ikwerre-speaking natives alongside people from various other tribes in Rivers State and beyond.

Evo Kingdom serves as the administrative hub of the Obio/Akpor local government and stands as a significant center of economic activity in Nigeria. The region predominantly features lowland terrain, with elevations averaging below 30 meters above sea level. Its topography comprises a mix of alluvial sedimentary basins and basement complexes, offering a diverse landscape ripe for development and settlement.

African indigenous religion

According to John S. Mbiti, indigenous religion encapsulates the beliefs and practices of every society, guiding individuals from conception to ancestor-hood. It serves as a conduit bridging the gap between the physical realm and the supernatural domain, manifested through symbolic rituals and liturgical expressions. Indigenous religion plays a pivotal role in upholding moral values and preserving societal sanctity, thereby fostering order and harmony in both the physical and spiritual realms.

In the context of the Evo people in the pre-modern era, indigenous religions advocated for principles such as peace, justice, economic prosperity, and the protection of lives and property. These religious beliefs and practices served as guiding principles for societal behavior, promoting cohesion and facilitating the advancement of both individuals and the community as a whole.

Development of security agencies in Nigeria

According to Osiagor, Nwaenyi, and Fiberesima, the British seized control of Nigeria in 1861, establishing imperial rule through the use of superior firepower, which served to both humiliate and subdue pockets of resistance, particularly among the southern population. The British traders in West Africa, driven by their desire to safeguard their exploitative trade interests, created a paramilitary organization known as the Royal West African Frontier Force (RWAFF).

This para-military force was employed by colonial administrators as a tool of repression and suppression, utilised to intimidate and attack villagers, as well as undermines indigenous governance structures. Traditional leaders who resisted compromise with the colonial authorities faced intimidation tactics.

The armed forces of Nigeria, including the army, navy, and air force, emerged from the reformed and independent branches of the RWAFF. However, their primary allegiance remained to protecting the colonial government, often at the expense of the indigenous population, who were the rightful owners of Nigeria's economic resources.

This exploitation left the people in a state of abject poverty, as colonial administrators' orders were executed without question.

Notably, the highest-ranking positions within the armed forces were predominantly held by individuals of British origin, while Africans were relegated to lower ranks with limited opportunities for advancement. This systemic racial discrimination perpetuated a hierarchy where whites held authority over blacks, undermining the professed objectives of maintaining peace and protecting citizens' lives.

This description outlines the troubling legacy of Nigeria's inherited armed forces and security apparatus, which contradicts the stated goal of safeguarding the populace.

Constitutional obligation of the security agencies

The law establishing the armed forces positions them as a tool of repression, exacerbating intervention in both politics and the economy while attempting to mask their inherent dysfunctionality. The Nigerian Constitution, particularly from its iterations in 1979 and 1999, clearly outlines the role of security agencies, notably the armed forces, in Sections 197 and 217. These sections delineate their function as individuals whose livelihoods depend on taking the lives of others.

Osiagor, victor I, Nwaenyi Kingdom E.O. and Fiberesima Diepiriye *An introduction to political economy for tertiary institution* Omoku: Akins professionals, 2002, 55.
[1] Ibid 57

Such a constitutional provision contradicts deeply ingrained indigenous religious beliefs across Africa, which assert that life is the exclusive domain of the Supreme Deity and should not be subject to human intervention. Murder is regarded as taboo, with severe consequences from the deities, who are believed to retaliate by bringing calamity upon the environment.

Evo indigenous security agents in the pre-colonial era

In the pre-colonial era, the Evo indigenous community entrusted the security of their environment and the broader universe to the Supreme Deity and its divinities. African indigenous religion instilled in individuals a profound awareness of these divinities and the consequences of transgressing taboos, emphasising justice and fairness. Each element of the environment was believed to be under the protection of a specific deity, ensuring the continuous blessing and sustenance of the people.

These deities possessed extraordinary mobility, enabling them to traverse various locales and inhabit natural elements such as trees, rivers, and land. Consequently, they were not bound to tangible objects within their respective domains but wielded influence beyond physical boundaries. Taboos served as fundamental guidelines

governing societal conduct, with severe repercussions awaiting those who violated them, administered directly by the deities themselves.

Within the Evo indigenous religion, the deities were organised into armed spiritual forces, with each deity assuming responsibility for protecting its subjects or adherents. Notably, Ali, the earth deity, held a pivotal role in ensuring the security of the land. Charged with nurturing and fertilising the soil upon which humans and other deities depended, Ali commanded significant reverence and authority within the spiritual hierarchy, second only to the Supreme Being.

In the classification of armed forces in Nigeria, the Ali deity would be likened to the army, tasked with safeguarding the land from defilement and ensuring the continuous production of food for both humans and animals.

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[1]Opoku, Asare Kofi West African Traditional Religion, Accra: FEP INTERNATIONAL PRIVATE LIMITED 1978, P54 *Owumini or Oshimini*

The water spirits are responsible for ensuring the security of the rivers, overseeing activities both within the water and along the riverbanks. Prohibitive rules surround these activities, and transgressions incur the wrath of the spirits. To restore harmony, propitiatory rites must be performed. As long as people abide by these rules, the water spirits safeguard them. In contemporary security terms, the role of the water spirits aligns with that of the Navy, tasked with protecting the water boundaries of the environment.

Another vital aspect of the indigenous religious security agents is Eluigwe, represented by the air spirit. This spirit is tasked with ensuring the protection and security of the airspace. Its presence is notably felt during disasters involving airborne diseases such as chickenpox and smallpox. However, in modern times, the Air Force has inadequately fulfilled its responsibilities in this regard, leaving a gap in the protection of the airspace.

