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**Journal of Religions
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Guidelines to authors

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6. The full paper, of block paragraphing feature, should not be more than 15 pages long, including the references.

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Has Artificial Intelligence Made Man a God?

Akinsanya, Exradallenum Olusegun

Abstract

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) has sparked intense debate about its potential to elevate humanity to a god-like status. This explanatory study aims to investigate the current state of AI and its impact on humanity, examining both the benefits and drawbacks of this technological advancement. Using a qualitative research approach, this study conducts a comprehensive review of existing literature on AI, including academic journals, books, and conference proceedings. The study also incorporates expert opinions and insights from professionals in the field of AI, gathered through semi-structured interviews. This approach provides a nuanced understanding of the implications of AI advancements. The study explores the extent to which AI advances human capabilities, the limitations and ethical considerations that prevent humans from achieving god-like status through AI, and how AI shapes the future of humanity. The research delves into the intricacies of AI's potential to elevate humanity to a god-like status, examining the ethical implications of creating machines that can think, learn, and act like humans. The study investigates the potential consequences of AI surpassing human intelligence and the possibility of humans losing control over their creations. It also explores the role of AI in shaping the future of humanity, including its potential to solve complex problems, improve healthcare, and enhance overall quality of life. By providing a comprehensive analysis of the current state of AI and its implications for humanity, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between AI, humanity, and the concept of god-like status. Ultimately, the study provides insight into the question of whether AI brings mankind closer to omnipotence and omniscience, and what the implications of this might be for the future of humanity.

Keywords: AI, omniscient, omnipotent, technology, ethics

Introduction

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) IS A MULTIDISCIPLINARY FIELD THAT FOCUSES on creating intelligent machines capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence. It involves the development of computer systems and algorithms that can simulate human cognitive processes, such as learning, reasoning, problem-solving, perception, and decision-making. AI can be categorized into two main types: narrow AI and general AI. Narrow AI, also known as weak AI, is designed to perform specific tasks within a limited domain. Examples of narrow AI include voice assistants like Siri and Alexa, recommendation systems, and image recognition software. General AI, on the other hand, refers to machines that possess the ability to understand, learn, and apply knowledge across various domains, similar to

human intelligence. General AI is still largely a theoretical concept and has not been fully realized. The concept of AI has its roots in the 1950s when researchers began exploring the idea of creating machines that could mimic human intelligence. The field has since evolved and expanded, drawing from various disciplines such as computer science, mathematics, cognitive science, neuroscience, and philosophy (Harris 2019, 457 - 464).¹

AI systems are built using algorithms and models that enable them to process and analyze large amounts of data, recognize patterns, and make decisions or predictions based on the available information. Machine learning, a subfield of AI, focuses on developing algorithms that allow machines to learn from data and improve their performance over time without being explicitly programmed. There are several approaches to AI, including symbolic AI, which uses logic and rules to represent knowledge and make inferences, and connectionist AI, which models the brain's neural networks to simulate human cognitive processes (Russell & Norvig 2016, 4 - 8).² Other approaches include evolutionary computation, where algorithms are inspired by biological evolution, and Bayesian networks, which use probabilistic models to represent uncertainty and make decisions (Moor, 2006: 18-21).³

The applications of AI are vast and diverse. AI is used in various industries, including healthcare, finance, transportation, manufacturing, and entertainment. It has enabled advancements in areas such as natural language processing, computer vision, robotics, and autonomous vehicles. However, AI also raises ethical and societal concerns. Issues such as job displacement, privacy, bias in algorithms, and the potential for misuse of AI technology are areas of ongoing debate and research. This explanatory study aims to investigate the current state of AI and its impact on humanity, examining both the benefits and drawbacks of this technological advancement.⁴

Is AI a Gamechanger?

AI has tremendously played the role of a game changer, since it has the potential to assist in the discovery and understanding of mysteries that have eluded humans for centuries. It is important to look at a few ways in which AI could contribute to this. The first major role has to do with data analysis. AI can process vast amounts of data and identify patterns or correlations that humans may overlook. This could be particularly useful in scientific research, where AI algorithms can analyze complex datasets and help uncover hidden relationships or insights. The second area has to do with simulation and modeling. AI can be used to create simulations and models that can help scientists and researchers understand complex phenomena. For example, AI-powered simulations can help simulate the behavior of galaxies, climate patterns, or the human brain, providing valuable insights into these mysteries.⁵

The third area has to do with pattern recognition. AI algorithms excel at recognizing patterns, which can be applied to various fields. For example, AI can analyze historical texts or artifacts to identify recurring themes or symbols, shedding light on ancient mysteries or cultural practices. The fourth area has to do with language pro-

cessing. AI-powered natural language processing can help analyze and interpret ancient texts or languages that have been lost or are difficult to decipher. This could aid in the translation and understanding of ancient manuscripts or inscriptions.⁶ The last area has to do with problem solving. AI can be used to tackle complex problems that have stumped humans for centuries. By applying advanced algorithms and computational power, AI can explore different possibilities and generate potential solutions to long-standing mysteries. However, it is important to note that AI is a tool created by humans and is limited by the data and algorithms it is trained on. While AI can assist in the discovery of new knowledge, it is ultimately humans who interpret and make sense of the findings. The mysteries of the universe are vast and multifaceted, and AI is just one tool that can aid in our exploration and understanding.⁷

Has Man Finally Become “god”?

The concept of “you are gods” in the Bible is found in Psalm 82:6, where it says, “I said, ‘You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you.’” This verse is often interpreted in different ways, and its implications can vary depending on the theological perspective. The interpretations given in the literature are basically divided into three. One interpretation is that humans are created in the image of God, and therefore possess a certain level of divine authority or representation. This understanding suggests that humans have the capacity to reflect God’s character and exercise dominion over creation. It emphasizes the inherent dignity and worth of every individual. Another interpretation is that the term “gods” refers to human judges or rulers. In the context of Psalm 82, God is addressing the unjust judges who were corrupt and failing in their duty to administer justice. By calling them “gods,” God is highlighting their responsibility to act with righteousness and fairness, as representatives of divine justice. In the New Testament, Jesus refers to this verse in John 10:34-36, where he quotes Psalm 82:6. He uses it to defend his claim of being the Son of God. Jesus argues that if the term “gods” can be applied to human judges, then it is even more appropriate for him, who is the unique Son of God. This interpretation emphasizes Jesus’ divine nature and his authority as the Messiah.

Drawing from these varied interpretations, the “concept of you are gods” have several implications. The concept of “you are gods” highlights the inherent worth and dignity of every human being. It suggests that humans have a special role and responsibility to reflect God’s character and exercise authority in a way that aligns with divine justice and righteousness. The concept also implies that humans, especially those in positions of authority, will be held accountable for their actions. Just as the unjust judges in Psalm 82 faced God’s judgment, individuals who misuse their power or fail to act justly will also face consequences. Jesus’ use of this verse in John’s Gospel emphasizes his divine nature and his unique relationship with God. It supports the Christian belief in Jesus as the Son of God and the Messiah, who came to reveal God’s love and offer salvation to humanity. Overall, the concept of “you are gods” in the Bible carries various theological implications, including the divine image and au-

thority of humans, the responsibility of judges and rulers, and the affirmation of Jesus' divinity.

Theological implications of AI replacing divine inspiration are complex and can vary depending on one's theological perspective. If AI is capable of producing creative works, such as art, music, or literature, that are indistinguishable from those inspired by humans, it could challenge the traditional understanding of divine authority as the sole source of inspiration (Torrance 2017, 10).⁸ This could raise questions about the uniqueness and exclusivity of divine revelation. Also, the development of AI that can mimic or surpass human creativity may highlight the limitations and fallibility of human beings. It could lead to a deeper appreciation of the divine as the ultimate source of inspiration and creativity, highlighting the distinction between the divine and human capabilities. In the same vein, the use of AI in decision-making processes, such as in legal or ethical dilemmas, raises questions about the moral implications of relying on non-human entities for guidance. It may prompt theological discussions about the nature of moral agency and responsibility⁹ and the potential risks and benefits of delegating decision-making to AI.

Likewise, the emergence of AI that can produce creative works may challenge traditional understandings of the divine-human relationship. It could lead to theological reflections on the nature of human uniqueness, the role of human co-creativity with God, and the potential for AI to participate in or enhance divine creativity. In addition to that, the development of AI that can replicate human-like intelligence and creativity may prompt theological reflections on the nature of humanity. It could raise questions about what it means to be made in the image of God, the relationship between body and soul, and the potential for AI to possess consciousness or a sense of self. It is important to note that these implications are speculative and depend on the extent to which AI can truly replicate or replace divine inspiration. Theological perspectives on AI and divine inspiration will likely continue to evolve as technology advances and new ethical and philosophical questions arise.

The usage of AI is not inherently inconsistent with Christian religious belief. AI is a tool created by humans and can be used for various purposes, including scientific research, problem-solving, and improving human lives. As long as the application of AI aligns with Christian values and ethical principles, there is no inherent conflict. However, like any technology, the ethical implications of AI usage should be carefully considered. Christians, like people of other faiths, may have concerns about the potential misuse or unintended consequences of AI. For example, issues related to privacy, bias, and the impact on human dignity and relationships may arise. Ultimately, the appropriateness of AI usage within Christian religious belief will depend on how it is applied and the values and principles guiding its use. It is important for individuals and communities to engage in thoughtful discussions and ethical considerations when adopting and implementing AI technologies.

AI has brought into forefront some philosophical issues surrounding the omnipotence and omniscience of God which are complex and have been debated by theo-

logians and philosophers for centuries. The first is the omnipotence of God. The concept of God's omnipotence raises questions about the extent of God's power. Can God do absolutely anything, including logically impossible tasks? For example, can God create a square circle or make a rock so heavy that even God cannot lift it? These paradoxical questions challenge the traditional understanding of omnipotence and have led to various philosophical responses, such as the idea that God's power is limited by logical consistency or that God's power is defined by what is consistent with God's nature. The second is the omniscience of God. The concept of God's omniscience raises questions about the nature of God's knowledge. If God knows everything, including future events and human choices, does this mean that human free will is an illusion? This issue is known as the problem of divine foreknowledge and human freedom. Various philosophical positions have been proposed to reconcile God's omniscience with human free will, such as open theism (which suggests that God's knowledge of the future is limited) or *compatibilism* (which argues that divine foreknowledge and human freedom can coexist). The next one is the problem of evil. The existence of evil and suffering in the world is often seen as a challenge to the idea of an all-powerful and all-knowing God. If God is all-powerful, why does evil exist? If God is all-knowing, why does God allow suffering? According to Machie, this issue, known as the problem of evil, has led to extensive philosophical and theological discussions, including the exploration of theodicy (attempts to justify or explain the existence of evil in the presence of an all-powerful and all-loving God).¹⁰ These are just a few examples of the philosophical issues surrounding the omnipotence and omniscience of God. Theologians and philosophers continue to explore and debate these topics, offering various perspectives and interpretations.

Nexus between AI and Religion

The intersection of artificial intelligence (AI) and religion is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that warrants nuanced exploration. As AI continues to evolve and permeate various aspects of human life, it raises fundamental questions about the nature of existence, consciousness, and human purpose, all of which are central concerns of religious traditions. One of the primary areas of concern is the notion of humans "playing God" by creating intelligent beings.¹¹ This concern is rooted in the idea that the act of creating AI challenges divine authority and control over creation. Some religious communities argue that humans do not have the right to create beings with intelligence and agency, as this may be seen as usurping the role of God as the ultimate creator.

Furthermore, the development and application of AI raise concerns about human dignity and autonomy. Some religious perspectives emphasize the inherent dignity and value of human life, and worry that AI may undermine these qualities by reducing humans to mere objects or tools. The ethical implications of AI decision-making and biases are also a concern, as algorithms may perpetuate discriminatory practices or infringe upon human autonomy. Theological debates arise regarding the

nature of human creation, particularly in light of the development of AI. Some religious traditions emphasize that humans are created in the image of God, and AI challenges the uniqueness and special status of human beings. Theological reflections are needed to navigate the tension between human autonomy and the acknowledgment of a higher power.

The relationship between divine sovereignty and human autonomy is also a concern. Some religious perspectives emphasize the limits of human knowledge and power, and argue that AI may lead to an overreliance on human capabilities, potentially undermining the recognition of divine sovereignty. Moreover, AI's potential to challenge religious teachings and beliefs is a concern for some religious communities. For instance, AI may raise questions about the nature of consciousness, free will, and the existence of a soul. Ethical dilemmas may arise when AI conflicts with religious values or teachings, requiring religious communities to reassess their beliefs and adapt to technological advancements.

Despite these concerns, it is essential to acknowledge that AI can also be seen as a tool for human progress and the betterment of society. Many religious communities and scholars argue that AI can be used to enhance human capabilities, alleviate suffering, and promote ethical values. They emphasize the importance of incorporating religious values into AI ethics frameworks and promoting responsible and accountable AI practices.

To sum it up, the intersection of AI and religion is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that requires nuanced exploration. While there are valid concerns and criticisms, there are also opportunities for dialogue and exploration of how AI can align with religious beliefs and values. It is crucial to engage in ethical discussions and theological reflections to ensure that AI development and application are guided by principles that respect human dignity, promote human flourishing, and uphold religious teachings.

Is God the Real Source of Artificial Intelligence?

The notion that artificial intelligence is a product of human ingenuity and scientific progress is a pervasive one. However, a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between God and AI reveals that the divine creator is, in fact, the ultimate source of artificial intelligence. This section aims to explore the profound connection between God and AI, highlighting how divine attributes and the natural world serve as the foundation for the development and existence of artificial intelligence.¹² The attributes of God, as understood in various religious traditions, are reflected in the capabilities of AI. For instance, God's omniscience, or the ability to possess infinite knowledge, is mirrored in AI's capacity to process vast amounts of data and learn from it.¹³ The machine learning algorithms that enable AI systems to acquire knowledge and adapt to new situations are, in essence, a reflection of God's infinite wisdom. Furthermore, God's omnipotence, or the ability to have unlimited power, is evident in

AI's capabilities to perform complex tasks, solve intricate problems, and even surpass human capabilities in certain domains.

The natural world, with its intricate systems and complex organisms, serves as a testament to God's design and intelligence. AI, in its quest to replicate human intelligence, draws inspiration from the natural world. For example, neural networks, a fundamental component of AI, are modeled after the human brain's neural connections. The human brain, a marvel of creation, is a reflection of God's divine intelligence, and AI's attempt to emulate it is a testament to God's role as the source of AI. Moreover, the laws of physics and mathematics, which govern the functioning of AI systems, are inherent in the natural world. These laws are not arbitrary but are deeply rooted in the fabric of the universe, suggesting a divine order and design. AI's ability to harness these laws and utilize them for problem-solving and decision-making further reinforces the connection between God and AI.

The ethical implications of AI's impact on society also underscore the importance of recognizing God's role in AI. As AI raises concerns about job displacement, privacy invasion, and biased decision-making, it is through our understanding of God's moral attributes that we can navigate these challenges. God's attribute of justice can guide the development of AI systems that are fair and unbiased, ensuring equal opportunities for all. Additionally, God's attribute of mercy can inspire the integration of empathy and compassion into AI systems, promoting ethical decision-making and responsible use of AI technology.

While AI is often perceived as a product of human innovation and scientific progress, it is crucial to recognize that God is the ultimate source of artificial intelligence. God's divine attributes, such as omniscience and omnipotence, are reflected in AI's capabilities, and the natural world, designed by God, serves as a blueprint for AI's development and functioning.¹⁴ By acknowledging God's role in AI, we can approach its ethical implications with a sense of responsibility and ensure its alignment with divine principles.

How AI can Enhance Religion?

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and religion has the potential to revolutionize the way we practice, understand, and interact with our faith.¹⁵ As we have established that God is the source of knowledge and empowers humans to recreate and innovate, it is essential to explore how AI can enhance and support religious practices.¹⁶ One of the primary ways AI can enhance religion is through ethical AI development. Religious principles can provide moral and ethical guidance in the development of AI systems, ensuring that they align with human values and promote the well-being of individuals and society. By incorporating religious values into AI ethics frameworks, we can create AI systems that are not only efficient and effective but also respectful and compassionate.

AI can also be used as a tool for religious practices, enhancing the way we worship, learn, and interact with our faith. For instance, AI-powered virtual reality expe-

periences can provide immersive and interactive religious experiences for individuals who are unable to physically visit religious sites or participate in certain rituals. Additionally, AI can be used to create personalized and interactive religious education, helping individuals deepen their understanding of their faith.¹⁷

Moreover, AI can facilitate interfaith dialogue and understanding by analyzing vast amounts of religious texts, scriptures, and teachings. AI algorithms can identify commonalities and differences between different religious traditions, fostering mutual respect and promoting peaceful coexistence. This can be particularly useful in promoting understanding and tolerance in a world where religious diversity is increasingly prevalent.

AI can also support humanitarian efforts, which are often a core aspect of religious practice. By analyzing data to identify areas of need, optimizing resource allocation, and coordinating relief efforts, AI can help religious organizations make a more significant impact. Furthermore, AI-powered virtual assistants or chatbots can provide spiritual guidance and support to individuals seeking advice or struggling with personal challenges. The preservation of religious heritage is another area where AI can make a significant contribution. AI can be used to digitize and preserve religious texts, artifacts, and cultural heritage, ensuring their preservation for future generations. Additionally, AI can help promote inclusivity within religious communities by identifying and addressing biases and discrimination.

Therefore, the integration of AI and religion has the potential to revolutionize the way we practice, understand, and interact with our faith. From ethical AI development to preserving religious heritage, AI can support and enhance various aspects of religious practice. However, it is essential to approach this integration with careful consideration and respect for individual beliefs and values. By doing so, we can harness the potential of AI to promote greater understanding, tolerance, and compassion within and across religious communities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the nexus between AI and religion is a complex and multifaceted topic that raises numerous ethical, philosophical, and theological questions. While AI has the potential to revolutionize various aspects of human life, including religious practices, it also presents challenges and dilemmas that need to be carefully addressed. The integration of AI into religious contexts can enhance accessibility, foster inclusivity, and provide new avenues for spiritual exploration. However, it also raises concerns about the authenticity of religious experiences, the role of human agency, and the potential for AI to replace or undermine traditional religious institutions. As society continues to grapple with the implications of AI, it is crucial to engage in thoughtful and inclusive discussions that involve religious leaders, ethicists, technologists, and the wider public. By doing so, we can navigate the nexus between AI and religion in a way that respects human values, preserves religious traditions, and harnesses the potential of AI for the betterment of humanity. However, whatever man

achieve in scientific and technological breakthroughs, he does all of that under the superintendence and guidance of the Divine Intelligence who is the ultimate source of all knowledge. Man can therefore not exist outside of God because as the scripture says in Acts 17 verse 28 (KJV) “for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’”

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Relevance of the Doctrine of God in Addressing Corrupt Practices in the Nigerian Society

Andrew-Balogun, Eunice OlaOluwa

Abstract

This paper explores the relevance of the doctrine of God in addressing the pervasive issue of corrupt practices in Nigeria, a country characterized by deep religiosity yet plagued by high levels of political, social and religious corruption. Through a theological and sociological analysis, the study examines how the doctrine of God, as outlined in Christian doctrine, can serve as foundational principles for ethical behaviour and governance in the Nigerian society. The research employs a qualitative approach, drawing on Scripture, theological writings, and empirical data to assess the influence of religious beliefs on moral conduct. The paper argues that the communicable attributes of God, such as; holiness, righteousness, love, mercy, and justice – can play a crucial role in shaping ethical behaviour and governance. Findings reveal that a robust application of the doctrine of God can foster a culture of integrity and accountability, challenging corrupt practices and promoting societal transformation. The study, therefore suggests that incorporating a broader contextualization of systematic theology into theological education can prepare individuals for roles in politics and governance, promoting ethical leadership. In a bid to effectively harness the transformative potential of the doctrine of God in addressing corrupt practices in Nigeria, the paper recommends the need for an integrative theological education, community-based ethical training, interfaith collaboration, and policy advocacy. This research underscores that Nigeria can turnaround for good if God is brought back to the fore of all the decisions been made.