These indigenous religious security agents, primarily the deities, were instrumental in safeguarding both the people and their environment during the pre-modern era. Additionally, there were lesser spirits with specific names, reflecting the religious experiences of the community, each serving various roles in the lives of the indigenous people. Despite their diversity, these lesser spirits shared common features, including their roles in providing security, legislative guidance, and judicial arbitration. Moreover, they acted as intermediaries between humans and the spirit world, bridging the gap between these realms.

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Some of the names of these spirits in Evo include Alabida, Ojukwu, Miniechara, and Miningulu. In essence, alongside these spiritual entities, ancestors also played a crucial role in maintaining security. They were considered part of the paramilitary force, overseeing human activities and ensuring the well-being and safety of the community.

Obodoegbulam Agi Otto Ogba religion, the pre-christian heritage Port Harcourt: Pearl publishers international Ltd 2019 p39

[1] Ibid p40

[1] Ibid p41

Containable security challenges in pre-modern era

During the pre-colonial era in Evo, security challenges did exist; however, their impact on the environment and human life remained minimal, largely due to swift action taken by the divinities to address problems. Individuals who violated prohibitive rules, such as stealing, killing, or rape, faced severe punishment from the deities, serving as a deterrent to others harbouring similar intentions.

Restoring confidence and safety among the people was relatively straightforward. Crime investigations were conducted through divinations, and the results were accepted in accordance with the religious beliefs and practices of the community. The indigenous people placed great trust in the integrity of the deities, believing them to be honest and just in their judgments. Bribery was inconceivable, as the deities could not be swayed to act unjustly against the innocent. Their verdicts often entailed punishments such as death, incurable diseases, or famine.

In the fight against crime and insecurity, diviners, serving as priests to the deities, regularly consulted them through divination to ascertain their will on various matters. The people of Evo relied heavily on the guidance provided by the deities through their diviners. Despite the presence of security challenges, their occurrence was infrequent and often attributed to the practice of witchcraft and sorcery. Individuals who engaged in such practices were ostracised and despised within their communities.

[1] Owete I Kingsley and   Ngozi N Iheanacho, (2009,) West African traditional societies fundamentals of religion and socio-cultural heritage Port Harcourt: Stepson printing press. p144

While acknowledging the existence of insecurity during the pre-colonial era, it's crucial to underscore how it was effectively managed by the religious deities responsible for society's security. Sorcery and witchcraft, viewed as malevolent practices aimed at harming perceived enemies, were recognized as forms of evil medicine. This paper does not downplay the prevalence of insecurity during this time;

rather, it sheds light on the challenges and the adept manner in which they were addressed by the religious deities. These deities assumed responsibility for maintaining security within their respective societies, ensuring swift and appropriate action against transgressors. In essence, while insecurity persisted, the effective management and response mechanisms provided by the religious deities played a pivotal role in mitigating its impact and maintaining societal order.

Modern insecurity development in Evo

During the pre-colonial era in Evo and the broader Rivers State terrain, a sense of peace and harmony permeated daily life. Families with shared blood ties resided together in communal hamlets, fostering an atmosphere of hospitality towards all visitors. Instances of armed robbery, theft, kidnapping, and other prevalent social vices, rampant in modern times, were virtually nonexistent. It was customary for visiting relatives to be welcomed with open arms, and the act of sharing everything without fear of harm was deeply ingrained in the culture.

However, the current security landscape in Nigeria starkly contrasts this idyllic past. According to Philip O. Okolo and Akpokighe O. R. (2014), the genesis of this security challenge can be traced back to corruption, a phenomenon initially foreign to African soil. Corruption seeped into Nigeria through the colonialisation of African nations, where it incubated and proliferated over time.

The erosion of rich cultural values and indigenous religious practices, as described by Okolo and Akpokighe, paved the way for corruption's entry into African societies, marking the onset of insecurity. This corruption, akin to Western barbarism, introduced detrimental elements such as favoritism, ethnicism, and nepotism, undermining the mutual love and hospitality inherent in African communities. Consequently, the cherished values of care and compassion, intrinsic to the black race, have been compromised.

According to a report from the Fund for Peace Partnerships Initiative in the Niger Delta (Niger Delta Partnership Initiative) (2015), the escalation of insecurity in the Niger Delta region stems from clashes among marginalized groups vying for access to and control over common resources. This struggle often manifests in the formation of cult groups, leading to socio-political tensions that have plagued Rivers State for over two decades.

The origins of these militant confraternities trace back to the 1950s, when they were established within universities with the goal of fostering camaraderie and advocating for social and political principles. These principles included resistance against colonialism, as well as opposition to discriminatory, sexist, or unjust university

policies. However, as peace efforts in the pursuit of justice proved fruitless, the groups became increasingly militant.

The 1980s and mid-1990s witnessed a surge in militarisation, driven by frustration over the perceived ineffectiveness of peaceful agitation. Consequently, these cult groups resorted to violence as a means of asserting their agendas.

Contemporary security challenges in Nigeria

In recent times, Nigeria has been grappling with an unprecedented level of insecurity, posing significant threats to national security. This surge in insecurity has necessitated substantial allocations from the national budget towards security, as noted by Okonkwo et al. (2015) citing Achumba and Akpor (2013). The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria explicitly declares that "The security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government." However, despite this constitutional mandate, successive governments have failed to adequately fulfill their obligations in providing security for Nigerian citizens.

Regrettably, the streets of Nigeria have become increasingly unsafe environments, jeopardizing the safety of lives, properties, as well as the conduct of business and other economic activities.

[1]Okonkwo Rita Ifeoma, Ndubuisi- Okolo Purity and Threasa Anagbogu (2015), Security challenges and the implications for businessActivities in nigeria: a ctritical review; *Journal of Policy and Development Studies Vol. 9, No. 2,*

The alarming level of insecurity in Nigeria is deeply concerning, with terrorist activities rampant across various regions of the country. This surge in crime poses severe implications for both the economy and human life.

Despite the clear provisions of Section 14 (2)(1), criminal activities and insecurity such as ritual killings, militancy, Biafra agitation, kidnapping, oil bunkering, Fulani herdsmen crisis with farmers, banditry, and Boko Haram insurgency continue to dominate the news headlines in Nigeria. The wave, dynamics, and complexity of security crises have resulted in severe social consequences, particularly on the economy. Furthermore, commercial activities have been severely hampered and paralysed in the areas most affected by insecurity.

Due to these security challenges in Nigeria, numerous companies and businesses have ceased operations due to insurgencies across all the geopolitical zones in the country. The heightened insecurity has resulted in a constant loss of both lives and material resources. The alarming frequency of gun battles and bomb explosions orchestrated by

terrorists is deeply concerning. Additionally, clashes between farmers and herders, banditry, kidnapping, theft, and the rape of women in their farms, as well as the destruction of farm crops by herdsmen using cows, highlight the failures of Nigeria's security system. Obarisiagbon, citing Oputa (1991) and Alemika and Chukwuma (2000), further commented that: "The Nigerian Police has a very serious image problem in the eyes of the public it is established to serve. The Nigeria Police is viewed with suspicion, a pariah of some sort, perceived to be 'unfriendly', 'brutal', 'trigger-happy', 'extortionist', 'crime collaborators', 'gross violators of fundamental human rights', and so on."

The surge in criminal activity, notably violent offenses such as kidnapping, armed robbery, ritual murders, political assassinations, ethnic and religious violence, and election-related violence, has significantly diminished public confidence in the police's ability to safeguard lives and property. As stated by Obarisiagbon and Akintoye (2019,), "The general feeling is that the police can neither solve the crimes already committed, through arrests and successful prosecutions, nor prevent or, at least, reduce the incidence of crimes."

[1]Obarisiagbon, Emmanuel Imuetinyan & Akintoye, Emily Obaide (2019) Insecurity Crisis in Nigeria: The Law Enforcement Agents a Panacea? *Journal of Sociology and Social Work June 2019, Vol. 7, No. 1,*

According to Hamza and Haruna (2015), the security issues in Nigeria are closely intertwined with poverty. Given Nigeria's underdevelopment, it undoubtedly contributes to a sense of unfulfilled expectations and widespread frustration among those trapped in the cycle of deep poverty.

The condition of hopelessness can worsen due to ineffective poverty eradication programs and neglect by the Nigerian state. Different regions in Nigeria respond differently to this dilemma. "These responses manifest in various disruptive behaviors such as armed robbery, kidnapping, and insurgency." Nigeria faces significant security challenges, including armed robbery, ethnic conflicts, assassination, militancy, kidnapping, and terrorism. The most alarming security issue is the terrorism perpetrated by Boko Haram. The mass media depict dramatic bombings and horrific scenes of people being burnt, maimed, and property destroyed by Boko Haram. Consequently, fear pervades especially in areas heavily affected by terrorism.

[1]Ibid
[1]Aminu Umaru, Hamza A. And Haruna Ali D. (2015) The impact of insecurity and poverty on sustainable economic development in Nigeria*International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE) Volume 2, Issue 2,*

Due to the escalating security challenges in the country, exacerbated by actions of some security agents, Nigerian youth organized a nationwide protest known as "End SARS and police brutality." This protest arose from the disturbing trend where those tasked with protecting citizens are instead using their firearms to kill them. Some perpetrators act with impunity. Sadly, many lives have been lost as unarmed protesters demanding security rights were shot at by the military. Shockingly, it was later revealed that they were acting on orders from the Lagos State governor, Babajide Sanwolu. This raises the troubling question of how those entrusted with preserving lives can resort to brutal violence. Such incidents only reinforce the perception that Nigeria lacks effective leadership.

Conclusion

In light of the analysis presented, it's evident that the security agencies have profoundly failed in their constitutional obligation to safeguard lives and properties. The increasing insecurity plaguing the nation cannot be adequately addressed using the current political and security frameworks. Consequently, there arises a need to explore alternative approaches. Considering the effectiveness of indigenous religious deities as security guardians in the pre-modern era, there is a compelling argument for their reinstatement as a potential solution to the contemporary security challenges. It's worth acknowledging that these deities often held significant sway in maintaining peace, justice, and fairness within their communities.

Furthermore, advocating for indigenous communities across Nigeria to entrust their security to these deities, tailored to their specific local contexts, could offer a decentralised and culturally relevant approach to tackling security concerns. This approach acknowledges the deep-rooted cultural practices and beliefs that have historically shaped security mechanisms within communities. By embracing indigenous deities as guardians of security, there is potential to foster a sense of ownership and empowerment within communities, thereby fostering a collaborative effort towards ensuring peace and stability. However, it's essential to approach this proposition with careful consideration, recognising both the strengths and limitations of such an approach within the modern context.

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DYNAMIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ANGLICAN CHURCHES AND ỤKWỤÀNÌ FAMILY LIFE IN THE CONTEXT OF VERTICAL EXPANSION OF CHRISTIANITY.