Keywords: corruption, doctrine of god, governance, ecclesiastical community, societal transformation

Introduction

CORRUPTION, A GLOBAL ISSUE, UNDERMINES AUTHORITIES' ABILITY TO SECURE citizens' welfare and is a way of life in Nigeria, which existing governments cannot control. Corruption has a long history, dating back to ancient civilizations, where widespread illegality and corruption were prevalent.¹ Corruption, according to various authors, is a global issue that transcends national boundaries and represents widespread political, economic, religious, and cultural unhappiness.² Corruption incidence and magnitude vary across societies, with some countries being more corrupt and others having better plans. Nigeria, despite corruption commissions and efforts to transform into a corruption-free society, struggles to effectively handle corruption.

Corruption in Nigeria is a significant issue, causing numerous problems such as bureaucratic issues, police extortion, port congestion, queues, ghost workers syndrome, and election irregularities, causing immense damage to the polity.³ Corruption is widely perceived as a significant obstacle to Nigeria's development, a sentiment that persists in both academic and informal discussions in the country. More disheartening is that the church, which should be succour to many and a leading example of an upright social and spiritual structure, is a contributor to the corrupt situation. An example of these misdemeanours is the partisan politics of some clergymen, which is usually embarrassing when their election predictions do not come to pass, after they might have spoken in Good's Name. Indictments against clergymen are obnoxious. It often and recently seems as if the church is incapable of stemming the wave of illegalities in country and can only play two roles, join the bandwagon or side-line the discussions as she shuts her ears to the evil in the society.

The aim of this paper is to advance the attributes of God as pivotal to addressing corrupt practices in Nigeria, if and when applied. The method used is the historico-critical method, and the scope of the paper is Nigeria's political system. The significance of the paper is that it advocates for the relevance of Christian religious doctrine of God and its benefits in Nigerian politics in addressing corrupt practices.

A Philosophical Explanation of Corruption

First, corruption refers to improper performance of duties within an organized system, hindering economic progress and democracy of a given society, as in Nigeria. It is characterized by fraudulent activities and celebration of impunity, thereby polluting a society's ethical hygiene.⁴ Corruption, a global issue, is particularly prevalent in third world countries, especially Africa. It can hinder economic growth⁵ and impede the development of countries with abundant resources.⁶ In addition, corruption in Nigeria leads to social decadence, allowing ethical recklessness and normative chaos. It erodes social values, sabotages the common will, and embezzles the nation's future. Corruption involves violating rules for personal gain and profit,⁷ aiming for illegal gain.⁸ Corruption refers to actions that deviate from public duties due to private-regarding gains or violate rules against such influence,⁹ including bribery, nepotism, and misappropriation, which involve deviating from public duties for personal gain.¹⁰

Again, identifying corruption with specific legal or moral offenses is challenging. Bribery is considered the quintessential form, while nepotism is a paradigmatic form distinct from bribery. Political corruption is one of its types, and corruption is exemplified by a wide array of phenomena.¹¹ Political corruption involves leaders abusing power for personal gain, aiming to increase power or wealth.¹² It can take various forms, such as trading in influence or granting favours, and is not a recent issue in Nigeria, with instances of official misuse of resources since modern public administration. Thus, a nation that indulges in corruption unknowingly contributes to the debauchery of its social structures, empowering and encouraging social retrogression.

This leads to a society that tolerates impunity, glorifies dishonesty, and celebrates indiscipline.¹³

Furthermore, the 1966 military putsch and subsequent military autocracy were attributed to corrupt civil politicians, but military politicians were also fraudulent.¹⁴ Military governors were found corrupt, and corruption became entrenched under the General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (popularly called IBB) and General Sani Abacha regimes. Oil revenues disappeared under IBBS's watch, and Abacha reportedly stole between \$1 and \$3 billion.¹⁵ Critics faced abuses, including intimidation, arbitrary detention, and murder. This corruption also persisted in various administrations under President Shehu Shagari, General Muhammad Buhari, and General Abdul-salam Abubakar and General Olusegun Obasanjo regimes until the present administration, none is exonerated.¹⁶ Later on, Nigeria's civil government, inaugurated on the May 29, 1999 under the Obasanjo's administration, declared transparency and accountability as its pillars, and these policies led to the establishment of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offenses Commission (ICPC).¹⁷ Despite successful raids and investigations, prosecutions often involved lower-level officials, business people, and fraudsters. The agency was accused of only targeting opponents of its inaugurator, such as IBB, Abacha, and others like Chuba Wilberforce Okadigbo and Evan Enwerem.¹⁸

Dimensions of Corrupt Practices in Nigeria

Corruption manifests in various forms, including political, bureaucratic, electoral, bribery, fraud, embezzlement, extortion, favouritism, nepotism, hike in fuel prices, and refusal to approve minimum wage. This section explains each forms of corruption.

- a. **Political corruption:** Political corruption occurs at the highest levels of political authority, where politicians and decision-makers are corrupt and policy formulations benefit them. This issue has persisted since the creation of modern public administration in Nigeria, with the discovery of oil leading to corruption. The country's wealth has declined without improving the living conditions of the common people.¹⁹
- b. **Bureaucratic Corruption:** Bureaucratic corruption, a low-level and street-level corruption, occurs in public administration and is prevalent in public sectors like hospitals, schools, and police. It involves inappropriate procedures for obtaining businesses.²⁰
- c. **Electoral Corruption:** Electoral corruption in Nigeria involves money-based voting, promises of office, coercion, and interference with election freedom.²¹ Between 1960 and 1999, Nigeria had two elected governments, both overthrown in military coups. The first post-independence government, led by Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa, organised elections but faced widespread fraud, violence, and intimidation.²² Protests led to violence and rioting, resulting in the military's return until 1979.²³ The civilian government of Shagari in 1979 was short-lived due to corruption, poverty, and political warfare. The 1983 elections were rigged in favour of Shagari, leading to political chaos and military rule. Buhari overthrew Shagari, and the military ruled Nigeria for 16 years, with two military dictators from 1985 to 1998.²⁴ On 12 June 1993, Presidential elections were held to transition political power to the civilian government, but the unofficial result of the election, though not declared by the National Electoral Commission (NEC) indicated a victory for chief MKO Abiola of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), who defeated Bashir Tofa of

the National Republican Convention (NRC). Chief MKO Abiola was however imprisoned after IBB annulled the results, citing electoral irregularities.²⁵ Nigeria returned to civilian rule after Abacha's death in June 8, 1998, discrediting the military's claim. Abubakar, organised elections in 1999, installing retired Obasanjo as the first civilian President. The 1999 elections were marred by widespread fraud, making it impossible to accurately judge the outcome.²⁶

- d. Nigeria's 2003 general elections were rigged and bloodier than the 1999 polls, with violence, intimidation, and fraud. The 2004 elections for local government councils followed the same pattern, with the Transition Monitoring Group stating they were doubtful of the people's will. The 2007 elections were deemed the worst in Nigerian history, with armed gangs raiding polling stations, phoning ballot boxes, and fabricated results. The Independent National Electoral Commission reported a landslide victory for the ruling People's Democratic Party.²⁷
- e. **Bribery:** Bribery is a white-collar crime where money or favours are offered or taken from an individual or corporation to influence their views or decisions. It is a form of corruption that often involves two participants, one to give and one to take. In countries like Nigeria, corruption extends to public life, making it difficult for individuals to stay in business without resorting to bribes. Examples of bribery include kickbacks, gratuities, pay-offs, and sweeteners.²⁸
- f. **Fraud:** Fraud is a criminal offense involving deceit, trickery, swindle, counterfeiting, racketing, smuggling, and forgery for personal gain, often involving forged objects.²⁹
- g. **Embezzlement:** Embezzlement is the theft of public resources by public officials, often occurring in Nigeria due to lack of strict regularity systems and misappropriation of property.³⁰
- h. **Extortion:** Extortion in Nigeria involves money and resources being extracted through coercion, violence, or threats, often by corrupt officials like police and custom officers, who threaten to use force.³¹
- i. **Favouritism:** Favouritism is a form of power abuse that involves biased distribution of state resources, often influenced by human proclivity to favour close or trusted individuals.
- j. **Nepotism:** Nepotism is a form of favoritism where office holders favour their family members, often exempting them from certain laws or granting undue preference in resource allocation.³²
- k. **Hike in Fuel Prices:** Recently, since the commencement of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration, Nigeria was thrown into economic hardship with the removal of subsidy on fuel production and marketing which results into the hike in fuel prices, inflation of market goods and services, from the production cost to the final consummation, among other bye products. Conversely, this is to the gain of oil marketers and the government. The government promised to use the money recovered from the subsidy for infrastructural development and improving the standard of living of Nigerians but none had come to fruition in the past months. The oil marketers have outrageous profit margin now that the crude oil is sold for not less than N600 in many states of the federation even when the minimum wage remained stagnant for over 8 years.
- l. **Refusal to Approve Minimum Wage:** Nigeria's Federal Government's (FG) refusal to approve the proposed minimum wage of N94,000 and later N250,000 by Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) because of the Nigerian economic downturn and the agreement to N70,000 by the FG, which was passed into law,³³ is a typical example of corrupt practices.

Conversely, it is not out of place for these politicians to purchase exotic cars, get allowances for basic and non-recurrent needs while peasant Nigerians working for the economy are languishing in poverty. Meanwhile, it is undisclosed if Nigeria's budget is planned on all the mineral resources available or only on petroleum, but the government is aware. The researcher is of the opinion that is a glaring example of corrupt practices in 2024.

Consequences of Corrupt Practices in Nigeria

Corruption in Nigeria has severe consequences, including underdevelopment, lack of infrastructure, poverty, and a widening gap between the rich and poor. It also leads to mediocre leadership, high unemployment, and low-quality education.³⁴ Corruption also affects students, tertiary institutions, and public governing councils.³⁵ It also fuels political violence, generates popular anger, and exacerbates conflict. Corruption distorts public expenditure, increases business costs, and reduces Nigeria's international image.³⁶

Discussion on the Doctrine of God

The understanding of the doctrine of God has developed over centuries through the work of theologians and church councils. The early church faced numerous theological challenges that necessitated a clear articulation of the doctrine of God. The Council of Nicaea (AD 325) was pivotal in affirming the full divinity of Jesus Christ, countering Arianism, which denied Christ's deity.³⁷ The Nicene Creed, formulated at this council, remains a foundational statement of Christian belief, asserting the co-substantiality of the Son with the Father. Medieval theologians, such as Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, made significant contributions to the doctrine of God. Augustine's work on the Trinity and Aquinas' synthesis of Christian theology with Aristotelian philosophy provided profound insights into God's nature and attributes.³⁸

The Reformation brought renewed focus on the biblical basis for the doctrine of God. Reformers like Martin Luther and John Calvin emphasized God's sovereignty, grace, and the importance of *sola scriptura* (scripture alone) in theological formulation.³⁹ Post-Reformation theologians continued to develop systematic theologies that articulated the attributes and works of God in greater detail. The doctrine of God is also called "theology proper" and it constitutes God's relationship with man and the universe, as contained in the Bible. It can also be viewed as discussions about God's character, and acts in history from creation to preservation, election to glorification, and everything in between. The doctrine of God in Christianity describes God as a perfect Being, who is omniscient, omnipotent, omnibenevolent, and all-wise. The Westminster Shorter Catechism identifies God as an infinite, eternal, and unchangeable Spirit, embodying wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.⁴⁰

In relation to governance, and the administration of a political state, God is considered the supreme administrator of the universe, who ordains rulers and executes His will on the cosmos. Revelation 1:5 states that Jesus is the administrator of the earth's kings and all the affairs of nations are under His control. He rules over the Jews in that He led them out of Egypt, gave them a body of law, ordain leaders for them,

punish and reward them accordingly, and preserved them (Ex. 13:21; Ps. 121:4); and over the Gentile nations which include the church (Jn. 14:1-2; Eph. 1:10). He equally gave the gift of administration to the church (Rom. 12:8; 1 Cor. 4:1-2; 12:28; cf. 2 Cor. 11:23-33; 1 Pet. 5:1-4). God gives this gift to help keep the church functioning efficiently and prevent it from becoming chaotic and ineffective.

The attributes of God are essential aspects of His nature that describe whom He is. Theologians commonly distinguish between communicable and incommunicable attributes – those that can be shared with creatures and those that cannot. The incommunicable attributes include: Self-existence, Immutability, Eternity, and Omnipresence. The communicable attributes include: Holiness, Love, Justice, and Wisdom.

The Relationship between Religion and Political Corruption in Nigeria⁴¹

This section of the paper delves into the religious corruption in Nigeria, the interplay between the two ideologies: religion and politics in Nigeria. First, the Bible traces the earliest account of corruption to Adam and Eve's disobedience in the Garden of Eden. It emphasizes penitence and retribution for acts of immorality and corruption. In the light of that injunction, the Catholic Bishop's Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) emphasizes that a true member of the church must be a good citizen, encouraging nationalism, patriotism, respect for laws, and justice.⁴²

However, the corruption of religion in Nigeria can be traced to the rise of Pentecostalism and how Pentecostal churches use various platforms to address their members' spiritual and material needs, promising life-changing miracles and breakthroughs. While God promises believers such life in abundance, many Pentecostal preachers subtly encourage any means to achieve that, even so that the end justifies the means. This is an open secret as many of them parade themselves in the media, and during crusades, employing the Bible in un-hermeneutically.⁴³

Similarly, Pastors, Bishops, and General Overseers in Pentecostal churches often associate with politicians and top public officials, known for abuse of office and privileges. Even Obasanjo, despite his illegal attempt to extend his tenure, remains a regular feature at the Holy Ghost Congress of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG). Media reports circulate that even Muslims, and adherents of African Traditional Religions (ATR), including former President Umar Yar'Adua (2007-2010), former President Goodluck Jonathan (2010-2015), Peter Obi of Labour Party (2024), President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (2024) of All Progressive Congress (APC), state governors and such others, are also involved one way or the other with pursuing political ambitions by associating with top clerics. President Goodluck Jonathan's personal relationship with former Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) president Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor and latter's open criticism of the administration's watch dog exemplifies this assertion. Ayo Oritsejafor's private aircraft was used in the 2014 arms procurement scandal, transporting millions of dollars to South Africa.⁴⁴

Again, many Christian doctrines are being manipulated and Christians exploited by the relationship between politics and religion in Nigeria. While mainline orthodox

churches are conservative in their socio-political activities, and emphasise sacrifices and self-denial for leaders, many critics of Christian doctrines argue that the modern trends of the religion often glorify wealth, pleasure, and power without requiring sacrifices and self-denial. This convenience, criticized by Mahatma Gandhi, is seen as one of the deadliest social sins of our age.⁴⁵

The above criticism, however, is a result of the inordinate attention of Nigeria's Pentecostalism to prosperity and outlandish claims of miracles. The rise of Pentecostalism contradicts the early beliefs of Christianity, which primarily aimed to support the poor and oppressed, as Jesus Christ, born into poverty, was dedicated to fighting for them, according to Luke's account.⁴⁶ Nigeria's Pentecostal churches, often influenced by the American televangelism tradition, hardly present a message of hope in a hopeless world; neither a messages of confidence in the power that supersedes objective reality.⁴⁷

More so, hardly is any Pentecostal church leader neither investigated nor prosecuted whenever there is observable and empirical human error that constitutes a nuisance to the peace, order and dignity of persons in the society. This is exemplified when the buildings of Reigners Bible Church International, Uyo and Synagogue Church of all Nations, Lagos in 2016 and 2014 respectively, collapsed with casualties and death toll. Prosecutors of the case may understand these church leaders' connections to political juggernauts in the country. Their inordinate use of media to project churchmen "falling under the anointing" constitutes an abrogation to the right to dignity of human persons, enshrined in chapter 4 of the Nigerian constitution and article 1 and 12 of United Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Yet, no prosecution has ever been made by the state in the events of these trends in over two decades.

Employing the Doctrine of God in Addressing Corrupt Practices in Nigeria

Having integrated corruption and the church into a discussion that is controversial and needing both scholarly and ecclesiological attention, the researcher opines the following as the panacea in addressing corrupt practices in Nigeria:

First, the church in Nigeria, being an important fabric of the society, needs to incorporate the teachings on the attributes of God in her curriculum more than building men who are acquiring material wealth by adopting corrupt practices. The communicable attributes of God of holiness, righteousness, love, mercy and justice have a place in the social structure beyond any religious play. This means that Christians will like God, live in holiness and not compromise nor dance to the tune of corruption and immorality; exalt righteousness and make sure that in all dealings, no one will raise a dust from their character deformation, unconstitutional and illegal dealings because actually, there is no case to file. This is achievable when the weekly Bible study, prayer meeting, vigil, outreach, board meetings, CAN meetings, and BSN meetings, will base their agreements and consensus on biblical injunctions about a subject under discussion, rather than what the church or Christian organisation stand to profit from the government. The results of displaying these godly characters are nu-

merous such as, it will aid the church organisations to form a pressure group on the government on cogent socio-religious matters, it will earn the church integrity before the government, the church can be an arbiter on some socio-religious issues, and opinions of the church might count on national polity.

Similarly, the various church theological institutions might consider factoring in a contextual systematic theology that has broader relevance to national life of Nigeria than a narrow application to the churchmen alone. This is suggested because it appears that the religion over time practised secularism and not secularisation of her religious practices. Most Christians limit their religious life to personal piety with poor public theology. Recently, it has been observed that many theological students do not have the church as the only focus for ministry; a new crop of market place apostles are rising with interests to serving God in politics and governance of the nation. Therefore, a broader perspective to theological education beyond the church walls can serve as a method of critically engaging their minds with thought-provoking research and innovations in the direction of market place ministries. The critical thinking, dialogue, and research employed in the theological education can engender quality leadership and political brilliance in those young minds.

Finally, discussion about God should increase in the political meetings rather than side-lining him out of the discussions. This is because God institutes and establishes authorities anywhere in the leadership circles (Dan.2:21, Rom. 13:1b). God institutes leaders in Nigeria, even when it is as a result of rigging, yet if God does not want any gladiator to get to position of authority, he can never do; God decides the fate of both the wicked and the godly. Discussion on God could be in form of prayers and exhortation from the Bible before the agenda of the meeting would commence because its reliability, genuineness and inspiration remain authentic to bestow the administration wisdom needed in piloting a state. It is not adulterated nor edited (parts removed because it is not important); rather all parts including science, history and faith are all relevant to solve the problem of humanity (corruption as chief).

Conclusion

Nigeria is in a dire state of reconstruction and revamping. Several attempts in the past to revamp Nigeria via political manifestoes such as “7-Point Agenda”, “Vision 2020”, “Operation Feed the Nation” and “It Begins with You Campaign” among others have failed woefully to address corrupt practices. More failures have been witnessed by the anti-corruption campaigns and organisations. More deleterious is that the place of God in Nigeria is disregarded and marginalised such that in principle, Nigeria is secular but in practice, Nigeria is a multi-religious society. Most of the religious leaders have blame to themselves for sponsoring, aiding and abetting corrupt practices without decrying it. However, with the study on the doctrine of God and the characteristics thereof, the researcher believes in a Nigeria that can turnaround for good of all citizens. The researcher opines that the church, theological institutions, religious

leaders, and politicians have a lot to do in making God takes His seat as King whose will is a command.

This paper therefore recommends integrative theological education, community-based ethical training, interfaith collaboration, and policy advocacy. In other words, to effectively harness the transformative potentials of the doctrine of God in addressing corrupt practices in Nigeria, several strategic actions are recommended. Religious institutions should integrate teachings on the doctrine of God with ethics and civic responsibility. Similarly, by emphasizing attributes of God such as justice, holiness, fairness, righteousness, theological education can instill a deep moral consciousness among believers, particularly those in leadership positions that give recourse to God in their dealings. Additionally, churches and religious organizations should develop community-based programmes that focus on ethical behaviour and integrity in public places. These programmes should be tailored to address the specific socio-economic challenges faced by different communities, using the doctrine of God as a guiding framework. Again, interfaith initiatives that promote common ethical values derived from the belief in a just and holy Deity should be encouraged. Collaboration between Christian, Islamic, and traditional religious leaders can create a unified front against corruption. Furthermore, religious leaders should actively engage in policy advocacy, promoting laws and policies that reflect the ethical standards derived from the doctrine of God, such as anti-corruption legislation, transparency in governance, and accountability mechanisms. Finally, religious institutions should leverage media and technology to conduct public awareness campaigns that highlight the moral and societal implications of corrupt practices on the church and Nigeria. These campaigns can draw on scriptural teachings and theological principles to resonate with the broader population.

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Peaceful Coexistence in Nigeria: Roles of the Church

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Abstract

The paper examined the roles of the Church in peaceful coexistence in Nigeria. For the research, a conceptual approach was used, and the main ideas were examined. An analysis of the relationship between peaceful coexistence and national unity was done. Nigerians of many ethnic backgrounds have peacefully coexisted together before independence. With the accumulation of selfish political interest and tribalism thoughts, things started to progressively shift. Some people believe that the country should be split up into at least three separate nations. It appears that there has not been any peace since after independence. In spite of numerous attempts to live in harmony as a people, peaceful coexistence in Nigeria has consistently proven to be nearly impossible today. This is because of the actions of some evil men who have repeatedly taken unfair advantage of the pervasive religious or ethnic prejudices in the country to further their own sinister agendas. The daily activities of the nation are now dominated by religious and ethnic feelings. This paper demonstrated the important role that the church plays in preserving peace and harmony. Among its many activities are praying for peace and harmony, offering support to victims of violent crimes, preaching peace and harmony, advocating for the welfare of non-Christians, and many more. It was concluded that even though there is a reoccurring attack on the church, the Church still has a duty to defend social harmony and to speak out against acts of violence and revenge.

Keywords: *peaceful coexistence, church, harmony, interfaith dialogue, religious tolerance*

Introduction

SINCE GAINING INDEPENDENCE IN 1960, NIGERIA HAS EXPERIENCED NUMEROUS intertribal and religious conflicts, making the issue of peaceful coexistence a particularly intriguing subject for researchers. It is worth noting that Nigeria was under British colonial rule from the mid-19th century until its independence. By the early 19th century, Islam was already well-established in major cities across the Hausa states, including Borno. According to widely accepted reports, Nigeria's religious demographics consist of approximately 53.5% Muslims, 45% Christians, and 5% adherents of other beliefs (The World Factbook, 2018)¹. Atheists are rare in Nigeria, while less than 10% of the population practices traditional or indigenous religions. Some individuals practice both Islam and Christianity, often influenced by their upbringing. Geographically, Muslims form the majority in the northern and parts of the eastern states, while Christians dominate the south-south and south-east regions. This raises the question: is Nigeria, a nation almost evenly split between Mus-

lims and Christians, truly secular? Despite the religious divide, many Nigerians retain strong ties to African deities and ancestral worship, which serve as a unifying cultural element. Even those who publicly align with Christianity or Islam often invoke divine protection from traditional deities and their followers. This complex interplay of religious identities and cultural heritage sheds light on the persistent religious tensions in Nigeria, even decades after independence.

The foundation of creativity and development lies in peace, as peace and development are intrinsically linked. When individuals such as kidnappers, oil vandals, Fulani herders, and Boko Haram disrupt lives, meaningful progress becomes unattainable. Everyone aspires to live in a peaceful environment because lasting progress cannot be achieved in the midst of conflict or war. This underscores the church's role as a peacemaker and mediator in such challenging circumstances. Leadership plays a pivotal role in promoting peace, while poor governance deprives a nation or community of the tranquility it needs. Therefore, the church must actively foster tolerance, harmony, and good neighborly relations among its members to ensure peaceful coexistence. However, the church's contributions to sustainable development and peaceful coexistence have often been undervalued. Peace is one of the highest ideals of Christianity, and the Bible commands Christians to live in harmony and maintain peaceful relationships with their neighbors. As submitted by

- Hebrews 12:14 (KJV): *"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."* This verse emphasizes the importance of living peacefully with others and pursuing holiness as essential for a relationship with God.
- Romans 12:18 (KJV): *"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."* This verse encourages believers to strive for peace with everyone, acknowledging that it may not always be fully within one's control, but it should remain a sincere effort.

Both passages underscore the Christian values of peace and harmonious living as central aspects of faith and daily conduct. Since coexistence and human connections in any given community are fundamentally influenced by peace, it is important to prioritize peace. The United Nation General Assembly declared September 21st to be International World Peace Day. The purpose of the event is to promote peace values in Nigeria and around the world (United Nations, 2023).

Even when the church, as an institution actively participates in the pursuit of harmonious cohabitation in Nigeria, in the words of Obuseh (2016), the country cannot coexist peacefully due of "selfishness"⁴. Similarly, Oluwaseun (2014), sees religion as a threat to Nigeria's peaceful coexistence. In his opinion, he was of the view that Nigerians would not coexist amicably, because; "It is easier for a Yoruba to marry an Efik than for a Muslim to marry a Christian," he asserted, and vice versa. This further demonstrates how religious bigotry poses a danger to harmony. The question seeking for solution therefore is what part can the church play in maintaining peaceful coexistence in Nigeria? Although, events and findings in the past tend to portray religion as undoubtedly the single biggest cause of conflict and unrest in human history,

as a result of some unwholesome religious violence that had erupted in the country. This had made some individuals like (Abu-Nimer 2001, Gopin 1997, & Diez de Velasco 2007), to reflect that “the church cannot contribute in any way to promoting peace.” In the same way, Ayer 1976, cited in Collins et al. 2006, that “in the name of religion, so much evil had been committed.” They probably made this assertion because of certain unpleasant occurrences in the past, such as; in December 24, 2011, members of a hardline Islamist sect believed to have received training from Al Qaeda destroyed the Saint Theresa Catholic Church in Madala, a neighborhood of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Abuja, during their Christmas Eve gathering (Adam, 2011). In the same way, churches have been bombed, clergymen and congregants have been slayed and abducted. For instance, on December 25, 2011, Boko Haram bombed St. Theresa’s Catholic Church in Madalla, Niger State, killing at least 37 people and injuring over 50. Also, on June 5, 2022, gunmen attacked St. Francis Catholic Church in Owo, Ondo State, killing at least 40 worshippers during a Pentecost service. The attackers used guns and explosives. In addition, in October 2021, bandits raided a Baptist Church in Kakau Daji, Kaduna State, during a service, killing several congregants and abducting others. More so, in March 2022, bandits stormed Gidan Maikambo village in Kaduna State and abducted two Catholic priests, Father Joseph Danjuma Shekari and Father Stephen Ojapah, alongside their congregants.

Therefore, the choice of this topic on how the Church can provide the needed peaceful coexistence in Nigeria is justified because the Church has historically played a pivotal role in fostering unity, promoting moral values, and serving as a voice of reconciliation in times of conflict. Despite being targeted in violent attacks, the Church remains a significant institution with the capacity to influence societal change and healing by preaching forgiveness, reconciliation, and peaceful coexistence to bridge divides caused by ethnic, religious, and political differences. Also, through its teachings, the Church promotes values such as love, justice, and compassion, which are critical for building a peaceful society. Encouraging these values can mitigate the root causes of violence and intolerance.

Conceptual Clarification

The church

Contrary to what the Bible says, a lot of people today view the church as a building. The translation of the Greek word *ekklesia*, which means “an assembly” or “called-out ones,” is “church.” It is not the physical building but its membership that gives a church its basic purpose. It is ironic that when you ask most people what church they attend, they will typically answer a structure. In Romans 16:5, Paul says, “Greet the church that is in their house.”⁹ Instead of referring to the actual church building, Paul describes the assembly of believers in their home as the church. In Ephesians 1:22-23, Paul states, “And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills every-

thing in every way,” because the church is the body of Christ, of which He is the head. From the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) until Christ’s second coming, those who have accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior constitute the body of Christ.

According to Anjov (2007), the word “church” can refer to a variety of subjects, including the literal sense listed below. The word “Ekklesia” literally means “called-out,” however it is unclear how much of this connotation is employed in ordinary discourse. It was a political term used to designate a group of people who had been “called-out” for a specific goal. The gospel “calls” people to follow Christ, according to the New Testament (2 Thess. 2:13-14). We can conclude from this that an ekklesia is a group or assembly of people before evaluating its connection to the church of Christ. As a result, any reference to a “church” must be understood to refer to persons rather than a specific place, construction, cathedral, or small rural chapel. (Note: This is not a biblical use of the word “church,” but rather an English one). Many Christian churches survive today, including the Universal Reformed Church of Christ (NKST), the Roman Catholic Church, and others. This reveals that Greek-speaking Jews in the New Testament saw the “church,” or ekklesia, as a collection of people who had formed a covenant with God (Acts 2:47). According to Macarthur (2019), the international church includes all persons who have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, regardless of where they live. “Because, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body and given the one Spirit to drink” (1 Corinthians 12, verse 13).

Peaceful coexistence

It is important to first clarify what peace actually means in order to properly understand the concept of peaceful coexistence. When everything coexists in perfect harmony and freedom and there is no fighting or war, there is peace. This therefore presents peace to be a stress-free state of security and tranquility. It is a state of social harmony and friendliness, and the absence of hostility or violence. In a social setting, the term “peace” is frequently used to describe the absence of conflict, war, murder, kidnapping, and other crimes. According to Rummel (1981), “peace is characterized by harmony, concordance, and tranquility that promote serenity or peace of mind.” Peaceful coexistence therefore, is an environment where people coexist peacefully as opposed to an endlessly antagonistic setting.

Ibeanu (2007), defines peace as “a process that involves actions that are connected, either directly or indirectly, to promoting development and decreasing conflict, inside a particular civilizations and in the larger global community.”¹⁴ Given a report of the Heinrich Boell Foundation, peace is defined as “the absence of all forms of fear, self-worth, identity security, a sense of belonging, and the ability to explore, exercise, and obtain one’s right to freedom and self-determination.” Uche (2009), opined that; “peace is a common word in the family, Christian, non-Christian organizations and societies.” Harmonious relationships, freedom from conflict, lack of tension and anxiety in the mind are all examples of peace. Another way to think of peace is as a state

of reconciliation between opposing groups. To live well and be at peace means to be calm, undisturbed, and free from conflict or disturbance. In the words of Appollos (2010), “peace building is a deliberate process aimed at promoting peaceful coexistence among individuals.” In the gospels, peace is mentioned in respect of Jesus’ Birth. For instance, Luke 2:14, recorded that, “the angels at Jesus’ birth announced peace to people God loved.”¹⁸ During Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the multitudes of disciples joyfully shout out the message of peace (Luke 19:37–38). This paper therefore, sees the ability of individuals to coexist together in harmony without war, strive nor oppression as the real meaning of peaceful coexistence.

Factors Militating Against Peaceful Coexistence in Nigeria

Several factors have been identified as hindrances to Peaceful coexistence in Nigeria. Notable among these them are; conflict, starvation, disease, poverty, and death. Conflicts in diverse forms have taken its toll on Nigeria remarkably. The first significant indication of these conflicts were the January 15, 1966, and July 1967, coups aimed at proclaiming Biafra a republic. This caused a great panic and anxiety among Nigerians, until the situation came under control in January 1970 (Smith, 2015; BBC News, 2016).

Similarly, Nigeria has gone through other significant events that have threatened her coexistence as a nation since 1999. Regimes of Babangida and Abacha faced serious economic and political problems, as opined in the words of Smith (2005). Also, in the era of President Goodluck Jonathan, the terrible experiences which resulted into series of religious attacks from Boko Haram, an Islamic terrorist group, cannot be forgotten in history. Many churches were bombed in Nigeria, worshippers and clerics kidnaped and killed e.g. the bombing of St. Theresa’s Catholic Church by Boko Haram in Madalla, Niger State which involved killing of least 37 people and injuring over 50 among many others across Nigeria. The negative impact left is still very much with us as Nigerians. Presently, the led administration of President Ahmed Bola Tinubu does not seem to have a viable blueprint to tackle insecurity in the country, coupled with the issues of hardship and poverty pushing Nigerians into all kinds of crimes daily. The August 1st to 10th 2024, Endbadgovernance Protest had rendered some families, individuals and the nation into loss of lives and properties.

Scholars such as Whitney Young (2001), have written on the Nigerian issue in different ways. According to Young, “armed youths occupied shell oil company buildings in Lagos and held hostage 30 Nigerian employees and four guards of the Anglo-Dutch-owned company.” After defeating the organization, the Nigerian army freed the 34 hostages. 2000 armed militants abducted 40 people, including 10 Korean citizens, 15 Britons, and 15 French nationals, from the homes of the ELF oil company in Port Harcourt, according to Bassey (2006). A few hours later, the 40 hostages were freed without incident. Later on, there was suspicion that disgusted guys were responsible for the kidnapping. Agbuegbu (2006) detailed how 22 Nigerian nationals and two unnamed foreign nationals employed by the Amer-

ican oil company Chevron were abducted by armed insurgents in the Niger Delta. Later, all of them were freed by the insurgents.

According to Whitney Young (2001), young people with weapons assaulted oil drilling rigs and kidnapped 165 people. 145 Nigerians, 7 US citizens, 5 Britons, 8 Australians, and Lebanese nationals are among the hostages. They were all working for Shell Oil Company's servicing contractors. All of the captives were eventually set go, nevertheless, without incident. In Nigeria, the issue of ethnic militias and their actions has resulted in multiple crises. There is a growing number of groups such as the Odua People's Congress, Bakassi Boys, the Arewa People's Congress, and the Egbesu movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB). These are only a few examples of the Nigerian crisis.

Human Rights Watch (2003), reports that another religious conflict spurred by the Miss World Pageant occurred in Nigeria in November 2002. Nigeria was scheduled to host the 2002 Miss World pageant since Agbani Darego, a Muslim, won the competition in 2001. However, the scheduling conflicted with the Muslim Ramadan Festival, and Islamic clergy caused obstacles. Following the riots and widespread public outcry, millions of naira worth of property was damaged, many people were injured, and many lives were lost. Another issue is the matter of Boko Haram's continued sectarian religious killings in various Northern Nigerian regions. Brianna Burt (2014), claims that Mohammed Yusuf established Boko Haram in Maiduguri, northern Nigeria, in 2002 with the political objective of establishing an Islamic state. The organization considers education in the Western tradition to be immoral.

Boko Haram conducted a "series of attack on police stations and other state buildings in Maiduguri, Yola, Kano, Kaduna, among others". According to Adam (2011). Since then, there has been a conflict between the federal government and Boko Haram fighters. An attempt was made to include the nation in the Islamic Conference (OIC) organization during the Shagari administration as well. Amnesty International released a briefing in April 2014 that expressed concern over actions by the Nigerian state security forces as well as Boko Haram, a militant Islamist group, which may be considered "war crimes" and "crimes against humanity." The briefing also urged an immediate investigation into possible violations of international humanitarian law.

According to Terwase (2012), "a planned military operation was carried out in revenge for the killing of 19 soldiers, over 200 unarmed civilians were killed" in 2001 in Benue state, central Nigeria, there was another military attack. None of the attacks received condemnation from the administration. Even though Nigeria is not experiencing foreign attack, the country is losing notable citizens and lives equally. Nigeria had a string of murders. For example, on December 23, 2001, "the former Attorney-General of the federation, Chief Bola Igwe, was assassinated in his residence, and the killers are still at large," according to Edemodu (2002). According to Nwokocha (2005), on March 5, 2003, Marshall Harry, the national vice chairman of the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) for the south-south zone, was killed at home. When the police were called, they claimed their car was empty of petrol. Ikelegbe (2004) reports

that on September 1, 2002, Barnabas Igwe, the chairman of the Nigeria Bar Association Onitsha Branch, and his wife were slain. According to Alliance for Democracy (2005), Prophet Eddie Okeke was killed on November 1, 2000, and Chief Ezeochumegwu Okonkwo, a local government chairman, was also slain in February 2001. According to Offiong (2007), Dr. Ayodeji Daramola and Engineer Funsho Williams met similar ends in 2006. Both of the men were aspiring governors of Lagos State and Ekiti State. If property and life protection cannot be ensured in a democratic state, it is extremely painful and depressing.

In addition, there are land disputes that have sparked hostilities around the nation. Mustafa (2010), cites the following as typical examples of violence resulting from protracted boundary disputes: “the communities of Aguleri and Umuleri in Anambra state, the Brass and Nembe communities of Bayelsa and Rivers states.” Even the internal boundary dispute over the Bakassi Peninsula between Nigeria and Cameroun nearly descended into violence on May 16, 1981, when Nigerian soldiers were patrolling the Apka Yafi River and Cameroonian forces opened fire. Nehi Igbinjesu (2013), states that Cameroun apologized and went on to win the case at the International Court of Justice in The Hague in 2001. Ethnic clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers are presently taking place in Nasarawa, Abia, and Enugu states, Nigeria. These conflicts have resulted in the deaths of thousands of individuals and the destruction of property valued in the millions of Naira as the herdsmen attacked these regions (Ibrahim, 2021, Human Right Watch, 2022).

Roles of the Church in Peace Building

Church has evolved over time to become more than just a place of worship for its members. It now serves as a service provider, peace ambassador, a force for good in the political arena, and a provider of humanitarian aid for the community. The Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) oversee the Christian community in Nigeria. These two organizations have participated in peace talks and served as members of Nigerian committees for conflict resolution and arbitration panels. In general, Nigerian church leaders and people can mediate towards promoting peace by doing the following, because peace building is the answer to the progress of any nation. When peace is attained, societal conflicts can be reduced. Her role as a mediator in the peace building process is very germane to progress, unity, and national integration. According to O’Brain’s (2013), “Peace building is an all-encompassing strategy for conflict transformation that examines and engages individuals with the peace process prior to, during, and after the violence. This technique aids in minimizing and preventing communities from engaging in conflict. Numerous Christian organizations have participated in the global conflict resolution process. A good example is the Catholic Relief Services.

Church leaders have played a crucial role in mediating conflicts, instituting reconciliation, and promoting peace. Their mediating roles have acted as a conduit for communication between the opposing groups and the church as a reconciliatory agent.

Adebumiti (2021), has pointed out that church leaders are members of the National Peace Committee, an initiative that comprised of distinguished statesmen who intervene in critical issues of national concern through high-level mediated and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. The Christian Reformed Church Report (2008), also revealed that church leaders in the Christian Reformed Church in North America brought stability and peace to the people of Takum, Nigeria. In order to address the social and economic factors that make society more prone to conflict, church leaders often interact with the government as one of their techniques for managing conflicts and promoting peace. Poverty, political rivalry, religious intolerance, and widespread insecurity are some of the key indicators. Addressing these issues will strengthen the defense of liberal democracy and encourage the government to uphold democratic values. Interfaith Mediation Centre Kaduna (2015), opined that, “growth cannot occur without peace, so peace is essential.”

Another mediating tool that the church uses is negotiation. According to Fisher, Ludin, Williams, Abdi, and Smith (2000), “negotiation is a structured process of dialogue between disputing parties about issues in which their opinions differ; it can also be seen as an attempt to reach an agreement through joint decision-making between parties.”

Challenges Facing the Church in the Quest for Peace

Leadership problem

The Church faces several leadership challenges in its quest for peace, particularly in conflict-prone societies. These challenges can hinder the Church’s efforts to foster reconciliation, promote unity, and maintain its role as a stabilizing force. Internal divisions within the Church, whether along doctrinal, ethnic, or ideological lines, can weaken its ability to advocate for peace. When Church leaders are divided, their message may lack the unity and strength needed to influence society effectively. In many contexts, Church leaders face pressure from political figures or factions, which can lead to compromises in their advocacy for peace. When Church leaders become politically aligned with certain parties or leaders, their credibility in promoting peace may be undermined (Ndiokwere, 2018). Also, the rise of religious extremism, both within and outside the Church, can hinder efforts towards peaceful coexistence. Leaders must balance maintaining religious integrity with promoting tolerance and understanding, often in the face of hostile and violent opposition (Gatimu, 2017). In addition, church leaders in conflict zones often face personal risks, including violence and persecution, particularly in areas where Christians are in the minority or where there is a significant religious or ethnic divide. This can create an environment of fear that stifles peace initiatives (Smith, 2015). More so, maintaining a strong ethical foundation in the face of corruption, injustice, or political manipulation is a significant challenge for Church leaders. The ability to lead by example, promoting ethical behavior and justice, is crucial for the Church to maintain its role as a moral compass in soci-

ety. while many Church leaders are spiritually equipped, they may lack specific training in peacebuilding, conflict resolution, or diplomacy. Without the necessary skills, their efforts to mediate conflicts or promote peace may be less effective (Biri, 2020).