By

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Abstract

There are many ways of doing church history. The traditional (Western) narrative of Christian history has always privileged the Western missionary enterprise and its impact on Africa, Asia and other parts of the world. However, from the nineteenth century a new paradigm of African historiography emerged. The focus was on how to weave the gospel message within the African primal religions. This paper takes the vertical expansion of Christianity seriously as it takes its root in the soil of African culture. Its concern is telling the stories of how African people and communities experience the power of the gospel within their various cultural milieus, thereby making the churches among them a place to feel at home. Using the historical approach to the study of religions, and Walls and Fyfe's (1996) theory of continuity, the study highlights Ụkwụànì Christians' contributions to the creation of distinctively African Anglicanism. It reveals that in the appropriation of Anglicanism, a considerable degree of continuity with Ụkwụànì culture existed. The study recommends that an important factor to be considered for effective evangelism in indigenous societies is the ability to recognize and integrate resonant themes in indigenous culture with the Christian faith as Christianity crosses national, ethnic, social and cultural boundaries. Understanding these dynamics can facilitate dialogue, foster cultural appreciation, and contribute to broader discourse on the impact of Christianity in diverse social contexts

Keywords: Socio-Cultural Heritage, Ụkwụànì, Anglicanism, Indigenous Agents, Religious Dialogue.

Conceptualising Principles and Approaches in the New Phase of African Christianity

There is the contention that most European Church historians entered West African Church mission field by focusing more on the activities of missionaries to the utter neglect of indigenous agents who aided them[1]. Their writings have adequately been described as being propagandist[2]. Mudimbe[3] had categorised such writings as an invasion of Africa. Yet others highlighted the racism of missionaries[4], the negative influence of the mission on traditional life[5], the vanguard role of missionaries in European colonisation[6] or the weakness and near failure of some mission[7]. Others emphasised the exclusion of indigenous agents[8] and cultures[9] in the modern missionary enterprise. According to Nyanda[10] "…we have become a fertile field for the kind of research that will enable a person to write an interesting thesis and obtain an academic degree - it is therefore not surprising that we do not recognise ourselves in their writings". For Kalu[11] a clear shift has taken place away from the missionaries to the arena itself, the African societies and their peoples. It is a shift from missionary historiography to a truly African Christian history, which is holistic. Debates are no longer between "blacks" and "whites", but "between us and about us". This approach eschews elitism by concentrating on people's history. It calls for a dialogical approach: a need to understand the inner history of African traditional religiosity as a means of assessing the encounter with Christianity. Some other studies in African Christian historiography show that the advent of Christianity in an African society proceeds from a shifting of worldviews[12]. Another genre presented the need to indigenise/learn the people's culture[13].

African theologians such as Adugbu[14], Obilor[15], Bediako[16], and Mercy Amba Oduyoye[17] have grappled with issues of the role of African primal religions in African "Christianities" and the quest for continuity with Africa's past. Yet others have stressed the need for discontinuity[18]. Some have demurred and taken the middle course; a bit of the old and a bit of the new. Recently, there have emerged strong agitations by some African scholars and theologians for a "theology of political engagement which postures the life and ministry of the Church as a mission-to-culture or baptising the nations"[19]. This is a call for African liberation theology. The studies of Mbiti[20], and Jenkins[21] have demonstrated that one important strand that runs through the works of African Christian historiographers is the need for authentic African Christianity. They argue that until Christianity becomes truly African, most Africans will continue to regard Christianity as a foreign religion.

However, Owete and Odili[22] have argued that the much of the genre of African Christian historiography after the modern Western missionary era presented a bizarre and apologetic mosaic of the "modern" missionary enterprise in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Frans Verstraelen[23] explains that doing Church history, from an African perspective necessitates broadening the scope of history in horizontal and vertical terms. Reflections on history in a non-western context and from a non-western perspective have a substantial contribution to make which will radically change the concept and content of (Christian) history as a whole. It is, then, no longer reasonable to treat North Atlantic history as the central piece of universal history and the interest in the non-western world only when Europe came in contact with it. Andrew F. Walls and C. Fyfe[24] observe that, "African Christianity appears in two categories: first, as a new period in the history of African religion; continuing the story begun in the primal or traditional religions; and the second, as a new period in the history of Christianity, in which the tradition is being expressed in intellectual, social and religious milieus, which has not previously entered". The element of continuity does not only serve to restore the biased image of Africa but points to evangelical models. In the process of indigenous assimilation, the decoders weave a new pattern following the lines of congruence, making their religious experience as an organic, unified one. This reciprocity enables us to study the fate of the gospel message in Ụkwụànìland from the perspective of the receiver–decoders of the message.

Ụkwụànì Peoples Ethnography and Social Index

The Ụkwụànì speaking people of the Niger Delta, also known as the Ndokwa or Kwale people, is the second largest ethnic group in Delta State. They occupy the area lying approximately between longitude 6^06, and 6^042, East, and latitudes 6^031, and 5^0251 North[25]. The geographical position of Ụkwụànì places the country within two belts: deltaic swampy forests, which occupy the southern and South-Eastern coastal towns and villages, and the tropical rain forests, situated in the Northern part of the territory. Many Ụkwụànì people are large-scale farmers. Those living in communities traversed by rivers and creeks also fish. Rubber and palm oil extraction have been the major source of income. Indigenous arts include basket weaving, metalwork and sculpture (*Okpu-Uzo*). The Ụkwụànì are also widely known for their music, having produced such artistes as Charles Iwegbue, Ali Chukwuma, King Ubulu, Rogana Ottah, John Okpor, Queen Azaka, Orji Moore, Eric Enuma, and many others. They remain a socially tight-knit group. Community unions and clubs are the rule, even among those who have emigrated to North America, Europe, or Asia. The people are deeply religious like other African societies[26]. Grimes and Grimes[27] note that the dialects called Ụkwụànì (Ukwani, Ukwali, Kwale) form a cluster within the Igbo language cluster. Nevertheless, the Ụkwụànì dialect is distinct enough from Igbo to be considered a separate Igboid language. They are by origin a hybrid of Bini (Benin) and Igbo extractions[28].