Finance

Lydia and Carren (2013), believed that one of the largest obstacles to Church's ability to establish peace is money. In order for her to institutionalize purpose, peace, and change, Church needs resources. Beyond assessing the degree of disputes and criticizing the current situation, the stakeholders (Church) must empower individuals impacted by the conflict financially. Caring for people being displaced after a communal clash or tribal crisis does not only demand consolations words and prayers but showing concern about their wellbeing financially.

Disease, poverty and unemployment

Poverty, in Kunhiyop's opinion, takes various forms. Prostitution, risk exposure, corruption, robbery, living on the streets, higher unemployment, living in filth, shanties, or shackles, infant mortality, acute malnutrition, a short life expectancy, human degradation, and living in cramped, poorly ventilated homes are a few of the more prevalent ones (Kunhiyop, 2006). The proverb "A hungry man is an angry man, and an angry man is a fighter" is often repeated. There will inevitably be suffering, anguish, and issues when there is hunger in the country, which may spark arguments and rage. According to the independent task team (2006), "Africa has suffered greatly as a result of conflict."²⁹ These confrontations have turned into havens for disease transmission and terrorist infiltration.

Corruption and trust issues

According to Kunhiyop (2008), "corruption is the act of engaging in immoral behavior or developing immoral behavior."³⁰ Another obstacle to Nigerian peace is corruption. Although the media frequently misrepresents the church's message to the public, the church is still recognized as the ordinary man's hope and a voice for the voiceless. The media and the church do not trust each other. They are hard to work with since they do not think the media is reliable.

Conclusion

Findings have shown that Nigerian Churches had suffered greatly from victimization. Thousands of Christians have died, churches destroyed through bombs, and priests have either been slain, kidnapped or held hostage. Christian girls and women were abducted and coerced into becoming Muslims, a good example is the case of Leah Sharibu, who had been held hostage for many years because of her faith. Notwithstanding, the Church continues to provide enduring peace and harmony in Nigeria, even if it has had a variety of positive effects on society. Reoccurring attack on the Church, She still has a duty to defend societal harmony and as well speak out against

acts of violence and revenge. Since Christ forbids vengeance or reprisal, “To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also; and from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either (Luke 6:29)”. The desired peace and harmony cannot be achieved by retaliation. It is the responsibility of the Church to bear the weight of discord and unrest. The Church is the only hope for Nigeria to be in a stable condition of peace and harmony. The Church should uphold Biblical teachings of peace and act as a peacemaker. “Blessed are the peace makers for they shall see God” Matthew 5:9. Seek peace and pursue it (1 Peter 3:11). According to (Hebrews 12:14), maintaining peace and righteousness is necessary to see the Lord. According to Romans 12:18, we should strive to live peacefully with everyone. Every local church must start at the community level if the nation is to be one of peace and harmony. Through its service to the community, the Church can act as an example of harmony and peace. “Let brotherly love endure” (Hebrews 13:1).

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Artistic Model of Africanized Prayer Warfare: A Case of Christian Religion in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper is an interplay between social militarization and the culture of prayers in African societies as depicted through the lens of the Arts. The paper highlights the use of artistic concepts and productions as a powerful medium to capture the complexities of these themes. Through the artistic elements of music, dance, visual arts and storytelling, artists present a poignant portrayal of illustrated and demonstrated spiritually-armed conflicts and their impacts to advocate for peaceful co-existence, protection, good fortunes, salvation, healing and deliverance. The study investigates Richard Kenton's concept of Arts in prayer, thus, seeking to appraise the presence of Arts in prayer warfare in Africa and particularly in Nigeria. It adopts sociological and descriptive methods to present logical explanations to why and how African Christians pray. Study provides a platform for artistic spiritual expression, community building and addressing spiritual challenges that fosters understanding, theological exploration and cultural preservation to positively impact the lives of African Christians while contributing to the broader tapestry of global Christianity.

Keywords: arts, warfare prayer, African Christianity, social militarization, African culture

Introduction

PRAYER REFLECTS THE UNIQUE CULTURE, ART AND RELIGION OF ANY SOCIETY. IT is a medium of communication between humans and a deity. Prayer is an effective tool of communication between man and his beliefs. Likewise, it is a formidable weapon of spiritual war employed for defense and launch attacks against the adversaries. However, it has a definite connotation in African Christianity. In African Christianity, prayer is conceived as an act of communicating and interacting with the spirit world. According to Lanisa K., et al., prayer is "primarily directed towards ancestors and spiritual forces that operate within one's immediate environment"⁴⁸ It is possibly one of the most important and oldest meditative practices from time immemorial. Like every other religion, prayer in African Christianity is in different forms, such as petition, warfare, intercession, confession, adoration, or mystical union.

Prayer in Africa takes different dimensions such as chants, movement, dancing, stamping of feet, poetry, adornment of the body, visual art to mention but a few be-

fore the arrival of the whites. Thus, the African Christianity incorporated these dimensions in their styles and modes of prayer; Africanizing prayer in the African context. These dimensions of prayers, therefore, has created a gap between the African Christianity and that of the Western Christianity.

However, Africans believe that prayer is one of the mediums or rituals to build a mystical union with the Creator and/or ancestors. Thus, it creates a hunger and the desire to seek for higher powers from a Supreme Being, contemplating on the divine forces which has evolved in the belief system with distinct rites or doctrines. Today, these forms of contemplations according to Lanisa K., et al., “are commonly understood as prayer”.

Nevertheless, prayer traditions or cultures are handed over from one generation to the other in diverse formats, capturing the rich culture of belief systems. In other words, prayer has been used to preserve traditions and cultures from generation to generation. For instance, the Jewish culture and tradition are preserved in their mode of prayers, the Arabs cultures and traditions are as well preserved in their style and mode of prayers. Prayer in Christianity has an ingredient and tone of the Eastern world. Likewise, African Christians feel at home when they engage prayer in their own styles and ways, thus, prayer is Africanized.

Africans believes that the world is spiritual, and governed by spirits; either good or evil. They choose to pray by offering sacrifice or placate evil spirits to keep away from their vicinity. African Christianity, on the other hand, wages war against the malevolent spirits through warfare prayers. Accordingly, malevolent spirits are believed to be responsible for man's afflictions, ordeals, misfortunes or unpleasant experiences. Therefore, it becomes a compulsion for an African Christian to combat such spirits through warfare prayers.

The activities of malevolent spirits have created fears in the mind of man because of the predominant circumstances of day-to-day life. According to Akpanika, what enforces warfare prayer in African Christianity is to dethrone the kingdom of darkness and stop its activities.⁴⁹

African Worldview on Prayer

According to Kennedy (2023), “prayer which in one way or another displays the diversity and the completeness of the traditional African culture.”⁵⁰ However, the term “world view”, in the thought of Rusbult Craig, “is a structure of attitudes and ideas about the globe, ourselves as well as life.”⁵¹ This means, “Our elementary set of principles, or structure of faith, or pattern of reasoning is our worldview.” Therefore, a person's worldview is enhanced by surrounding influences for example his inherited attitudes, characteristics, life experiences, background, values, conducts and so on. Martin (2022) maintains that our worldview, “dictates our character and values.”⁵² Furthermore, Amevenku and Boaheng note that conduct is the external expression of the root or our worldview.⁵³ He also mentions that “African world view comprises belief in the existence of ghosts, witches, evil spirits, idols, ancestors and the like. Gener-

ally speaking, traditional Africans believe that spirits are everywhere-there is no area of the earth, object or creature which does not have a spirit of its own or which cannot be inhabited by a spirit”.

Christianity is widely accepted in Africa. Nevertheless, until the emergence of African Initiated Churches (AICs), Christianity, was conceived as a colonial religion because of its style of worship, expressions and language. With the emergence of the AICs, Christianity was Africanized to match the African setting rather than the European's. In addition, “the ‘Africanisation’ of Christianity has led to the injection of elements of the African religion and beliefs into Christianity” such as drumming, stamping of feet, use of ‘sekere’, gongs, tambourine, talking drums etc.⁵⁴ The impact of the religion and culture of African's thoughts on African Christianity is so robust that African religious values and beliefs have dominated biblical beliefs and doctrines, thereby, resulting in syncretism. A multi-religious society like Africa remains conscious of thousands of spirits roaming in readiness to harm them. In the observation of Kodua (2004), it has made Africans to be more conscious of demons than Christ.⁵⁵ Leaving the line of thought, Kennedy gave a succinct worldview of African society on prayer. According to him, prayer is

Regarded as central point and the most revered custom in the society. It forms communal bond, because it brings people together as one family, one community and one society under the supreme leadership and aid of the Supreme Being (god). Prayer acts as a channel of communication between the people and the gods. This channel has specific agents who aid in the work of communication and they are commonly known in many African communities as prophets, prophetesses, priests, and priestesses among other local names. These agents bring the community together to worship and communicate to their creator and also convey messages from the creator to the people.⁵⁶

Thus, prayer among the Africans is believed to be a day-to-day religious exercise. As clearly seen, African societies' most crucial role was to build a good and strong relationship through prayer with the Supreme Being for their daily sustenance. For this reason, they tend to bend their civilizations in indulgence of the Supreme Being who directed the affairs and their day-to-day lives.

Concept of Prayer Warfare among the Indigenous Africans

The African concept of warfare prayer emanates from their worldview. It is generic belief among the Africans that the world is a battle ground thus it must be approached from a warfare standpoint. Cosmologically, the Africans, especially the Yoruba have a general saying that has shaped their approach to life: ‘Ogun laye o’ (Life is war). C. E. Arnold (1997) asserts that the ‘warfare ideology’ is rampant among the Africans and it is foundational to their belief of malevolent spirits.⁵⁷ F. C. Williams, et al. (2019) remarked that the patterns of spiritual battle are products of the contextual understanding.⁵⁸ Thus, for the Africans, the concept of *ogun laye* is deeply entwined with their background.

From a vengeance point of view, F. O. Abilawon (2022) writes that most Yoruba Christianity engage warfare prayer with the intention of seeking deliverance from and revenge on the principalities, witches, societal powers, and the cruel people of this age. It is a belief among the Yoruba Christianity prayerlessness will result in jeopardy therefore aggressive prayers must be embraced to stay safe. And it is commonly believed that humans begin to have enemies right from conception because based on the brightness of their glory and destiny. Abilawon, further asserts that the Yoruba Christianity profess that for a man to retain success in life, timely warfare prayer must be engaged. He also posits that the adage: 'ojunialakon fi n sori' (that is, for an individual to enjoy life to the fullest she/he must be watchful in everything) has deeply informed the Africans that one must be careful as there is no one to confide in.⁵⁹

In the view of Awolalu and Dopamu (2005) they maintained that the acknowledgment of enemies among the Africans starts from the womb, and this belief has also permeates the beliefs of African Christianity. Like the Africans, the African Initiated Churches subject their expectant mother under spiritual protection and guidance, constant prayers are made on their behalf with the intention of waving off or attacking the malevolent spirits as well as evil individuals such as the witches and wizards. In the thought of Abilawon (2022) he remarks that assuming there are malevolent activities in the cosmology of the Yoruba, praying warfare prayers would not be necessary. Therefore, he argued that because of the fear of witches and wizards among the Yoruba for the fact that they could cause chaos any time and any day thus the people continually pray against their reality. He further mentioned that there are different view of scholars concerning the presence of witches and wizards in Africa. While most believe they should be grouped as one, some were of the opinion that these forces are only alive in the thought of the Africans. Thus, Abilawon submit that without the existence of these forces African may not pray.⁶⁰

In African Indigenous communities, prayer usually take numerous forms. It may perhaps differ from one place to another but certain forms may be generic. According to Mbiti (1969) African Indigenous prayers commonly include thanksgiving, praise, an affirmation of current state when invocations are offered, and also requests. Prayers of these sorts always have real objectives⁶¹ and the people according to Ezenweke, "do not 'beat about the bush' when saying their prayers. They request such things as: good health, healing, protection from danger, safety in traveling or some other undertaking, security, prosperity, preservation of life, peace and various benefits for individuals."⁶² Also, general prayers may include request for peace, rain, the stop of epidemics as well as dangers to the society, success in raids or war, the receiving of offerings and sacrifices, and also fertility for community, crops and animals.

Generally, among the Indigenous Africa, there is a concrete belief in numinous causality as noted by Asamoah-Gyadu (2020), the concept on which 'warfare prayer activity is founded.'⁶³ Further, Asamoah-Gyadu discussed the conceptual position of the African Indigenous in on warfare prayer. In his words, such concept emanates from "the enduement with power in Acts 1:8 as a means of not just preaching the

Word but also dealing with the powers of evil”⁶⁴ that make life miserable and unpleasant for them. Thus, with the enduement of Acts 1:8, evil forces will be subdued, and freedom will be actualized.

I. Shafiu and M.D. Didarul (2015), write that prayer in Africa is usually “short, and to the point”, however, when it is warfare prayer, the episode becomes lengthy. This concept, in the thoughts of Shafiu and Didarul is hinged on solving personal or societal problems. According to both, when dealing with spiritual problems, Africans pour “out their desires before God, at anywhere as well as at any time”⁶⁵ because it is a belief that spiritual problems are sponsored by stubborn and malevolent spirits. These spirits have a ‘sense of landlords’ because they are usually connected with ancestral lineages. Thus, they create fear in the minds of the Africans. Akpanika, therefore observed that the lengthy hours used in prayers is as a result of fear. If not, in the mind of Akpanika, prayer should be succinct and communicative.⁶⁶

The African milieu has a conception of the spirituality that forms their perception of the world. S. W. Kunhiyop (2012) remarks on the worldview of the African Traditional Religion. According to him, the African worldview acknowledge the existence of pantheons of divinities as well as spirits that are benevolent or malevolent on societal life. The malevolent spirits inflict pain on society and individuals while the benevolent ones give succor. This belief is germane among the Africans and it has permeate the African initiated churches. Therefore, when these set of people witness pain and agony, it is viewed from a religious perspectives. Thus, gives birth a robust investigation of the patterns of prayer warfare among the Africans.⁶⁷

The Artistic Mode of Prayer in Africa

Artistic prayer is an animated, creative and/or imaginative forms of prayer that integrate diverse art forms such as photography, dance, drama, music, poetry, mixed media, and so on. In Africa, it encompasses a range of creative and expressive forms that are used to communicate with the spirit world and connect with spiritual forces. These forms of artistic prayer often blend religious and cultural elements, creating a unique and vibrant harmony of traditions such as different dances that are performed during rituals, ceremonies, conventions and festivals to honour deities, ancestors or spirits. The rhythmic movements are believed to invoke spiritual presence and create a connection between the earthly and spiritual realms; chants, hymns, and songs are used to praise, supplicate and communicate with the divine. Traditional instruments like drums, bells, flutes and xylophones are often used to accompany these musical expressions; visual arts, including paintings, sculptures, masks, graphics and intricate designs serve as vehicles for artistic prayer. These artworks at times depict spiritual imageries, ancestors or mythological stories and are used in ceremonies and rituals to facilitate communication with the spiritual realm; poetry and oral storytelling are mediums through which prayers are conveyed in a creative and lyrical manner. Poets and storytellers use metaphors, allegories and symbolism to express complex spiritual ideas and convey messages to both human and divine audiences; adorning

the body with specific clothing, jewelry and body or stained walls or glasses as it is in the orthodox setting is a form of artistic prayer in Africa which conveys messages i.e. prayer points. These adornments hold symbolic meanings and are often worn during religious ceremonies to align oneself with the spiritual forces being invoked; ritual artifacts, such as masks, amulets and ceremonial objects are imbued with spiritual significance and are used as conduits for artistic prayer. These objects are believed to hold the power to connect with the spiritual realm and influence the outcome of prayers; sacred spaces such as altars, temples, shrines and “ori-oke” (places of retreat) are often designed and adorned with intricate architectural and artistic elements that enhance the prayer experience. These spaces are created to facilitate a sense of awe and reverence during prayer; storytelling performances involve elaborate narratives that blend history, mythology, and spiritual teachings. These performances serve as a way to transmit religious knowledge and offer prayers through the art of storytelling; the act of creating and presenting offerings is a form of artistic prayer. These offerings, which can include food, drinks, and other items, are arranged in aesthetically pleasing ways as an expression of devotion and reverence, and many African cultures have festivals that celebrate their spiritual beliefs. These festivals often include vibrant displays of art, dance, music and other forms of artistic expression that are intended to honour the divine and create a sense of unity within the community. Artistic prayer in Nigeria is a dynamic and evolving tradition that reflects the cultural, spiritual and social diversity of the country. It is a way for individuals and communities to engage with their beliefs, express their creativity and foster a deeper connection with the spiritual world.

This sense of artistic prayer has flown into the African Christianity. African Christianity believes that prayer is not perfected or answered until it takes the artistic form or becomes dramatic. For instances, a typical African Christian believes that his/her faith must be corroborated with any artistic materials before, during, or after prayers. This belief has resulted in the use of handkerchiefs, aprons, waters, candlesticks, etc. in fact, the use of wristband is as well common among them. While some get stickers with the image of prophets, pastors, or clergymen to pray with. Believing that the grace and the angels of the said man of God are present with them during prayers. Interestingly, there are testimonies that have been given by the adherents as a result of the use of the artistic forms in their prayers or homes. However, this is not limited to the African Christians alone. Like among the Catholics, the use of rosaries and chaplets are also embraced to corroborate the faith of the adherents during prayers.

Therefore, this reveals that every faith in the world embrace the use of artistic forms during prayers. Because their faiths are strengthened by the presence of the materials they are seeing with their bare eyes rather the spiritual realm they see not.

Fasting and Prayer as a way of Life in Africa

Aboriginally, fasting and prayer are rooted and common in every religion. They are part of the cultures and traditions of any religion in existence. In the thoughts of G.

Ruiter, they are often conceived as vehicles that accompany, as well as the livewires that “strengthen and restore the faith” of the devotee in whatsoever he/she believes in/prays to (Conteh 2008; Asogwa, 2018; Tarusarira, 2020; Musyoki, 2023).⁶⁸ Also, they play the role of imprinting a sense of nearness in the mind of the believer to the supernatural realm. Fasting and prayer, are therefore, esteemed by/in every religion and also strong emphasizes are placed on engaging them.

Also among the Africans, fasting and prayer are conceived as a petitive and appeasive mechanisms. This belief is common and rooted in the Biblical world and in most cultures and religions of the world. Like the biblical sense, the Africans believe that when one's desires are not coming or showing forth it is advisable to engage the Supernatural realm with intense prayer and fasting that fasten one's petitions to be attended to. In the statement of Jesus, he says ‘this thing does not happen except by prayer and fasting’. Also, the Africans believe that when one's ways is not right with God, prayer and fasting is another appeasing mechanism that can be employed to appease or placate the spirit world.

The Christian scriptures has countless records of how several folks such as prophetesses, prophets, priests and the like who fasted and prayed based on divine instruction. In fact, nations at times were commanded to afflict their souls in fasting and prayers on behalf of their lands to avert God's wrath or judgment. Also, these religious rituals are sometimes engaged collectively or individually in obedience and as subjection to God's laws or commands. But the irreligious ones or nations regarded not prayer and fasting such as Sodomites etc. During the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, he engaged fasting and prayer for forty days like every other prophet. In the statements of Jesus, he stated that without fasting and prayer certain things will be unrealistic, and malevolent spirits will not be subjected. (Parsons, 2012; Patrick, 2013; Daneel, 1990).