Anglican churches have their first contact with Ụkwụànì when the 1841, 1854 and 1857 Niger Expeditions made contacts with Aboh[29]. The topography of the area did not favor the establishment of the proposed farm settlement[30]. In 1932 another frantic effort was made by the Asaba Anglican Diocese to establish Anglicanism in Aboh[31]. From 1901 Anglicanism penetrated the hinterland of Ụkwụànì through the activities of indigenous agents who on their own invited agents of the CMS from Isoko and Urhoboland to evangelize their various communities. Odili[32] has detailed accounts of conversion experiences and the diffusion of Anglicanism in Ụkwụànìland.

During the formative years of Anglican churches in Ụkwụànìland, converts met in the personal homes of individuals who initiated the establishment of an Anglican church in his or her community. Church huts made of red molds were later built to accommodate the increase in the number of worshippers. Whenever they met for worship, they simply prayed. They were led in prayer by the head Christian who also delivered the sermon. At first, the Lord's Prayer and the Apostle's Creed were recited in Urhobo, Yoruba, Itsekiri or Isoko language depending on the tribe of the Anglican agent in charge of a particular station or parish. Similarly, the catechism was for a long time learnt in any of those languages. All these presented many difficulties to the early converts who could not understand them. This is an indication that most of the early Anglican Church agents in Ụkwụànìland conducted services in their own local languages. Later on the language of worship became Igbo except in some churches in the eastern section of Ụkwụànìland where Isoko influence was strong. The introduction of Igbo speaking agents led to the use of Igbo language in worship. Most of the converts within the period under study accepted Igbo language as the only language of communication. This researcher observed that most of the retired catechists and teachers interviewed in the course of this study still used Igbo language in prayers and in all their religious communications.

The need to use Ụkwụànì language for religious instruction inspired some Ụkwụànì converts who understood Igbo language to serve as interpreters. Among these were Ochonogo Etue of Amai, Jacob Egbue of Umutu, Paul Ibedeni of Utue-Ogume and John Atuma of Umukwata. Some educated converts, like Peter Akpogbue Okwuebgue of Emu-Unor, S. Maledo of Utagba-Ogbe, Matthew Onyenike of Abbi, A. Maduneme of Ashaka and Johnson Agwaturu of Emu-Unor, interpreted directly from English in the indigenous language. The use of Ụkwụànì language in churches made the worship more meaningful to the converts. Some believers in some churches in Ukwaniland where foreign languages were used trekked to the nearest Ụkwụànì communities where the native language was used for mid-week services. Communities that fell under this category were Iyege-Ame, Akoku-Ebede, Asaba-Ase, and Ogbeagbu-Ogume.

Relationship between Anglican Churches and Ụkwụànì Family Life

The Ụkwụànì Anglican Christians contributed significantly to the making of a distinctively African Church between 1841 and 1941. It reveals that in the appropriation of Christianity in its Anglican form, a considerable degree of continuity with Ụkwụànì culture existed. At the earliest stage, the Church consisted of communities of Christians struggling to come to terms with their total environment. The struggle involved a creative response to the tensions produced by the encounter between Ụkwụànì culture and Anglicanism. Ụkwụànì response to and appropriation of Anglicanism derived its force and liberality from indigenous models and experiences. Specific attention is paid to an aspect of Ụkwụànì cultural heritage, marriage and family life.

In Ụkwụànìland, family and marriage customs are designed to ensure social equilibrium; to prevent moral laxity and social degeneracy. It ensures protection for all members of the family and societal continuity. This is one aspect of the people's traditional value that has greatly affected Christian doctrine on the same issue. In Ụkwụànìland, there are traditional beliefs about marriage, which include polygyny, the consideration of a wife as a possession, divorce and wife inheritance. Among the Ụkwụànì Anglicans, marriage ceremony in the church was not an alternative to the traditional marriage ceremony. The essential custom in traditional marriage including dowry (*imefe onyiye*) and paying of homage to in-laws (*ifo ibu*) were carried through in any case, whether or not, there was a church ceremony. However, few fathers refused to accept any dowry at all. Among these were Achunike Odagwe of Isselegu, Matthew Ishiana of Ugiri-Ama, Peter Onyegu of Isumkpe and Andrew Otuya of Utueh-Oguma. The feeling that without a dowry there can be no true marriage was so deep among the people that lack of it, even willingly agreed to at the time of getting married, caused trouble later on[33]. At Umutu in 1931 one Awari Ogu went to demand dowry from his son-in-law, Oza, whom he believed was maltreating his daughter, Awuli, because he married her "on a platter of gold"[34]. Most of the converts went all lengths to circumvent the demands of the church that there should be no exchange of dowry in the marriage of their children. Their understanding of dowry as the seal of marriage was considered more important than the church ceremony.

In the belief of the people, there is more to the dowry and other festivities of their traditional marriage ceremony than just the union of two people (as Christians conceives it). In the rituals and the slaughtering of animals (goats and cocks) during the negotiations and after, the ancestors who are part of the family are invoked. Without their blessing and good will, the success of the marriage, it is believed, would be in jeopardy. This was so strong on the minds and emotions of the people that most

parents risked a dishonest attitude contrary to the requirements of the church in order to be in good relationship with the ancestors and the community. Put tersely, what was considered as a Christian marriage ceremony was in reality a mixture of traditional and Christian values. Some of the elements Anglican converts used in a traditional marriage were local. Such elements included log of wood, kola nuts, bitter kola, yam tubers, alligator pepper, and gin. The elements presented have different connotations and they were used significantly by the leader of the occasion, usually the head Christian, for prayer.

The indigenization of this all-important cultural institution was not an easy one. In 1915 at Iyege-Ame, one John Okwuene gave his daughter Ochonogo out for marriage to one Enitime without accepting dowry from the later[35]. The family members of Okwuene complained to Andrew Agunebe, the head Christian that their daughter was given out without the customary marriage rites. Agunebe was said to have considered their complaint as trivial on the grounds that such customary rites were fetish and unchristian. Members of Emitime's family, on the other hand, threatened not to recognize and accept Ochonogu as lawfully married into their family unless the traditional marriage rites were performed. This tension led to the suspension of the marriage for over a year. In 1916, the aggrieved families attacked Andrew Agunebe on his way to the farm. He was beaten mercilessly and tied to a tree for attempting to introduce a new form of marriage rite[36].

A similar incidence occurred in 1928 at Umukwata when Theophilus Ukpe, the head Christian, wedded one Pius Abamba and Mary Ikechukwu; the father of Mary had insisted that his daughter must be married in the traditional way[37]. This he believed would earn him some respect in the community. Furthermore, a marriage contracted in the Anglican way would mean a denial of his dowry rights. The tension that ensued led to his imprisonment by the then Kwale District Court. He was said to have attacked the congregation on a Sunday with a machete. He openly assaulted three women and got a man wounded. The head Christian reported the incidence to the then District Officer in Kwale who ordered his arrest. He was subsequently tried and sentenced to six months imprisonment. It was during this period of incarceration that his daughter was wedded to Pius Abamba, who later left for Obiaruku.

The situation was, however, not antagonistic in all Ụkwụànì communities. Some Anglican converts in most Ụkwụànì communities gave out their daughters in the traditional way. Among these was Obiasa Ozuam of Eziokpor[38]. This, however, was met with the displeasure of F. Abanum, who subjected the former to a disciplinary action of suspension from partaking of the Lord's Supper. In 1928, Sunday Chukwuka, an interpreter followed suit and gave out his daughter in the customary way. When F. Abanum wanted to carry out a disciplinary action against him, the Anglican converts at

Eziokpor appealed to the Church at Obiaruku for a new head Christian. This request was not initially granted until the Anglican Church at Eziokpor started recording a decline in the number of worshippers. In 1929, F. Abanum was transferred to Ashaka and the Eziokpor church was left without a head Christian for a period of two years.

The situation at Emu Unor in 1940 was quite dramatic[39]. The influential Wajah, who was a staunch financial supporter of the church gave out his daughter also in a traditional way. On the said day of the occasion, he was said to have invited the members of the church to his compound. He asked the head Christian then, Peter Akpogbue Okwuegbue to conduct the marriage. In the course of the ceremony, Wajah announced, to the amusement of all that, "Our in-laws have come with some Kola-nuts, bitter kola, palm wine, logs of woods, some tubers of yam and some money … since they are ignorant of our Christian way, we should bear with them and accept them as they are; after all, no libations are made"[40]. Recalling the incidence, Peter Akpogbue Okwuegbue states, "We were perplexed. There was a mixed feeling. Since he was a very influential man, most of us stayed back". However, some of the brethren resented his actions and left the occasion. Wajah was a staunch supporter of the church there. It was through his assistance that the church acquired a piece of land at the Ikosa quarters where a church hall was erected. It was not until the late 1940s that the church welcomed an integration of traditional Christian marriage rights in Ụkwụànìland. The native marriage was concluded with prayers said by the parents of the couple who prayed for good luck as they started their own life as husband and wife. This was followed with feasting. In most cases, the native marriages were concluded in the church with thanksgiving. It always came up on a Sunday after the day of the marriage. On that Sunday, some couples brought their rings for blessing, thereafter, the thanksgiving followed. Certificate for the blessing were issued in the church.

Another marriage system that posed a challenge to Anglican churches in Ụkwụànìland in the period under study was polygamy[41]. Between 1900 and 1941, the "foreign" indigenous agents brought along with them the practice of monogamy, which is distinctively opposed to polygamy. They adjudged monogamy the ideal system. They were convinced that the Christian society must be built on Christian family life and that the ideal of the Christian family can only be realized in monogamy. Polygamy was out rightly condemned. No tolerance or sympathy whatsoever was shown to polygamists. They were not to be baptized until all wives but one had been divorced. This practice proved artificial to most of the Ụkwụànì who had embraced Anglicanism because it liberated them from traditional restrictions. The Church accepted polygamists because they played significant roles in the church. They supported the church financially and in terms of deference. Nevertheless, the

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catechesis principle was applied; they could be catechized, but once any of them decided to proceed for baptism, it became obligatory on him to dismiss all his wives but one[42]. No principles were laid down as to which, of the wives were to be dismissed and which not. Generally, the youngest and most fertile of them was chosen. For instance, Ebeni, the head Christian at Abbi was refused baptism because he was a polygamist[43].