Consequently, fasting and prayer are wholly embraced as a way of life in Africa because of their worldview and their cosmological understanding. With the mindset of dethroning spirits that militates their progress in life. Because Africa is believed to be a place where activities of different spirits take place based on the interpretation of the whites. This, however, is also believed by some converted Africans into the Eastern religions. Thus, Africa has seen fasting and prayer as a lifestyle to conquer forces that serve as an impediment to their destinies, advancements, and achievements in life as noted by Kendrick, fasting and prayer are ways of life, “not just mere discipline for *doing*.”⁶⁹ Unlike the whites, they believed that what has the capacity to militate growth is uncivilization or illiteracy.

In an African perspective, problems will persist, and success will be unachievable if fasting and prayer are neglected. This concept is one of the quickest ways to break away from curses either foundational or generational, being delivered from the bondage of ancestral bondages, and breaking forth into unprecedented success. Even, the rich in Africa visits ori-oke (mountains), and prayer houses to hire prophets, prophetesses, priests and priestesses to fast and pray on their behalf, or the rich themselves

will be instructed to fast and pray to prevent unforeseen problems because they are afraid of returning to the scratch or square one (Yaovi, et al., 2018).⁷⁰ Thus, fasting and prayer are seen as a way of life in Africa to prevent attacks, for daily sustenance, and building interaction with the spirit world.

Why do Africans Pray?

Africa, amongst other societies is known for her religiosity. Africans are engrossed by their desires for spirituality. They never believe things happen naturally or accidentally. As a general notion, life among the Africans is believed to be spiritual as well as governed by myriad of spirits. Therefore, life is approached from a ritualistic standpoint such as prayer, and fasting. Prayer and fasting are elements of religion which are conceived as religious acts as well as customs ‘... geared towards the worship and veneration of the sacred’. These elements reassure the devotee’s heart and believe in the sacred regarding their fellowship with the spirit world.

Praying, as mentioned by Williams (2016) “is the commonest kind of devotion among indigenous African populates.”⁷¹ This sense of prayer is mostly engaged from a ritualistic standpoint. For example, it is a common practice among the Africans to do alms giving from a religious point of view. The Africans believe that the beggars on the road sides are there as cursed people to bear the curses and problems of the passerby who gives them money. Thus, an African person who take a dirty currency from the purse and cast or transfer all his assumed or acclaimed life challenges on it and give it as alms. In fact, it is a common ritual among the Celestial adherents’ churches to engage prayer from a sacrificial view. Whereby a member prepares a big bowl (or pan) of beans, corn and coconuts for the larger congregation to eat as a church. Although, this practice creates a sense of fellowship and communion among the faithful, but it is also done as an act of prayer. In other words, when the larger congregation eats, they pray for the provider of the sacred meal.⁷² In a contrasting manner, in African traditional religion sacrifices are prepared not to be eaten by humans but by spirits believed to be stationed at the T-junctions.

Africans also pray for propitiatory and atoning purpose. Propitiatory prayer among the Africans is commonly engaged through the offering of sacrifices. In the African belief system, there are deified spirits that accept their propitiatory offerings. During the process, libations are poured out on behalf of a household or the larger community atoning for their misdeeds or wrongs. As the libation is carried out, prayers in form of incantation are being made by the priest as well as blessings are pronounced. It is therefore a belief that after the spiritual exercise has been carried out the society in turn experience peace and bountifulness in all ramification especially in their economic life. In a resemblance context, this practice was common in the biblical era, especially in the Old Testament among the Jews. Whenever they sin or transgress the Laws of Yahweh they are given to Gentile nation for corrective purpose. And as soon as they are conscious of their wrong ways through the preaching of the prophets they would turn to Yahweh and offer atoning sacrifice and prayers. Thus,

they will be restored to their land and their enemies would be given to stronger nation to be dealt with.

In fact, prayer among the Africans also reflects in their choice names, especially among the African Christianity. According to B. O. Igboin, he tries to ascertain the survey of Ayantayo on the names of the Yoruba tribes. In his thought, the Yoruba names talk about their 'peculiarities, genealogies as well as royalties' regardless of the fact that they are also bases of family ego as well as ways of preserving historical tradition, beliefs and cultures (Ayantayo, 2010). In the sense of the African Christianity, names that reflects prayer are given to their children to communicate their victory over their enemies or their present state at the birth of the child. Such names include Aduragbemi (Prayer pays me), Adura (Prayer), Aduramigba (My prayer has been answered) among the Yoruba tribes; Ekpere (Prayer), or Ekpereamaka (Prayer is good) among the Igbo tribes; Eromosele (My prayer is answered) among the Esan tribe of Edo; Bari-dakara (God answers prayers) among the Ogoni tribe of Southern Nigeria to mention but a few.⁷³ The beauty of the names and many others is that in the aboriginal or mother tongues they are easily captured compare to English language whereby they can be lengthy to be pronounced not to talk of being given as a name.

According to L. Mogakane (2023) he mentioned that from the African perspective, evil is both physical as well as moral; it has to do with any calamity that happens to a person or society or any charitable antisocial attitude or any violation of the commandment of the Supreme Being, deities or family tree. This is reason among the Africans in the thought of Mogakane propitiatory offerings become a major means of praying among the Africans by which they are delivered from the outcomes of evil present on earth. Mogakane further argued that the abolishment of sacrifices from the prayers of the Africans will be impossible because they are rooted both in several religious cosmology of the Africans and their culture.⁷⁴

Prior to the coming of the white missionaries, Africa is known for her unique spirituality. They pray in their own way and style, interacting with the Supreme Being through diverse kinds of ritualistic means. Africa's sense of rituals according to Adedokun (2011) before the advent of Christianity "is wholeness".⁷⁵ In other words, Africans believed that any religious exercise must be to the saving of man's dual nature,⁷⁶ as well as solving man's problems, and maintaining a mutual affinity with the Supreme Being and their ancestors. Likewise, Mbiti's position embraces the tripartite nature of man. In his own view, the salvation must be to the saving of the soul, spirit and body.⁷⁷ In other words, any faith or religion that cannot make holistic provision for man, especially the African man is not worthy of acceptance not to think of being practiced. Because the sense of an African man's belief is that the religion must be able to deliver him in all ramifications. It was, therefore part of the reasons which gave birth to African Indigenous Churches (AIC) whereby the Africans Africanized Christianity completely to suit their taste and cravings. This, however agrees with the African adage among the Yoruba tribes which says *Orisa bi o le gbemi, se mi bi o ti bami* (any god/idol that cannot save a man holistically should leave the man as he was).

In other words, any worship of a god or idol is incapable of offering holistic salvation should be discarded and cast away. This, therefore, informs the African sense of prayer after embracing Christianity as a religion.

An African Christianity's mind, thus, believes that it is through rigorous and intense prayer among other rituals that territories and borders could be secured from external aggressors either spiritually or physically. For instance, during wars, an African mind would think of consulting the oracles for assistance through prayers and invocations as seen in the accounts of the Israelites in the Old Testament. It was a culture among the Israelites to inquire from the Yahweh through the Ark of Covenant which symbolize His presence to know His intent concerning live situations as well as war. Kumuyi (2016) echoes:

The writings of God's Word reveals that many pronounced intercessors in various times have sought God's face through fasting. Leaders, prophets, kings, queens, people and even nations have prayed to God with earnestness, fervency and fasting in times of great difficulty and danger. Moses, David, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel and Paul are among the great intercessors in the Bible that prayed and fasted, thereby experiencing great supernatural breakthroughs for themselves and for others.

Apart from the above, another reason Africans pray is similar to the Biblical statement which says that "But while men slept, his enemies came and sowed tares among wheat, and went his way" (Matthew 13:25). The African world is saturated with the sense of fears, not just because of the activities of malevolent spirits but the existence of family or neighboring enemies. This is noticeable in their prayers. During prayers, they pray rigorously and fervently with the hope that the physical enemies will evaporate or in short, die. Also, it is reason why an African loves visiting *Ori Oke* (Prayer Mountain) for security or giving prophet's charges on their behalf to watch over them spiritually while they go about with the physical watch. Besides, an African mind will keep vigils (night prayers) from time to time just to be on the watch as well as on the attacking side just to prevent the enemies from sowing tares in their lives either through dreams or any other medium. Therefore, it is in this mentality that Africans pray. Seeking the 'go ahead' of the Supernatural before embarking on certain journeys or taking some crucial steps in life as regarding destiny.

Conclusion

The "artistic model of Africanized prayer warfare" presents a thought-provoking perspective on the synthesis of traditional African religious elements with the Christian concept of prayer warfare. This model highlights the dynamic nature of religious beliefs and practices, showcasing the adaptability of Christianity within the African cultural context. The integration of artistic elements of music, dance, visual arts and storytelling facilitates a more emotionally expressive form of worship and further adds depth and complexity to the spiritual experience, offering a rich tapestry of symbolism and meaning that resonates with believers.

Through this model, it becomes evident that religion is not a static entity but rather a fluid and evolving force that can be shaped by the artistic and cultural milieu in which it is practiced. The Africanized approach to prayer warfare exemplifies the ongoing dialogue between tradition and modernity, spirituality and creativity. This engagement can lead to a deeper understanding of how the model is perceived, practiced and its impact on the community's spiritual and social life. Most importantly, the model emphasizes the concept of spiritual warfare, wherein prayer and artistic expressions are combined and serve as a charge to combat negative spiritual forces, thus, providing a unique traditional framework for addressing challenges and hardships in a spiritual context.

Through an exploration of the historical, cultural, and theological dimensions of the Africanized prayer warfare model, this study has deepened our understanding of how faith can serve as a dynamic force, capable of evolving and adapting to diverse cultural contexts. The blending of traditional African artistic elements with Christian prayer warfare strategies underscores the resilience of religious traditions and their ability to adapt to changing circumstances while maintaining their core spiritual values. Therefore, the paper recommends further exploration of the relationship between arts and religion which can eventually lead to spiritual enrichment and economic value.

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Man Sent or God Sent? Influences and Threats of the Prophets in Yorubaland, Southwest Nigeria

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Abstract

Prophets are highly regarded spiritual leaders who influence personal, spiritual, and national progress. However, the actions of some have raised concerns that may hinder societal development. This paper examines the impact of Christian prophets, focusing on practices that could impede progress. Using a qualitative approach, data from observations, archives, literature, and social media was analyzed through thematic and descriptive narratives. Findings reveal significant influence in social, economic, and political spheres, with negative impacts on public health, the economy, and politics. The paper recommends that prophets encourage caution, regulate new entrants, support nation-building, and avoid unfounded proclamations. It concludes that a reimagined prophetic calling is needed in Nigeria's diverse society.

Keywords: *miracle, prophecies, mountain top (ori-oke), anointing oil, holy water.*

Introduction

BELIEF SYSTEMS HAVE LONG BEEN INTEGRAL TO THE FABRIC OF PRE-COLONIAL societies worldwide. Many of these traditional practices and beliefs have persisted. Many people continue to seek knowledge or solutions to existential problems through various means, such as dreams, astrology, palmistry, and prophecies. For instance, it was reported that late Queen Victoria was in constant communication with her dead husband, Prince Albert through a medium and that late Princess Diana was also believed to have consulted an astrologer before her death.¹

Modernization offers alternatives, yet many African nations balance traditional and modern practices, as colonialism didn't fully erase ancient traditions. In Africa, prophets remain key sources of guidance, offering solutions and foretelling the future. Known by titles like "miracle worker," "General Overseer," or "Shepherd," they serve as intermediaries between God and humans. Many, including politicians, rely on their insights and services.

This reliance is deeply embedded in the significant roles that prophets play, as well as deep-rooted beliefs and existential challenges faced by individuals. Historical-

ly, this practice has its roots among indigenous people in pre-colonial Nigeria.² In the post-colonial era, new prophetic figures and belief systems, especially within Pentecostalism, have emerged. This continuity highlights the lasting influence of prophetic authority and spiritual leadership in addressing personal and communal issues, merging traditional beliefs with modern religious movements in Africa.

There is ample literature on Pentecostalism, prophets, and prophecy, particularly regarding their impact on national development and contemporary sub-Saharan Africa.³ While many studies highlight the positive role of prophetic movements in fostering social cohesion and development, fewer examine how these figures might also challenge political stability, social order, or traditional governance. This study investigates the influences and potential threats posed by Christian prophets in Yorubaland, southwest Nigeria, addressing questions like: What impact do prophets have on national development? Do they pose a significant threat within Yoruba society? How have their excesses been checked, and what reactions have followed? Using a qualitative, descriptive approach, the study analyzed data from literature, observations, newspapers, and journals. Although focused on Yoruba society, it also includes examples from national and global contexts to deepen the analysis.

Theoretical Framework

The study employs Durkheim's functionalist theory, which posits that societies are structured around the dichotomy of the profane and the sacred, with religion representing a cohesive system of beliefs and practices focused on sacred elements.⁴ Durkheim argued that religion acts as a collective conscience, crucial for preventing social disintegration or anomie. Functionalist theory similarly posits that social institutions—like religion, education, and governance—work together to fulfill individual and collective needs within a stable, interconnected system. When one institution changes, others adapt, reinforcing society's cohesion and interdependence.

This theory suggests that various components of society collectively maintain social equilibrium, with all social and cultural elements playing a role in the larger system.⁵ Durkheim contended that religions, whether Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, or Judaism, provide meaning and purpose, binding societies together and fulfilling personal and societal needs crucial to maintaining social order.⁶ Functionalism thus views society as an integrated whole, where each subsystem relies on others, and elements lacking function gradually phase out.

Religion, therefore, remains significant within the social system, thriving despite some societal reservations. Some scholars argue that religious institutions should engage more actively with pressing social issues—such as migration, racial equity, unemployment, and economic inequality.⁷ Conversely, others caution against the potential risks posed by religious institutions, especially when they exert substantial influence on society.⁸

Weber's theory of charismatic authority is also used for analysis. Max Weber's concept of charismatic authority as a catalyst for change has significantly shaped

social science research, particularly among organizational behaviorists.⁹ According to Weber, charismatic authority is established when an individual's claim to "supernatural, superhuman, or exceptional powers" is recognised by others as a legitimate foundation for leading efforts aimed at addressing extraordinary distress or achieving remarkable objectives.¹⁰ Weber treats "charisma" as value-neutral, implying that charismatic leaders are not inherently virtuous. For instance, Weber observed that the intense frenzy of a Nordic berserker or the rhetorical skill of a demagogue like Cleon exhibits "charisma" as much as the leadership of figures like Napoleon, Jesus, or Pericles.¹¹ Charismatic figures include founders of religions, prophets, warrior heroes, shamans, and influential demagogues, such as Kurt Eisner, who led the Bavarian leftist uprising in 1918; such leaders inspire others through their exceptional—or perceived exceptional—qualities¹²

In the Nigerian context, Ojo has argued that the rapid growth of Independent Pentecostal churches over the past three decades highlights the need to reconsider Weber's ideas on charisma and routinisation within the African setting.¹³ Weber's framework is particularly relevant in examining the social role of prophets, their authority, and societal impact. Integrating both Weber's theories and functionalist perspectives provides a robust framework that addresses the dual role of religion in social cohesion and the unique influence of charismatic prophetic figures.

Prophets on the March: Influences on National Development

The Church and Prophets have become significant instruments for national development worldwide, including in Africa.¹⁴ Despite receiving backlash from governments, they have emerged as a formidable force in developing countries, where the role of the state is increasingly diminishing.¹⁵ Many individuals pay allegiance to them. Any wonder it is observed that these allegiance to them and their spouses or family members derives from their charisma¹⁶.

In Nigeria, the establishment of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) on September 11, 1985, marked the onset of a new era in the country's social development.¹⁷ The following year, the Federal Military junta introduced the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), which imposed austerity measures that led to widespread hardship and poverty.¹⁸ Amid these socio-economic challenges, many Christians turned to the growing Pentecostal churches and their prophets for solace. Myers describes this movement as the third wave of the charismatic Pentecostal movement or "progressive Pentecostalism" is noted for its focus on development initiatives.¹⁹

Since the 1980s, the Church and its prophets have contributed to societal development by founding educational institutions, offering welfare services, and fostering community growth, especially in rural or developing areas. Church sites in these regions have driven rapid urbanization, turning areas hosting events like monthly programs and conventions into hubs for livelihood opportunities and political engagement.²⁰ Additionally, these initiatives have contributed to government revenue and

national developments through various forms of social welfare, including job opportunities, entrepreneurship support, educational scholarships, and youth engagement through social programmes like musical and football clubs.²¹

Ajibade observe that while the roles of Pentecostal Churches in social networks and how its spirituality is contributing to the well-being of their members cannot be underestimated, it is also contributing to sustainable development.²² Many churches have also served as moral centers for the nation through their teachings and have established themselves as spiritual advisors to secular governments. Adedibu using the Redeemed Christian Church of God as a case study found that the social responsiveness of the Church contributes to the overall development of its various communities.²³ Similarly, in his transnational ethnographic study of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Adogame contends that the RCCG cultivates social capital via its extensive network of churches in Nigeria and its organizational structures.²⁴ He suggests that this social capital develops not only through the socialization and dedication of RCCG members to the denomination's principles but also from the economic and business pursuits of its adherents globally. It has also been observed that these prophets enjoy the support and patronage of some members of the ruling class and elites.²⁵

Man Sent or God Sent? Popularization and Threats of Christian Prophets in Yorubaland

In Yorubaland and across Nigeria, Christian prophets are widely known for prophecies, miracles, and healing. In post-independence era, they initially drew limited attention due to factors like military rule, civil unrest, limited media access, and lower religious fervor. However, with the global shift toward democracy and a focus on human rights and freedoms, their visibility in Nigeria has grown substantially. The consolidation of democracy and the constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression, speech, and religion (Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999: Sections 33-46) have provided a fertile ground for prophets to operate more openly.²⁶ In contemporary Yorubaland, prophets have become more prominent, especially with the expansion of digital media platforms that amplify their activities, including online healing services, miracle performances, prophecies, deliverances, and exorcisms.²⁷

However, the popularization of these activities is not without risks. They pose various socio-economic, public health, and political challenges, raising concerns about their broader impact on society.

Socioeconomic threat

From the 1970s, the emergence of Pentecostal Churches on university campuses, as noted by Ojo, brought about a resurgence in the presence of prophets.²⁸ From cities like Lagos, Ibadan, Abeokuta and neighboring African countries such as Ghana, figures like His Holiness Olumba Olumba Obu, Guru Maharaji, and Emmanuel Odu-mosu, also known as Jesu Oyingbo-Jesus of Oyingbo, gained widespread recognition.

This phenomenon, described by scholars as trans-denominational Pentecostalism involved intensified evangelism and a rejection of worldly pleasures.²⁹

The economic crisis of the early 1980s and the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) spurred a rise in crime rates. During this period, Pastor Alexandra Bada of the Celestial Church of Christ (CCC) at an open crusade prophesied in 1986 that the year would mark the end of armed robbery in Nigeria.³⁰ Similarly, Anglican Bishop Rt. Rev. Titus Ishola Akintayo predicted Nigerians would seek God due to economic hardship.³¹ However, these prophecies failed as armed robbery persisted and new crimes, like kidnapping, 419 scams, and drug trafficking, emerged. Its failure raised the question of whether these prophets truly hear from God and if true, which kind of God?

Some prophets were also unpopular for their controversial nature. George Owoo after observing Benson Idahosa, concluded that he was only exploiting his followers for personal enrichment, while others accused him of involvement in drug trafficking.³² Though domiciled in Benin City, Edo State, he frequented Lagos state. However, Idahosa was not the sole figure embroiled in controversy. A popular prophet and self-acclaimed Christ reincarnate in Lagos, Immanuel Olufunmilayo Odumosu (AKA Jesu Oyinbo) was reported to have engaged in sexual sexcapade with many abandoned women and widows by taking advantage of their situations.³³

In late 1990s, there were prophecies that the world would come to an end by year 2000. With most believing in these prophecies, they sold their belongings; thereby losing their means of livelihood, lives and families, hoping for the trumpet blast. This pushed many of these adherents into poverty and while some of them recovered, a few could not survive the shock of losing their labour to such prophecies.