Among those who dismissed their wives was Chief P. T. Itue of Obinumbe who had three wives and a concubine beside. He sent all but one away before he was baptized in 1925[44]. Another convert, one Oza Ozegbe Osaewe, who paid this price no doubt saw it as a sacrifice. He saw his action as a qualification for special recognition in the church. His son's remarks give us a clearer picture of this issue, "For the sake of being a Christian, my father abandoned three of his wives, and since then he was recognized as the second leader of the church in our town"[45]. An informant confessed that the first sermon he heard was, "Come to church, marry one wife, be baptized so that you may go to heaven". Thus, there were polygamists who embraced Anglicanism and had to give up all their wives but one before baptism. The situation was such that one of our oral sources[46], complained, "The church's insistence on polygamy affected negatively, the spread of the gospel in Ụkwụànìland. It wrecked many families"[47]. With the passage of time some polygamists who had divorced their wives but one returned to their vomit. Among these were Chiefs Thomas Azonobi of Umutu, Paul Akpe of Abbi, C.Y. Osakwe of Umolu and Omenogor Ifedioga of Amai. These, however, were not excommunicated from the church because of their vital role to the growth and development of Anglican Churches in their various communities. In 1927, Omejona Okolo of Emu Unor was excommunicated from the church because he welcomed back two of his wives. Prior to this incidence, six months after he had divorced his wife in order to be baptized, he started complaining that the work on the farm was too much for him and his last wife, whom he had retained. When the situation became unbearable he went to his in-laws and pleaded with them to return his wives. He claimed that divorced them in ignorance. With the return of his wives, he was excommunicated from the church. It is pertinent to state that in some Ụkwụànì communities, prominent patrons and individuals were not baptized because they refused to divorce their wives. Among these were M. Oza of Umutu, John Onuabo of Isselegu and M. Adenu of Abbi[48].

However, there was a case of one Philip Okpor of Sanubi who proved indispensable because of his role as an interpreter[49]. He was a trader in Warri where he embraced the Anglican faith. In 1927, following the liquidation of his business settled down to farming. The then church Agent, Bernard Onyeigbo, was an Urhobo man. Philip Akpor, having stayed in Warri for a period was able to understand Urhobo,

he hardly spoke the language. He merely interpreted what he heard into Ụkwụànì. In June 1927 he divorced his wives in order to be baptized. Two months later, he called them back. This caused uproar in the church, and he was subsequently suspended. Within a period of one month of his suspension, the number of adherents reduced drastically to the minimal. My informant recalled that there were occasions where no one attended church services. Realizing the indispensability of Okpor, Bernard Onyeigbo tried to persuade him to send them away. When this proved intractable, Okpor was recalled to his position as interpreter. This was a rare case.

In 1928, Anglican agents in Ụkwụànìland met in Obiaruku to deliberate on the problem of polygamy[50]. They included individuals such as E. Okolo of Ezionum, D. Otuata of Orogun-Ijere, J. Edomete of Emu-Unor, S. Oseji of Umutu, S. Chukwu of Obiogo, M.F. Nwosu of Ebendo, P. Okwudinta of Utue-Ogume, D. Nigbo of Isselegu, V. Omolu of Umukwata and B. Chikwendu of Obiaruku. There were arguments for and against compatibility and otherwise of polygamy to the Christian faith. At the end of the deliberation, they resolved that a polygamist who was one prior to his conversion should be permitted to keep them all. However, such as person should not be eligible to any office in the Church. The resolution rejected a situation whereby a convert would want to be a polygamist after his conversion. This resolution went along way to make Ụkwụànì polygamists to feel at home with Anglican churches in their various communities.

Associated with the marriage and family life in Ụkwụànìland is the traditional family practice of *Ifo Ibu* and *Ife-Uno*. Anglican converts treated with contempt and disgust this aspect of family life. Anglican converts were taught not to perform filial duties towards their ancestors (*Ifo ibu),* especially by a daughter-in-law to the ancestors of her parents-in-law. *Ifo Ibu* is associated with the new yam festival (the Ukwata festival). In Isselegu in 1938, one D. Onyeigabo was said to have refused his daughter going back to her husband who for two years had not performed *Ifo Ibu*[51]. Irrespective of the size of the family, it is always under the leadership of the family head known as *Okpara* who is invariably the eldest male member of the family. The *Okpara* summons his people from time to time to give them a sense of direction, settle disputes and sometimes offer sacrifice and prayers in his role as the mediator between the living members of the family and their ancestors. In turn, the *Okpara* is rewarded in cash and kind in what was traditionally called *ife-uno*. *Ife-uno* involves the filial obligation of rendering services and the giving of gifts without demanding or accepting any reward in return. Such services include weeding in the *Okpara's* farm, thatching his leaking roof, collecting firewood for him, fetching water for him, giving a special portion of animals to him, and making occasional presents of wine and tobacco to him.

All these have changed because of Christianity and colonialism. Presently, most families are nuclear while its members are becoming more and more individualistic. The authority of the *Okpara*, which used to be sacrosanct, has come to be questioned, while the allegiance to him has been forgotten. Homage has been transferred from the *Okpara* to the clergymen and men in authority in government cycles. In fact, some people today cannot recall the name of their *Okpara*, let alone serving him in the traditional *ife-uno*. For similar reasons, traditional rulers whose upkeep was the responsibility of their subjects have been left to fend for themselves. Thus, *ife-uno* has become outdated to most individuals.

A good Christian family life is a major concern of the church. On 28th September 1938, the District Church Council meeting states[52]:
Investigation has it that inconsistency of Christian family life in Ụkwụànì is a cankerworm that eats the life of Christianity. Majority of the parents do not give any Christian teaching or show any Christian life in their homes. Hence, the following things obtain in the District.
1. In some Christian homes most of their children cannot read the Bible in Igbo.
2. Some girls are kept "*idegbe*" to bear children for their Christian fathers.
3. Some Christian parents give their daughters to heathen or polygamists to marry. Some send their children to the cities for prostitution
4. Some send their girls to their brothers "abroad" for marriage without questioning how the marriages were contracted …. Those who live under these abnormal conditions are left to change.