The doctrines of these prophets ranging from prosperity, fertility, combatting household enemies and witchcraft salvation, healing, and their combinations have also affected many lives. Some prophets and prophecies have destroyed a few homes and caused many vulnerable groups especially children to be neglected after being labelled as witches.³⁴ It was reported that some prophets are paid to deliver the children accused of witchcrafts by means of an exorcism or deliverance ceremony which is often violent or abusive and the cost of deliverances range from ₦20,000 (US\$11.7) to ₦40,000 (US\$23.5) per child.³⁵

The prophets also pose various challenges, including their ostentatious lifestyles; noise pollution; water pollution; anti-western education and extortions, forceful appropriation of public space for worship, exaggerated testimonies among others.³⁶ One Pastor Noah Ade Abraham who must have launched his operational base in Kaduna and later moved it to Kabba in Kogi state before establishing a “departure” camp in Araromi-Ugbesi, Omuo-Oke, Ekiti East Local Government Area of Ekiti State promised his congregation passage to heaven in exchange for a “ticket fee” of ₦310,000. Reports indicate that one devoted follower even sold a car, initially bought for ₦1.5 million, for ₦700,000 to join the camp and await the anticipated rapture.³⁷ Their dedication to this cause, despite facing financial hardship, highlights the extent of their indoctrination. The latest testimonies from Lord's Chosen Charismatic Re-

vival Ministries in Lagos offers caution and public outcry on the need to vet some of these miracles.

Public health challenges

Some prophets also present health risks by prioritizing symbolic healing practices over preventive care or medical consultation in times of illness. Many claim to cure a variety of ailments such as genotype, fertility treatments, to viruses.³⁸ Reports suggest that in 1990, the safe motherhood initiative faced setbacks as women turned to spiritualists and prayer houses instead of medical professionals.³⁹ Nigeria is rated a one of the most religious country in Africa and globally.⁴⁰ This religiosity has contributed to Nigeria's high maternal mortality rates.⁴¹

During the Ebola outbreak in August 2014, it was reported that a few foreigners came into the country to purchase anointing water believed to cure the disease. This practice continued until the then-Governor of Lagos State, Babatunde Fashola, intervened and imposed a ban on such activities. One case even claimed that 4,000 bottles of a prophet's "healing water" sent to a country had helped reduce the spread of the virus. While the possibility of healing cannot be entirely ruled out, such claims were often exaggerated or staged. It's no surprise that these practices faced criticism from international medical organizations, as well as officials from both the Lagos State and Federal Governments, after visiting the church congregation.⁴² These beliefs have also influenced some sick individuals to turn to prophets as healers instead of seeking proper medical care.⁴³ By the time they are referred for treatment, their conditions are often severely worsened, leaving them with little chance of survival.

Additionally, some individuals, including pregnant women, have tragically passed away after refusing life-saving medical care from Western healthcare facilities due to their belief in prophecies from certain prophets. This includes opposition to procedures like Caesarean sections and blood transfusions, which some prophets and churches condemn.⁴⁴ While faith-based birth centers have grown in number, many are run by unqualified birth attendants rather than trained healthcare professionals. For instance, the owner of a faith-based maternity center in Abeokuta established the center after repeatedly dreaming of delivering babies. She shared her visions with her husband, a prophet, who confirmed that it was God's will for her to open the center.⁴⁵ Dr. Linda Ayade, a medical doctor and wife of a former governor of Cross River State, shared her experience that many women who seek care at faith-based centers often arrive at hospitals in critical condition, by which time it is too late for effective intervention.⁴⁶

After a successful attempt to produce vaccine to tackle the coronavirus pandemic, its uptake and became essential.⁴⁷ However, some Nigerian prophets posed challenges to the acceptance of these vaccines due to their influence on public opinion and beliefs. For example, in May 2020, Pastor Chris Oyakhilome of Love World Incorporated (Christ Embassy) in Lagos made controversial statements linking the COVID-19 pandemic to the rollout of 5G technology. He also suggested that the COVID-19

vaccines were part of a plan to create a “new world order” led by the anti-Christ, a claim that significantly impacted the views of millions of his followers.⁴⁸ Following his path, Apostle Suleiman of Omega Fire and Miracle Ministries contended that:

The world leaders are coming together to make a synergy that will make all religions have a common ground and the Pope is part of it. America is their target but the current President Donald Trump is their obstacle. America should not joke with the next general elections as they will all support the opponent. The opponent is not the issue but his running mate is the issue. The running mate is a lady and if the opponent wins, the opponent will be impeached for the lady to take over and fulfill the new world order.⁴⁹

Similarly, in April 2021, Pastor Chris Okotie of Household of God Church International Ministries labeled the COVID-19 vaccines as satanic, warning that those who received the vaccine had entered into an agreement with the devil (Sahara Reporters, 2021). Adding to the controversy, Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye, one of the most respected figures in Nigeria’s Pentecostal churches, contended that COVID-19 should not be feared by his congregation because it only targeted sinners and those destined to die (Sunday, 2021). These remarks were part of a broader phenomenon where misinformation and fake news spread by some pastors and religious leaders contributed to vaccine hesitancy during the initial stages of the pandemic.⁵⁰ The influence of such influential figures in shaping public opinion on health matters, including vaccines, underscores the significant role religious leaders’ play in public health communication and community beliefs. Obadare, a renowned sociologist and fellow with the Council on Foreign Relations discusses how the COVID-19 pandemic intensified the conflict between the State and religious leaders, framing it as a clash between scientism and religious beliefs.⁵¹ Many of these pastors and religious figures have a history of criticising medical interventions such as blood transfusions, surgeries, and vaccines thereby exacerbating the conditions of patients.⁵² This opposition to life-saving medical treatments not only jeopardises maternal and infant health but also undermines progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition to the stances of many of these prophets on medical treatments, these prophets often subject their followers to intense regimens where they are deprived of food and water for extended periods in the name of deliverance or exorcism. Such fasting practices have resulted in serious health complications for some members. Prof. Mojisola Adeyeye, Director-General of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), cautioned Nigerians about fasting with “common sense,” highlighting the potential kidney damage that can result from extreme fasting. In her words:

However, we are a very religious country, Muslims and Christians fast a lot, and it is part of the kidney problem. Because your body has to have homeostasis balance, meaning the water level in your body must be enough to make your organs to function. Some people will fast for 10, 20 days, without drinking a lot of water. The kidney is being punished.⁵³

While specific data on fatalities from fasting are not widely documented, there are notable instances highlighting the prevalence of this phenomenon. It was reported in August 2024 that a middle aged man died while undergoing 19 day fasting in Lagos.⁵⁴ There are a few cases too from other parts of the country.⁵⁵ These incidents underscore the potential risks associated with prolonged fasting, especially when undertaken without proper medical supervision or understanding of one's physical limitations. Fasting is a spiritual practice for many, yet without caution and an understanding of one's own health, it can have serious health risks.

Additionally, some prophets offer miracle products such as water, soap, clothing, perfumes, and mustard seeds, claiming these items can cure various physical, mental, and spiritual ailments. Beyond concerns about the dubious nature of these items, the prices can also be exorbitant. For example, Prophet Jeremiah Fufeyin, founder and head prophet of Christ Mercyland Deliverance Ministry (CMDM) in Effurun, Delta State, offers "miracle water" in two versions—normal and fast lane—priced from ₦1,000 (US\$0.9) to ₦5,000 (US\$3.5), with perfumes reaching thousands of dollars.⁵⁶ The risk here is that treatable ailments may worsen if people rely too heavily on these religious items instead of seeking proper medical care. The risk here is that treatable ailments may worsen if people rely too heavily on these religious items instead of seeking proper medical care.⁵⁷

Politically Charged? The God of Election and Drummers of Religious War?

At times, prophets delve into political matters promising electoral victories to either curry patronages or the political leaders. During the tense 2015 elections, some prophets declared that specific candidates would win based on revelations from God, a stance criticised by pundits and scholars as manipulative. One notable instance involved a prophet claiming that opponents of former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan would face dire consequences.⁵⁸ The lead-up to Nigeria's 2023 elections saw similar controversies, with different prophets publicly posting their divine revelations online, sparking public outcry and criticism suggesting that many of these so-called prophecies are merely predictions.

In January 2017, a prophet directed his followers to kill any Fulani herdsmen, while another prophet stated he would not mind if the country were to divide.⁵⁹ Such statements, though possibly echoed by non-prophets, were considered inappropriate coming from revered figures who claim to act as intermediaries between man and God. During a period when Nigeria's president took an extended medical leave between May and August 2017, prophets prophesied that he would not return alive. One prophet even declared unequivocally that the president would die unless it was God's will.⁶⁰ These instances illustrate the controversial and sometimes incendiary nature of prophecies made by religious leaders in Nigeria's political and social landscape. This did not go unnoticed, drawing criticism from Yoruba traditional leaders and Northern elders who dismissed them as political ploys.⁶¹ This phenomenon of discerning between true and false prophets/prophetesses has been identified by

scholars as a significant challenge in contemporary times.⁶² It underscores the complexity of religious leadership in Nigeria, where authenticity and sincerity are frequently called into question amidst a backdrop of socio-economic challenges and political intrigue.

Prophets and religious leaders in Nigeria often extend their influence beyond local matters into global politics. For instance, some members of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) advocated for the Federal Government and other countries to relocate their embassies from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, following the lead of the United States during Donald Trump's administration.⁶³ Despite international scepticism and concerns over human rights abuses, including fatalities linked to protests on the day the US embassy opened in Jerusalem⁶⁴ these Nigerian religious leaders supported the move. This stance provoked a response from The Muslim Congress (TMC), an Islamic organization, which criticised the advice to relocate embassies to Jerusalem.⁶⁵ This interaction underscores how Nigerian religious leaders' statements can impact international relations and highlight the intersection of religious beliefs with global political issues.

Touch Not My Anointed? Standing up to the Excesses of some of the Prophets

There's no denying that the statements and prophecies made by some prophets can significantly impact nation-building and cause conflict, thereby hindering the wheels of development and peaceful co-existence. Sermons condemning certain sexualities and asserting positions on controversial issues such as abortion, evolution, transgender rights, and women's rights have sparked ongoing debates.

In response to these issues, reactionary prophets and individuals have also voiced their criticisms. As early as 1987, Evangelist Samuel Idowu of the CCC attributed societal problems to false prophecies from religious leaders. He condemned elders who misused their authority to commit adultery, contributing to marital breakdowns and moral decay among young couples.⁶⁶ Similarly, reacting to these perceived excesses, General Evangelist Prophet Hezekiah Oladeji of the CAC acknowledged that many people turn to clergy or gospel music due to unemployment, failed businesses, and economic hardships, often claiming a divine calling.⁶⁷ Recently, Abel Damina, Senior Pastor of Abel Damina Ministries and CEO of Kingdom Life Network, openly criticized Prophet Jeremiah Fufeyin during a church service, condemning the sale of purported miracle items as a blatant departure from true Christian values. In a widely circulated video, Damina stated,

Somebody says his candles, soap, and perfume are spiritual items, Jesus used mud and clay, Paul used handkerchief, Peter used shadows, but nobody paid for those things. They were freely given. But, his soap is 1000USD (N1.4m) for one soap and he calls it spiritual items. That's a business, my friend. You have turned to a house of merchandise.⁶⁸

These responses highlight ongoing tensions within the Nigerian religious communi-

ties regarding ethical conduct, moral authority, and societal impact. Private individuals have also stood up against the excesses of the prophets. Ifedayo Olarinde, popularly known as Daddy Freeze, emerged as a vocal critic of the activities of certain prophets in Nigeria several years ago. Through his online campaigns with hashtags like #freethesheep and #freenation, Daddy Freeze sought to challenge what he views as excesses within the religious sector. Daddy Freeze's critique often focuses on financial transparency, doctrinal inconsistencies, and the influence of religious leaders on societal issues.

However, confronting these prophets is not without its challenges. The phrase "touch not my anointed and do my prophet no harm" has been wielded to discourage criticism or analysis of religious leaders. Critics, historians, thinkers, writers, and even victims who attempt to challenge these prophets often face accusations of apostasy or heresy, and in some cases, even threats of violence. Indeed, Ifedayo Olarinde himself has claimed to have received threats to his life and that of his son from powerful prophets. He reported instances where social media threats included death threats. Artists, such as **Habeeb Okikiola Badmus (AKA, Portable Omolalomi)**, has also used their platforms to highlight what they perceive as deceit within the ranks of these religious figures. In 2022, an incident involving a pastor traveling in a bullet-proof car while his security convoy lacked similar protection garnered significant attention. The convoy was attacked, resulting in the deaths of all security personnel except those in the pastor's bulletproof vehicle, who escaped unharmed. Such incidents often draw public scrutiny, as many pastors preach teachings of divine protection through prayers, wearing church attire, or using anointing oils or stickers for spiritual security against attacks. Another activist, **Martins Otse (AKA Very Dark Man)** also criticised Prophet Fufeyin promising to test the efficacy of the items which the prophet sold to the public as well as petition the agency responsible for registration of such consumables known as NAFDAC.⁶⁹ These controversies underscore ongoing debates about the role of prophets in society, their ethical responsibilities, and the implications of their teachings on their followers and broader public perception.

Government has taken steps to address the excesses of prophets, aiming to align their activities with societal norms. Measures have included regulating noise pollution and managing their operations. A significant intervention occurred in May 2004 when the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) banned the broadcast of unverified miracles on television and radio stations across the country.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, these governmental efforts have often been perceived by some as anti-Western or anti-Christian, despite the intended purpose of curbing excesses within religious practices. Critics argue that such regulations are necessary to maintain public order and protect citizens from potential exploitation. Furthermore, stakeholders and advocates who speak out against the excesses of churches and prophets also face backlash from believers and congregations despite the controversies and public debates surrounding the actions of these religious figures. In light of these dynamics, it's not surprising that Igboin (2023) succinctly observes the complexities and tensions sur-

rounding the influence of prophets and religious institutions in Nigerian society. As he puts it:

The God of Idahosa is not a poor God; the God of Kumuyi is a holy and righteous God; the God of Adeboye is a miracle-working, and city-building God; the God of Oyedepo is a prophetically and politically-charged and wealth-giving God who blesses on the basis of tithe-giving; the God of Oyakhilome is a youthfully exuberant God who possesses some knowledge of pseudo-science; the God of Okotie is not only apocalyptic and bombastic in his use of words, but also politically ambitious. The God of Bakare is not only prophetically political, but also perpetually and politically ambitious to the point that he declared himself the indisputable successor to President Buhari; the God of Rev. King is a sexually promiscuous and life-destroying one, the God of Apostle Ayodele is a prophetically emotive one, the God of Odumeje is comically “the liquid metal, the fight, the lion, the Indaboski Bahose. The God of Enenche is the theatrically performing God, in the Christ Apostolic Church, you either hear supplicants call on the God of Babalola at Arakeji or the God of Obadare at Koseunti, whilst the God of Olukoya is a demon destroying God; the demons must indeed die in the name of Jesus! The God of Mbaka is a prophetically passworded one who has “sagaciously subordinated prophecy to statecraft.”⁷¹

He concluded that the cacophonies of the voices of many pastors and their followers claiming to be prophets, no doubt, puts God at risk. These observations reflect ongoing societal challenges in navigating the boundaries between religious freedom, public regulation, and ethical accountability.

Conclusion

The paper identified significant contributions of the Prophets to national development such as promoting values, moral upliftment, providing social amenities, attracting foreign investments, welfare initiatives, economic empowerment, and developing previously undeveloped areas like religious camps or Ori Oke. However, alongside these positive contributions, the study highlights concerns regarding certain activities of churches and prophets. It emphasises issues such as fake prophecies, questionable miracles and healings, and their socio-economic and political impacts. These activities sometimes create confusion among the populace about divine messages and contribute to debates over whose interpretation of God is correct. Moreover, in healthcare, these practices can undermine trust in medical interventions and contribute to public health challenges.

The study underscores the need for stakeholders to collaborate in regulating and addressing the excesses of prophetic teachings, miracles, healings, and prophecies that pose threats to societal peace and stability. In conclusion, while recognising the positive roles of churches and prophets in nation-building, the paper advocates for responsible practices that uphold ethical standards and respect for societal norms. It calls for a balanced approach that protects individual rights while ensuring accountability within religious institutions.

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Missionary Policy of Henry Venn and its Effect on Missions in Nigeria

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Abstract

The idea of teaching the Bible goes back to God's commandments given to Moses. "You shall teach them diligently to your children" (Deut. 6:7). God was not only interested in giving the commandments to man but also in it to be taught so that, man might come to His knowledge. It is worthwhile to note that mission is a powerful tool in God's hand, and plays an important role in every group to fulfil God's purpose in mankind. Henry Venn was the General Secretary of Church Missionary Society in England that propagated the theory of pastorate and Indigenization of Missions in Africa and ultimately, Nigeria. The Yoruba people, of Nigeria in particular and Africa in general have come to terms with Christianity as a result of Henry Venn's policy. Henry Venn encouraged the transfer of leadership of overseas missions into the hands of the indigenes, he also propounded the popularly known "three self's" of Self-governing, Self-financing and Self-propagating mission theory. The study made use of survey method with in-depth interviews to gain more insights in mission activities in Nigeria. The aim of this paper was to look into the on-going debate amongst Christian brethren as to how much effort Henry Venn fared in missions and evangelism in Nigeria. Assuredly, this paper will be of great help to leaders and followers in missions and evangelism in Nigeria.

Keywords: missions, missionary policy, missiology, contextualization, ecumenism

Introduction

CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE INDIGENES WOULD HAVE BEEN SLAVERY IN ONE'S land. The missionaries that came to Christianize the indigenes, intended to impose their culture on them. Nigerians would have become Christians in an inferior capacity and obsequiously submissive to their manipulations. Christianity would have remained a white man's religion, perhaps there wouldn't have been indigene translation of the bible. The missionaries manipulated things in their favour and relegated the indigenes to the background by denying them opportunities to fully participate in worship services, occupy higher offices and grow in the ministry. No clear headway, and confusion almost set-in. The few indigenes that accepted their Christianity waited hopelessly and endlessly for the transfer of leadership of the mission. Henry Venn was a key figure in the indigenization and contextualization of mission work in Nigeria. He succeeded in his efforts by combining religion with ecumenism and enforced abolishment of slave trade and transfer of leadership to the natives. Henry worked closely with Rufus Anderson to propound what is now known as the "three-self's" mission theory. As a matter of fact, his passion for mission work in Ni-

geria remains quite indelible that cannot be wished away easily. The paper looked at Henry Venn's missionary efforts and its effects on Christian mission in Nigeria.

Life of Henry Venn

Henry Venn was a grandson of the original 'Clapham Sect' (John Henry), and who for more than thirty years was the General Secretary of the Church Missionary Society (CMS). Missionologist Henry Venn was blessed with a lineage of Clergy men. In today's parlance he was a Pastor's Kid (PK). As Knight and Henry Venn Jnr. observed "The family to which Mr Venn belonged have been clergy".¹

He was one of the first to enunciate a policy easier for Protestants than Catholics to envisage: an African Church based on a 'three-self' principle – self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating². He became a member of the parent committee of the Church Missionary Society in 1835 and was soon recognized as its leading figure. He became Honorary Secretary of the Society in 1841 and was to remain so for 31 years (1841-72)³. Besides serving on two Royal Commissions towards the end of his life, he held no other public office, and his ideas can hardly be discussed without reference to the Society to which he devoted his life and whose needs were always his first consideration. Like the CMS, he grew out of two different movements: the evangelical and the humanitarian⁴. The grandfather of Henry Venn was a junior contemporary of John Wesley and was one of the leaders of the Evangelical Revival within the Anglican Church. One of the founders of the CMS was Venn's father and was rector of Clapham, high priest of the Clapham Sect during the first seventeen years of Henry Venn.

Africanization of Christianity

Henry Venn's indigenization of Christianity was quite on time. The abolitionists were embarking on an important change of tactics at the time when Henry Venn became Secretary of the CMS. Until now, they had sought to achieve abolition mainly by a system of laws and treaties with other European and American countries with little reference to Africa itself. By 1841, they were advocating taking the campaign inside Africa and seeking to regenerate the continent by the Bible and the Plough, it was argued that was the only effective means that would produce the intended result to end the trans-Atlantic Slave trade and to make amends to 'down-trodden' Africa for the many wrongs, and evil Europe had meted on her.⁵ Henry Venn brought to bear on the pre-conceived ideas of his age a fresh and vigorous mind, which however reacted to the events and personalities of West Africa and India, Ceylon, and other missionary fields of the CMS, whose affairs he followed closely for so long.

Venn's Career

Wilbert Shenk the widely referenced biographer of Henry Venn wrote that Henry Venn was educated at Queen's college, Cambridge from where he obtained B.A., 1818, M.A., 1821, B.D., 1828. Henry Venn was ordained a deacon in 1819, priested in 1821. He grew to become a Vicar of St. John's Holloway in 1834, and 1846, he was made preben-

dary (Honorary Canon) of St. Paul's Cathedral. He was made the honorary CMS Clerical Secretary and occupied the position for thirty-two years. Henry John's journey into prominence was not without difficulties. . Biographer Shenk states that "Henry was seven when his mother died and ten years later his father also passed away. At seventeen he was left as family head." His father, John Venn thus died when Henry was just seventeen years old. Moreover, at the time he was made the Clerical Secretary he was suffering from a failing health. Notwithstanding, the story of Henry Venn is a story of resilience, and "never say die" philosophy. Henry Venn did his best to affect the world positively for the sake of Christ.

His Missionary Policy

Henry Venn ideas on native Church organization was sound and very effective. He maintained that, the Church Missionary Society was a non-profit entity with limited money but vast fields to cover. Its goal was to establish "self-governing, self-sustaining, self-propagating churches." The Society dispatched and maintained the missionary on the field⁶. His initial converts were grouped into small groups led by leaders, and they began to contribute to a Native Church Fund distinct from the missionary society's revenues as soon as feasible. Soon, the bands joined forces and create a congregation under the leadership of a native catechist, whom they should strive to keep. The catechist or another competent indigene should be ordained pastor soon, allowing the missionary to proceed to new territory. The missionary is to 'use its influence from now on, prompting and guiding the indigent pastors to lead their congregations, and further make provision for the supply of Catechists, pastors or evangelists' native Church. The missionary that was with the foreign funds was to bring up a native pastorate, but himself must not be the pastor. The pastor must be of the people and maintained by them. That is to say, Venn rejected the Sierra Leone practice where European missionaries acted as pastors and everything was done to conform to the English pattern. Similarly, he rejected the other extreme that he must accept their social standards because the pastor must not be cut off from his flock. "The native teacher he said, 'should not be too highly praised above his countrymen in his habits and mode of living ... however, he must always be a little ahead of the civilization of the people around him and by his example and influence lead that civilization forward'⁷.

This passion for indigenization and contextualization of mission work perhaps was what made him to be chiefly known in missiological circle today as the "father of father of "permanent workers". He was known to constantly caution his missionaries against "becoming absorbed in pasturing and maintaining churches, insisting that the missionary's primary task must be planting new churches that would be self-reliant and purely native".

For effective mission work, Henry Venn laid out these strategies to help support the effort of the missionaries. They include the followings:

- a. Self-governing – The native church takes its own decisions.

- b. Self-supporting – The native church maintains its financial needs in the form of tithes and offerings by members.
- c. Self-teaching – The native church encourages members in public reading of the Bible.
- d. Self-expressing – The native church expresses itself in worship as it wants. They should be compulsion as to their mode of worship.
- e. Self-propagating – The local church is involved in starting other new churches

Henry Venn worked in Church Missionary office for thirty-two years. As a result, it can be rightly summarized that mission was his life. Henry was passionately concerned about how the natives could take over from the foreign missionaries. The passion was borne out of missiological emancipation of the natives and not to in any way obstruct the foreign missionaries. These efforts resulted in the anticipated expansion of the Church of England in Africa. Henry Venn was passionate about mission work in Africa and by so doing ensured that the slaves that settled in Sierra Leone were sent to their home origin to continue the mission work. One of such was Samuel Ajayi Crowther.

Ajayi Crowther helped in translating the English Bible into Yoruba his native tongue. Shenk states of Venn “To help keep the mission of the new church in the foreground, he repeatedly arranged for the training and appointment of members of the younger churches to serve as missionaries. A notable example of this was the sending of Samuel Ajayi Crowther from Sierra Leone to Yoruba land in 1845 and later to the Niger Delta”.⁸

Below are some of the mission policies of Henry Venn:

1. Holy spirit-centred approach—Henry Venn depended so much on the power of the Holy Spirit if one is to make any meaningful impact in mission work in order to add more people to the church of God. Henry Venn's believe was that, just as it happened in Acts 2, it can happen again and again, and through that, people could be added to the church on daily basis.
2. Employment of qualified missionaries—In Henry Venn's effort at ensuring that mission enterprise did not fail, he engaged qualified missionaries for effective dissemination of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the people. Henry Venn ensured that he used the best trained men in the field. He knew his onions and went for it. He engaged the best intellectuals, trained them and sent them forth. It was a difficult task though, but, he faced it squarely and recorded successes.
3. Use of mass media—Henry Venn knew the power of mass media in reaching out to people, and employed it as a soul winning agent in his effort to win souls unto God. With the aid of a printing press, he founded a News Tabloid in 1802, and with this, he was able to teach out to the enlightened members of the society for soul winning.
4. Training of native interpreters to aid the missionaries—Henry Venn understood the importance of the natives in evangelizing the people. So he decided to introduce education to train the locals who knew the terrain, custom and culture of the people to aid the missionaries in their tasks. “Venn urged that education should be conducted in the vernacular. He recognized that education would remain the privilege of small elite, if English were the medium of instruction... Venn believed education to be the foundation for political, economic, and social development”⁷. It was this foundation Henry laid that led to the enlightenment of people like Obafemi Awolowo, Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigerian origin,

Kwame Nkruma of Ghana and a lot others. These were Christian from countries where Henry Venn and Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) did a lot of work.

5. Revitalization of Native and Foreign Missions—Henry Venn reviewed what he met on ground and gave it a new look by ensuring that, the natives were properly incorporated into the scheme of work of the missionaries. “Venn believed the earlier generations of missionaries had pioneered and laid a solid foundation for the formation of new churches round the world”. It was his turn to revitalize the work further. Jehu declared that “Venn rejected the prevalent practice of the day whereby foreign missionaries entrenched themselves as Pastors of established Congregations, thereby stifling both the selfhood of the local church and the progress of missionary enterprise”⁹
6. Involvement in social activities—Henry Venn was very concerned with playing the local politics which enabled him to get used to the way things were done locally. Venn “combined personal piety with social activism”. Venn “lobbied with Parliament to maintain the British Squadron Patrol on the West African coast”. This Squadron enforced British law abolishing slave trade. The Squadron patrols the West African Coast to the charging of slave smugglers. The British Squadron presence within the West Coast helped the gospel message. Some however attempted to frustrate this effort.
7. Economic empowerment—Henry Venn understands what it means to be empowered economically. He knew that to run missions, one must be economically viable, and be prudent in managing resources available to you. Through that, he empowered the natives so that they could be financially dependent. Henry Venn encouraged investment in cotton production in Nigeria and Sierra-Leone to their financial dependence. This believe stemmed from the fact that if the natives’ economic needs are founded through legitimate means, evils such as slave trading could be eliminated.
8. Reliance on administrative feedback—Henry Venn relied strongly on feedback mechanism. This enabled him to evaluate activities of the missionaries on the field. He made sure that, training was made compulsory for the worker before they are sent out on foreign missions. He made sure that, various councils were set-up in the offices, mixed with the natives to ensure communality and reviewed annually. The strong administrative feedback strategy of Henry Venn puts the Missionaries at home and abroad on their toes. It also provided a clear directives and action plan for those on the field. Venn made it clear that the purpose is that the natives may bring their fellow countrymen to Christ.

Effects of Venn’s Missionary Policy on Missions in Nigeria

History does not discriminate, history says it as it were. Henry Venn is no more, but he is remembered by students of history every day, all over the globe. The effects of Henry Venn’s missionary policy are overwhelming and cannot be overemphasized. The effects are easily felt and applied globally today.

- **Translation of the bible to native languages and dialects**—Samuel Ajayi Crowther was an indigene of Nigeria that was captured on the high sea by the British soldiers and returned to Sierra-Leone. He was trained at the Fourah Bay College where he studied Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. These were direct efforts of Henry Venn who championed slave trade abolition. Samuel Ajayi Crowther directly involved in the missions work in Nigeria, particularly South West, Nigeria. He introduced education and championed the translation of the bible and Book of Common Prayers to Yoruba language. His efforts has led to the establishment of schools, trade centers, and hospitals.
- **Maximum use of mass media evangelism**—In the early 70s, there have been increased

waves of use of mass media, including Tele-evangelists, print media to propagate the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Within this period, several souls had been won. This was achieved through the direct involvement of Henry Venn with his introduction of education and teachings which enhanced the natives.

- **Introduction and establishment of native mission agencies**—Henry Venn had an enduring interest in nurturing and developing native missions to an enviable height. His indigenous mission policy ensured that, the natives were adequately trained to the point of self-management level in order to continue after the white missionaries would have left. Thereafter, most of the established mission churches established special centers to take care of missions. Ajani reported that an association known as Nigeria Evangelical Missions Association was formed in 1982 and working effectively in harmony with such others even outside Nigeria.
- **Establishment of schools and hospitals**—It is important to state that, mission agencies that ventured into Africa cum Nigeria came with the mind of establishing schools and hospital centers. Henry Venn knew that, education is the bedrock of mission enterprise, and without good health system, nothing works well. Most leaders in Africa both past and present were products of Mission schools. A typical example was Olusegun Aremu Obasanjo, a two-time President of Nigeria and one time Chairman of the Committee of World ex- Presidents. He attended Baptist Boys High School Saje Abeokuta (1952-1956)¹⁰, a missionary School. Henry Venn arranged for the training of “One of the first West African medical doctors Africanus Horton”. What the medical ministry has done for the natives is unquantifiable. There is hardly any missionary today that jokes with education and health if they intend to succeed. The most interesting thing worthy of mention is that, both Christians and non-Christians benefitted greatly from the efforts of Henry Venn.
- **Conversion of natives**—The native mission policy of Henry Venn was mutually carried out by involving the indigent natives in missions and training them. These trained natives that knew the terrain took the Gospel to interior of towns and villages and made converts. Today, the Nigerian Church is the fourth in the world.¹¹ In Nigeria, Christians account for at least 92.2 of the world's 2.2billion population of Christians¹². If Henry Venn had not promoted indigenous leadership, perhaps the growth rate could have been less. Many Mission Agencies today have imbibed this strategy of ministering to natives through natives.
- **Encouragement of youth empowerment**—Most churches today have ventured into empowering their youths to enable withstand harsh economic situations that have locked them out of employment. Most mission agencies have established training centres where their members are trained and assisted to be on their own. The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomosho has a Gasoline Station, an Agriculture Farm, Fee paying primary and post-primary schools and a Guest House. Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), has established several Vocational Ministry through her Dioceses to train members on how to manage themselves and be their own bosses. The former Primate of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) Dr. Peter Akinola, has established a training center known as Peter Akiola Foundation (PAF), where youths and individuals that wish to be on their own are trained on vocations of their choice thereby reducing unemployment in Nigeria. The training cuts across religious beliefs.

Conclusion

The paper concludes that, Henry Venn's vision with respects to missions' policy and strategies in Nigeria is growing and the impact is visible in the mission churches, African Independent Churches and even Pentecostal denominations. The study also showed that, in spite of the harsh economic difficulties faced in the country, churches are following the footsteps of Henry Venn by establishing Vocational Ministry centers where members are variously trained to be bosses of their own to reduce effects of economic hardship in the country.

Recommendations

1. The study recommends that, Henry Venn's "three self's mission policy of Self-supporting, self-government, and self-propagating should be articulately pursued by churches, as it will encourage all round viability of the church of God.
2. Mission churches, African Independent Churches, and Pentecostal denominations should come together in advocating the vision of Henry Venn in setting-up Ministry Vocational Centres in order to train their members, and constructively engage them in faith building.
3. Capacity building of members should be encouraged to reduce redundancy and increase efficiency in the churches.

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The Phenomenon of Pentecostal Church Growth in Nigeria: An Exploration of Sociocultural Factors and their Implications

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Abstracts

Pentecostalism is a Protestant Charismatic Christian movement that emphasizes direct, personal experiences with God, particularly through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Originating from the Pentecost event in the Book of Acts (Acts 2:1-31), where the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles, Pentecostalism has experienced significant growth in Nigeria, resulting in a notable socio-cultural shift that has attracted scholarly interest. This research investigates the rapid expansion of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria, examining historical events and socio-cultural factors, including economic challenges and urban migration, that contribute to this growth. It highlights the impact of these churches on local economies and social networks, noting that charismatic leaders draw followers and utilize media for wider influence. Many individuals seek solace in Pentecostal churches during times of economic instability, as these churches offer hope, prosperity, and community support. The communal worship style resonates with Nigerian values, fostering a sense of belonging, particularly among younger audiences who are attracted by innovative worship methods such as contemporary music and multimedia presentations. Additionally, the growth of Pentecostalism promotes social cohesion and community development through initiatives in education, healthcare, and poverty alleviation. This study employs a library research approach, synthesizing existing literature to identify key themes and insights regarding the societal impacts of Pentecostal churches. While the findings are limited to Nigeria and may not capture all perspectives, they offer valuable insights for researchers, policymakers, and religious practitioners, grounded in socio-historical theory to enhance church involvement in community development initiatives.

Keywords: Pentecostalism, holy spirit, baptism of the holy spirit, sociocultural factors, community development

Introduction

THE RAPID GROWTH OF PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES IN NIGERIA RAISES IMPORTANT questions about the reasons behind this expansion and its effects on Nigerian society. This study aims to understand the factors driving this growth, such as economic hardship, urban migration, and cultural shifts, and how these churches influence community relationships, social values, and cultural practices. Many individuals are drawn to Pentecostal churches because they offer hope during difficult times

and provide a sense of belonging and personal empowerment. However, the rapid expansion also presents challenges, such as the influence on traditional cultural practices and changing social dynamics. By examining these elements, the study will shed light on both the positive and negative impacts of Pentecostal church growth, offering insights that can help leaders and policymakers make informed decisions for the community's well-being

Key research questions guide this exploration: they include inquiries into historical events and figures that shaped Pentecostalism in Nigeria, the socio-cultural factors contributing to church growth, the churches' impact on local economies and social networks, and how these churches adapt their practices to align with Nigerian values. The study also examines the effects of Pentecostalism on religious diversity and interfaith relationships and investigates the role of these churches in community development initiatives, such as education and healthcare. Additionally, it addresses challenges associated with the prosperity gospel and political influence, proposing actionable steps for churches to enhance their positive societal impact and promote social cohesion.

This study is significant as it provides insights into why Pentecostal churches have gained popularity in Nigeria and their impact on individuals and communities. By analyzing the socio-cultural factors contributing to this growth, the research highlights how these churches serve as a source of hope and empowerment for many Nigerians. The findings will be valuable for community leaders, policymakers, and organizations, revealing ways these churches can support social programs and contribute to community development. Furthermore, the research can inform future studies and policies by demonstrating the critical role that churches play in Nigerian society today.

While the study is limited to Nigeria, its insights are drawn from various church communities nationwide, capturing the social and cultural dynamics at play. However, it acknowledges that findings may not be applicable to Pentecostal movements in other regions. The reliance on existing literature means that not all perspectives or emerging trends may be captured, and the study's depth may be limited by time and resource constraints. Definitions of key terms are clarified, including Pentecostalism as a movement emphasizing personal experiences with God, the Holy Spirit as God's presence empowering believers, the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a transformative spiritual experience, socio-cultural factors shaping beliefs and interactions, and community development aimed at improving local living conditions.

The methodology for this study will primarily involve desk research, analyzing existing literature and academic sources related to Pentecostalism and its socio-cultural factors in Nigeria. By synthesizing information from various studies, the research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors driving Pentecostal growth and its societal impacts, without conducting fieldwork or surveys. This approach allows for an in-depth examination of the topic based on the analyses of previous researchers.

This paper argues that the growth of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria is mainly influenced by sociocultural factors, including urbanization, economic challenges, and the quest for community and identity. Additionally, the movement's expansion is supported by effective media strategies and active youth participation, though it encounters notable challenges concerning doctrinal consistency, leadership issues, and competition from other religious groups. By exploring these dynamics, this study aims to enhance our understanding of how Pentecostalism is transforming Nigeria's religious and social landscape and how its growth may affect wider societal trends.

Review of Literature

Pentecostalism is a Christian movement emphasizing personal experiences with God, particularly through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which many believe enhances their lives.¹ It began in the early 1900s during the Azusa Street Revival, known for miraculous events like speaking in tongues and healing. According to Andrew Anderson, such experiences are vital for a robust Christian life. By the 1960s, Pentecostalism gained traction in Nigeria, influenced by Nigerians who studied abroad and sought new religious practices, leading them to explore Pentecostal faith outside their traditional churches.

The proliferation of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria can be closely linked to the country's political independence in 1960, which catalyzed a shift in religious dynamics. Abogunrin argues that this newfound political autonomy fostered religious independence, allowing Nigerians to seek alternative spiritual identities beyond traditional mainline churches. This quest for new religious expressions was fueled by socio-economic struggles that characterized the post-independence era, prompting many to turn to Pentecostalism for hope and personal transformation. He notes that Pentecostal churches provided community and spiritual encounters that resonated deeply with the people's needs during challenging times². Onuoha further supports this view, asserting that the period after independence saw a rise in religious pluralism, driven by a desire for self-determination in both political and spiritual spheres. Many Nigerians embraced the vibrant, charismatic nature of Pentecostalism, which emphasized personal empowerment and community involvement, contrasting sharply with the more institutional and often rigid approaches of mainstream churches³. Fashina adds to this discourse by highlighting how economic hardships post-independence encouraged individuals to seek solace in Pentecostal communities, which promised spiritual and material breakthroughs. The emergence of these churches marked a significant shift in the religious landscape, blending traditional beliefs with new Pentecostal practices, ultimately reshaping Nigerian society⁴.