Discipline, as a sense of communal order and its survival, was the order of the day. In 1940, Rev. J. Omoefe, the Ụkwụànì District Superintendent forbade teachers from courting or even betrothing girls and a female visitor earned a teacher a summary dismissal. Ozeh explains that one Philip Achuya of Umutu was summarily dismissed for entertaining a female visitor. The situation was such that church agents and leaders kept jealous watch, and paid clandestine or sinister visits to the teachers on the mission premises. The church was very conscious of the conduct of its members and workers: individual rights to privacy were infringed upon[53].

Igo Ani Ezhi is the traditional dedication of a newly born baby to *Olise-Ezhi*, the arch-divinity of the people. As the chief agent of *Chukwu* on earth, *Olise-Ezhi* is believed to be the custodian of life. Consequently, a newly born baby must not see the world until homage is paid to this divinity in form of ceremonial service on the seventh day. The people believe that new born babies and their mothers have the potency of defiling the land, the divinities, the warriors and the priests if they moved about in society without worshipping the arch-divinity as prescribed by the *nsoani*[54]. This rite has been indigenized. Christian mothers and their newborn babies were advised to

keep indoors for seven days[55]. At the end of the seventh day, instead of rendering service to *Olise-Ezhi*, they were instructed to offer prayers and praises to *Chukwu*. Usually members of *Otu Ekpere Eke*, the *Eke* prayer band, helped Christian mothers in this ceremony. On the seventh day, the head of the prayer band led the group very early in the morning to the house of the person performing the outdooring ceremony. Like the traditional priest, the Christian leader ordered the parents to bring the baby outside[56]. Nevertheless, unlike the traditional priest who took the baby to the altar of *Olise-Ezhi*, the Christian leader merely carried the baby from its parents and offered prayers to *Chukwu* directly as he and his group remained standing in front of the house. After this dedicatory and thanksgiving prayer, the leader, like the traditional priest, touched the baby four times against the opened palms of the mother, pronouncing the same traditional cultic blessing, *Nwa Kene n'atanyali i n'eka*. "Let this baby be glued forever in your palms"[57]. In other words, let this baby abide with you forever. After this brief ceremony, the members, the parents and the baby entered the house. After a brief intercessory prayer, members ate whatever the parents set before them as a sign of merriment. Such occasions were marked with Christian songs, choruses and dancing in place of the traditional cultic singing and dancing which usually followed the *Igo Olise Ezhi* ceremony. Many people regarded this Christian attitude as a form of compromise with traditional religion. However, it seemed that Christians in Ụkwụànì had begun to feel the gravity of many of their members falling prey to the ostentatious ceremony attached to *Igo Olise Ezhi* and wisely interpolated a traditional custom into their system of worship without actually entangling himself or herself thereby. Those who were opposed to this compromise saw the idea of isolating newly born babies and their mothers or even forbidding them from public sight for seven days as superstitious and blind support of primitive traditional rites[58]. Most Christians in Ụkwụànìland felt that their approach to the traditional outdooring ceremony agreed in principle with Biblical descriptions and that it was unnecessary to violate any *nso ani* that did not conflict with Christian norms[59].

Concluding Remarks

This paper has echoed the unsung and un-drummed contributions of various categories of indigenous agencies in the Christianization of Ụkwụànìland. It resonates with the new aspect of African Christian historiography. The study emphasizes the areas of convergence in beliefs namely the places where the Christian doctrine echoed the traditional values and beliefs merely reinforced the conviction of the elders about what they already knew and firmly believed in. The areas of "doctrinal differences" which should have influenced their persuasive effort often seemed to produce jarring notes in the ears and religious sensibilities of the custodians of the traditional religious heritage. Some Anglican doctrines were, in the eyes of the adult representatives of the

traditional religion, simply illogical and even non-sensual. From painful and frosting experience, indigenous agents realized that conversion by direct appeal to doctrinal logic and the threats of heaven and hell just did not produce the kind of result they hoped for. On the account of the less productive effects of these earlier attempts at critical dialogue with the local people, they turned to other tools and techniques, such as indigenization of Anglican churches in Ụkwụànìland. This study then advocates that missionaries, foreign or indigenous, should continue to take a realistic approach to the spiritual, moral and socio-cultural needs and conditions of their mission fields in order to ensure its continuity among the people because an important factor to be considered for effective evangelism in mission-societies is the ability to incorporate certain socio-cultural elements which are not inimical the Christian faith and to other religious traditions in dialogue in that society.

On the other hand, African church historians, while relating their works to those of historians in other parts of the globe have the obligation to view the one Church of God through various cultural lenses and perspective. No story of the church in a region or cultural setting should be treated as merely an appendix to or extension of other. What is needed is a fully integrated universal Christian historiography (Platvoet, 1996). We are sanguine that understanding these dynamics will foster dialogue across racial, cultural, gender, or national particularities, as well as facilitate cultural appreciation, and contribute to broader discourse on the impact of Christianity in diverse social contexts and ethnicities. Ultimately, this will help in fostering mutual understanding and dialogue between Anglican Churches and the Ụkwụànì community to establish a harmonious relationship that values both Anglican Christianity and traditional Ụkwụànì cultural heritage.

Notes

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[40] (Okwuegbue 2002, personal interview)

[41]somebody interview

[42]interview

[43]interview at abbi

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[45] (Osaewe, 2005, personal interview)

[46] (Atieku, 2009, personal interview)

[47]interview

[4848]interview abbi

[49](Ezenwa, 2009, personal interview)

[50](D.C.C., 1928)

[51](Ejechi, 2009, personal interview)

[52]Iwegbue ma work. add him in bibliography

[53]interview

[54]INTERVIEW

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