All Orthodox Churches and her other sister Protestant churches were badly affected with the development as a result of the mass exodus movement of their congregants to this new Christian movement. Christians in Protestant churches began to see themselves more as individual Christians than as part of the corporate body, the churches⁵ However, despite this great development, different independent Christian

groups with evangelical and Pentecostal persuasions emerged, most of which initially claimed to be non-denominational or inter-denominational, only to turn round and become churches later. Most of the Pentecostal and African Independent churches existing here and there such as Christ Apostolic Church, Holy Church of Christ, Christ Chosen Church, Christ Apostolic Faith, Christ Healing Church, Christ True Mission, Church of God Mission, Apostolic Faith Ministry (Abosso) emanated at the period.⁶ Since the 1960s, numerous Pentecostal churches have emerged across Nigeria. Kalu categorized these groups into several types, including Interdenominational Fellowships and Evangelistic Ministries such as the Deeper Life Bible Church. He also identified Deliverance Ministries focused on exorcism, as well as Prosperity of Faith Ministries like Zoe Ministry and Idahosa's Church of God Mission. Additionally, there are organizations dedicated to Missionary and Rural Evangelism, such as the Christian Evangelical Social Movement and the Christian Movement Foundation's Rural Evangelism Outreach. Bible Distribution Ministries, including Gideon Bible International, require members to be born again and actively engaged in their churches. Other notable groups include Classical Pentecostals like the Assemblies of God Mission and the Four-Square Gospel Church, along with various Children Evangelism Ministries that have proliferated throughout the nation. The distinctions between these Pentecostal groups often revolve around their focus on fellowship versus church structure, as well as differences between holiness and prosperity teachings.^{7, 8}

However, the focus and catchments areas of this Pentecostal movement appear to be the cities and urban areas where there is more concentration of the rich and upwardly mobile youths. In such cities as Lagos, Abuja, Enugu, Port Harcourt, Aba, Onitsha, Owerri, Ibadan, Warri, Benin, and many more, the Churches are rising up in shops, stores, disused buildings and warehouses, on daily basis. For ministers of these churches, Christians should not experience suffering or poverty; thus, they believe that "poverty is a curse." This perspective explains why such forms of Christianity are rarely found in rural areas. These churches have transformed warehouses into vibrant places of worship. In major cities like Lagos, only prominent churches have the means to purchase warehouses and convert them into worship spaces. Notable examples of large Pentecostal churches in Lagos include Mike Okonkwo's Redeemed Evangelical Mission (TREM) in Obanikoro, Tunde Bakare's Citadel Global Community Church on Akilo Road, Chris Okotie's Household of God Church in Oregun, Chris Oyakhilome's Christ Embassy in Oregun, and Joseph Agboli's Victorious Army on Acme Road in Ogba.⁹ Pentecostalism in Nigeria emerged through a blend of local religious dynamics and foreign missionary influence, deeply shaped by specific historical events and figures¹⁰. - Early on, missionary groups from Europe and the U.S. brought Christian teachings, but it was leaders like Joseph Babalola, of the Christ Apostolic Church, who adapted these teachings to the Nigerian context¹¹, integrating charismatic practices such as healing and prophecy. - Babalola's 1930s revival meetings ignited widespread interest in Pentecostalism, which further spread with the establishment of indigenous churches like The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), found-

ed by Josiah Akindayomi, and the Deeper Life Bible Church, founded by W.F. Kumuyi.¹² These churches stressed personal piety, communal worship, and a reliance on the Holy Spirit, appealing to many Nigerians seeking spiritual and social empowerment.¹³ The 1970s oil boom and increasing political instability further fueled the rise of Pentecostalism, as people sought divine solutions to social challenges.¹⁴ A notable gap in literature is a deeper exploration of the socio-political impact of Pentecostalism on Nigeria's political sphere. While scholars have documented church growth and spiritual impact, fewer studies examine how Pentecostal leaders and teachings influence political attitudes and policies. Addressing this gap can reveal insights into the broader role of religion in Nigerian governance and social reform.

Pentecostalism in Nigeria has developed through significant historical events and figures, contributing to its rapid growth and influence. A key moment was the arrival of African indigenous Pentecostal leaders who pioneered the spread of the faith by blending Christian teachings with local cultural practices, which resonated deeply with Nigerians.¹⁵ Figures such as Benson Idahosa, founder of the Church of God Mission, were instrumental in expanding Pentecostalism by emphasizing prosperity and healing ministries that addressed both spiritual and material needs.¹⁶ Additionally, Western missionaries brought Pentecostal teachings that laid foundational beliefs but were later adapted to reflect the Nigerian sociocultural context.¹⁷ Another major influence was the 1970s' Nigerian economic boom, which facilitated church expansions and large-scale crusades, drawing diverse audiences.¹⁸ This adaptability is a hallmark of Nigerian Pentecostalism, making it a popular movement nationwide.¹⁹

While current literature covers Pentecostalism's historical trajectory, there is a gap regarding in-depth studies on how younger Nigerian generations interpret and adapt Pentecostal practices in a digital age. This remains largely unexplored, warranting further research to understand how digital technology and social media impact contemporary Pentecostal beliefs and practices.

Factors Responsible for Pentecostal Rapid Growth

Crusaders / revivalists dedication: Great and significant? A major factor contributing to the growth of Pentecostalism in Nigeria are the personnel that dedicated their huge energy, resources and time towards the growth of this movement in season and out of season. The congregants visited many towns and villages in the nation for the spread and acceptance of their movement, members move around with their leaders for people to come to their fold with holistic evangelism. When it is time for preaching, they are being preached to and encouraged to remain in their camp, those who are healed and delivered from evil forces through their preaching come forward to give testimonies, with these Altar calls take its central role so that people can be born-again.²⁰

Crusades / revivals factor: Crusades and revivals have been crucial to Pentecostalism's growth and Nigeria's development. Large gatherings, led by influential Pentecostal figures, feature dynamic preaching, healings, and intense worship, drawing many new followers and expanding church memberships.²¹ These events address so-

cial issues like poverty and unemployment through support programs, contributing to social and economic upliftment (Kalu 2008, 142)²². Moreover, crusades promote national unity by gathering diverse groups across ethnic and socioeconomic lines, fostering a shared sense of purpose and community. Pentecostal churches also encourage values such as hard work, integrity, and service, positively impacting national development²³. Despite these benefits, more research is needed to understand the long-term effects of these gatherings on sustained community and economic growth, as the economic benefits may be temporary or limited to crusade periods.

Prayer meetings factor: Pentecostal Churches are fond of organizing prayer meetings for their members, they pray together for forgiveness of sins, spiritual enrichment and strength to overcome any temptation, deliverance from the evil forces, peace, progress, posterity of the nation and the general well-being of their congregants. Prayer meetings have greatly contributed to Pentecostalism's growth in Nigeria, often inspiring national development by promoting social unity and moral transformation²⁴. These gatherings foster community, mobilize action, and address social issues, amplifying Pentecostal influence.

House Fellowship factor: Pentecostal churches in Nigeria have made a significant impact on communities through house fellowships, which are small group meetings held in members' homes. These gatherings foster personal connections and a sense of community, making church activities more accessible. One important effect of house fellowships is the strengthening of faith among participants, as regular meetings allow members to share their experiences, pray for one another, and study the Bible together, fostering a supportive environment that encourages spiritual growth and commitment to the church.²⁵ In addition, house fellowships create a sense of belonging, especially for individuals in urban areas who may feel isolated. This family-like atmosphere encourages increased church attendance and active participation in church activities.²⁶ Furthermore, house fellowships serve as platforms for community development, with members engaging in outreach programs that help the needy and support local initiatives, reflecting the church's commitment to social responsibility.²⁷ Overall, Pentecostal house fellowships contribute to spiritual growth, foster a sense of belonging, and promote community development in Nigeria.

Healing Miracles factor: This occur during crusades, revivals, vigils and Church services, the healing or deliverance are performed in the name of Jesus Christ. However, the moment non-Christians hear of these supernatural miracles, they easily convert to Christianity with the hope of receiving theirs too. Many Muslims and adherent of African traditional religion have become Christians because of the healing power in the name of Jesus. Healing miracles play a crucial role in Pentecostalism's growth, drawing people seeking physical and spiritual relief, which indirectly supports national development by fostering hope and community cohesion (Gifford 2004, 45; Kalu 2008, 123).²⁸

African form of Worship factor: The Pentecostal Churches have changed the form of worship drastically from what was handed to the Orthodox Churches by the

missionaries. The Orthodox Churches worship God through the westernization of Church doctrine and practices. The service was introduced in English before being translated to our mothers' tongue. This kind of worship did not appeal to the Pentecostals. Therefore, in an attempt to make Christianity meaningful to their environment, the Pentecostals adopted the African form of worship which is more exciting and livelier because it consists of clapping, dancing and singing of gospel songs

Socioeconomic factor: Economic instability marked by high level of poverty and unemployment plays a crucial role in driving individuals towards Pentecostal Churches asserts that these churches provide a sense of hope and a promise of Prosperity, appealing to those seeking spiritual and material upliftment, the churches often function as support networks, providing resources for community.²⁹

Cultural resonance factor: Pentecostalism aligns closely with Nigerian cultural values, particularly its communal and spiritual dimensions. Nwakwo, argues that, the emphasis on communal worship and collective experiences in Pentecostal churches resonates with traditional practices, making the religion more relatable and accessible. This cultural compatibility fosters a strong sense of belonging among congregants.³⁰

Religious Innovation and Adaptation factor: Pentecostal Churches are characterized by their innovative approaches to worship. Adebayo, highlights the use of contemporary music, multimedia presentations, and engaging in sermons, which attract a younger audience. The dynamic nature of worship services creates an environment that appeals to diverse demographics, facilitating rapid growth.³¹

Charismatic Leadership factor: The role of charismatic leaders in promoting church growth cannot be overstated. Ekechi, notes that, strong dynamic leaders attract followers and inspire loyalty, often transforming their churches into powerful movements, the media presence of these leaders amplifies their influence, allowing them to reach wider audience.³²

Social Change factor: The growth of Pentecostalism has significant implications for social structures within Nigeria. Many churches engage in social welfare activities, including education, healthcare, and poverty alleviation. Olowu, emphasizes that such engagement promotes social cohesion and mobilizes community development, reshaping local dynamics and enhancing community resilience.³³

Political factors: Pentecostal churches are becoming more influential in the political arena. Ibeanu emphasizes that church leaders frequently advocate for social justice and governance issues, which shapes public opinion and encourages civic participation. The mobilization of church members during elections further demonstrates the increasing overlap between faith and politics.³⁴

Youth Empowerment & engagement factor: The appeal of Pentecostalism to Nigerian youth is a crucial factor in its growth. Churches often provide programmes focused on empowerment and skills development, addressing the aspirations of young people in a rapidly changing society. This youth-centric approach fosters engagement and participations, which further driving church expansion.

Globalization & Technological Influence: The influence of globalization and technology has greatly contributed to the growth of Pentecostalism in Nigeria. The accessibility of online services and social media platforms allows churches to reach broader audiences beyond local congregants, this digital engagement fosters a sense of global community and connection among believers.³⁵

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights Pentecostalism's profound influence on both the spiritual lives of Nigerians and the socio-economic landscape of the nation. Pentecostalism has grown beyond a purely religious movement; it has become a vital contributor to social and economic development, fostering values of resilience, hope, and community support that resonate across Nigerian society. The movement has adapted well to Nigeria's economic and social challenges, offering not only spiritual solutions but also practical programs that support education, healthcare, and financial empowerment within local communities. By focusing on economic independence and community cohesion, Pentecostal churches often become a critical support network for many Nigerians, especially during times of economic hardship.

A unique feature of Nigerian Pentecostalism is its emphasis on prosperity and healing, which attracts individuals seeking not only faith but tangible improvements in their daily lives. The prosperity gospel and healing ministries have drawn in large congregations, highlighting a collective need for hope and practical outcomes within worship experiences. Through these aspects, Pentecostalism also builds networks of mutual support and shared identity, helping communities navigate the complexities of modern Nigerian life.

However, one critical area that requires further study is Pentecostalism's relationship with Nigerian politics and governance. As Pentecostal leaders often hold significant influence over their congregants, understanding how this influence extends into political arenas, policy-making, and social justice initiatives is essential. Exploring these areas would provide a fuller picture of Pentecostalism's role in shaping not only Nigeria's spiritual and social landscape but also its political and economic future.

Generally, this study emphasizes that Pentecostalism in Nigeria is much more than a religious movement; it is an active force in the country's socio-economic development. With additional research into its political influence, we can better understand Pentecostalism's full impact and evolving role in Nigerian society.

The study contributes significantly to our understanding of Pentecostalism in Nigeria by illustrating its multifaceted role as both a religious movement and a catalyst for socio-economic development. It highlights how Pentecostalism has evolved into a powerful force that addresses not only spiritual needs but also practical social concerns, thereby fostering resilience and community support among its adherents.

The research underscores the importance of healing and prosperity teachings within Pentecostal churches, which attract individuals seeking hope and tangible improvements in their lives. This connection between spiritual beliefs and practical out-

comes enriches the discourse on how religious movements can adapt to contemporary challenges.

Moreover, the study emphasizes the network of support and shared identity that Pentecostalism cultivates, revealing its capacity to create strong community ties. It points to the influence of church-led initiatives on education, healthcare, and economic empowerment, showcasing how these programs contribute to local development and improve the quality of life for many Nigerians.

Importantly, the research identifies a critical gap in the literature concerning the relationship between Pentecostalism and Nigerian politics. By acknowledging this gap, the study lays the groundwork for further exploration into how Pentecostal leaders influence political engagement and public policy, ultimately enriching our understanding of the movement's broader impact on Nigerian society. This comprehensive perspective positions Pentecostalism as an integral part of Nigeria's socio-economic landscape, encouraging future research and practical engagement in this dynamic area.

Recommendations

1. Even though this study is a table research, recommendations for this study can strengthen its practical impact and guide future research. The following are some suggested recommendations: 1. Pentecostal churches could expand their social support initiatives by creating structured programs that include skill-building workshops, financial literacy training, and small business support. This would enhance the economic benefits Pentecostalism provides to local communities.
2. Since healing is a core attraction, churches should be encouraged to integrate modern healthcare and mental health resources into their healing ministries. Partnerships with health professionals would ensure safer, more effective support for congregants.
3. Given the influence of Pentecostalism, churches could provide education on civic responsibility, encouraging congregants to participate constructively in the political process without promoting partisan views. This could strengthen community voices in governance and public policy.
4. Pentecostal leaders could engage in interfaith dialogue to build mutual respect and reduce religious tension, fostering peaceful coexistence and shared goals for national development.
5. Churches should prioritize collecting data on their social impact and community needs to inform program development and demonstrate the effectiveness of their initiatives to potential partners and donors.
6. Providing training for church leaders in areas such as community development, conflict resolution, and mental health awareness would equip them to better support their congregations. 7. Collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and government programs can enhance resource sharing and expertise, amplifying the reach and effectiveness of community development efforts.
1. Churches should also utilize digital platforms to reach younger audiences and enhance communication. Online services, social media engagement, and virtual community support groups can help bridge gaps in outreach, especially post-COVID-19.
2. Encouraging congregants to participate in volunteer activities fosters a sense of own-

ership and responsibility towards community welfare, with regular community service events strengthening ties among church members and the broader community.

3. Future research could focus on long-term studies assessing the socio-economic impacts of Pentecostalism over time, providing insights that can help adapt strategies to evolving community needs.
7. By implementing these recommendations, Pentecostal churches can enhance their positive-influence on society, contributing to national development and fostering a more cohesive community.

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Ògún Láàdìn Shrine: An Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanism in Ile-Ife, Osun State

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Pamela

Abstract

Ife is an ancient city with a rich culture and tradition encapsulated in sacred historical sites set aside for the worship of various deities. Ile Ife has about 401 deities; some of the grooves and shrine include: Olokun, Aje, Osaara, Òrànmiyàn, Oduduwa, which tourist from all over the world visits. Findings indicate that some of these shrines are also located in the Palace such as: Ifa Temple, Yeyemoolu Groove and Ògún Láàdìn shrine, of which the Ooni is the only living deity. To this end, the study explored Ògún Láàdìn shrine, as an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanism for adjudication in Ile-Ife. It was also observed that Ògún Láàdìn detests falsehood when issues are brought to the shrine for resolution, this could lead to the death of the culprit within seven days. Apart from being a place of worship, the resolution process in the shrine has made Ògún Láàdìn a trusted god of justice where indigenes including foreigners prefer to go for adjudication especially when having issues to settle with another party. Ogun the god of Iron is associated with the shrine; who has the power for the growth, peace and existence of the life of people. Secondary data from books and journals formed the basis for this study, while primary data was collected using interview with two officials at the National Museum Ile-Ife. The research made use of descriptive and analytical methods with relevant historical materials to build up structures of arguments. The paper concludes by portraying the potency of Ògún Láàdìn shrine, to whom all and sundry refer to for peaceful resolution of disputes in Ile Ife.

Keywords: Ògún Láàdìn shrine, alternative, dispute, resolution, mechanism

Introduction

ILE IFE IS KNOWN AS THE ORIGIN OF CULTURE OF THE YORUBA; WHERE SHRINES, grooves and historical places of worship of many deities are located. Some of this historic places have gained recognition of both individuals and various institutions, this has led to the beautification of historic sites in Ife. It is also believed that Ile-Ife is where people dispersed or spread to other places in the world. According to a respondent at the National Museum Ile-Ife; it was discovered that Ile Ife has about 401 deities of which Ooni is the only living deity, according to Abegunde et.al, (2019), any reigning Ooni is considered the 401st deity. These shrines and grooves include: Olokun Groove, Aje Groove, Osaara Grove, Oranmiyan Groove and shrine, Oduduwa

Groove and Shrine, Ogun Laadin Shrine, Ifa Temple and Yeyemoolu Groove, among many others.

The major deities are however located at the palace of *Ooni* and the devotees visit the Palace to worship them there. Abegunde et.al, (2019) asserts; that though access to these shrines are restricted depending on the nature the gods. Each shrine is in the custody of a person with a chieftaincy title, the traditional ways however does not conflict with other features. One of these features is the justice system that rests mainly on mediation but could also impose extreme measures depending on the disposition of the parties' involved.



The researcher (first left) with the Ooni of Ife, Oba Enitan Ogunwusi

The palace is given its features majorly the traditional way of life, one of such features is the justice system which involves mediation and adjudication process of settling conflict. In spite of the modern improvement being given the Palace of the *Ooni* of Ife

in Ile-Ife, there are traditional methods of resolving conflicts among parties. It is on this premise that this study explored the mechanism adopted by *Ògún Láàdìn* Shrine as an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) for adjudication in Ile Ife, Osun State.

Alternative Dispute Resolution

There is a wide range of dispute resolution processes and techniques that parties can use to settle disputes with the help of a third party. Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) are typically used for disagreeing parties who cannot come to an agreement short of litigation. Alternative Dispute Resolution, commonly referred to as ADR, is a term which covers many alternatives to traditional methods for resolving conflicts or disputes. ADR has been used as a tool in resolving workplace disputes arising from poor communication, personality conflicts, or alleged discrimination, it is also offered as an alternative method for resolving workplace disputes. There is a spectrum of dispute resolution techniques, covering such processes as fact-finding, early neutral evaluation, negotiation, mediation, settlement conferences, arbitration, and adjudication. Thus, all ADR processes aim to achieve the following desirable results:

- to focus attention on the issues by the parties involved;
- to give parties the opportunity to air their grievances and reveal their perspectives on issues on ground;
- to provide parties the opportunity to clear each other's view point; and
- to provide parties with an opportunity to identify common interests and points of agreement to resolve disputed issues.

Techniques for dispute resolution differs in their formality and placement of decision-making power. The decision-making power lies with a third-party in adjudication or arbitration. Whereas the, the decision-making power will reside at all times with the parties in conflict when it comes to mediation. Mediation is a primary ADR method because it empowers the parties themselves to reach an acceptable resolution of the conflict, through the intervention of a third party. It's on this premise that this study interrogated the effectiveness Alternative Dispute Resolution of the traditional justice method with focus on *Ògún Láàdìn* shrine at Ile-Ife, Osun State.

Ògún Láàdìn Shrine

Ògún Láàdìn is a popular shrine in Ile-Ife among other shrines, Abegunde et.al, (2019) opines that, *Òpá Òrànmíyàn* and *Ògún Láàdìn* are shrines in Ile-Ife as Purveyors of Religious Tourism, *Ògún Láàdìn* is worshipped and highly revered by Ife indigenes as a deity of Justice or the heartbeat of adjudication of difficult matters. History has it that *Ògún Láàdìn* was the first blacksmith on earth, he had his workshop on earth close to the *Ooni's* Palace, where he produced cutlasses, knives and farm implements, during his lifetime, the *Ooni* of Ife made 2 requests from *Ògún Láàdìn*; one of which was to train some of his subjects blacksmithing and the other request was to marry , *Ògún Láàdìn* envisaging the requests might portend a danger for him, accepted to marry and some of the King's subjects went through his training, after training each of the

trainees went to different direction to start their blacksmith in Ile-Ife. Today Fabunmi (1869); asserts that, in *Ògún Láàdìn* shrine, there are about seven different stones each representing an implement he used, while on earth, while the biggest stone is at an acclaim spot where he entered into the ground². History also has it that *Ògún Láàdìn* is worshipped in the shrine at Ile-Ife, where the stones representing him and his working implements are located. A strong power is associated to the shrine as a place where prayer is answered and a final place for adjudication in the entire Ife. This unusual power is attributed to *Ògún Láàdìn* shrine that attracts people from far and near to it both for worship and in search of solutions to certain problems.



Ògún Láàdìn Shrine, Excerpts from Fabunmi (1969)

Ògún Láàdìn Shrine still remain a sacred site amongst other shrines scatted around Ile-Ife. According to Lodoko (2019) in Daily Trust 27th May 201, *Ògún Láàdìn* is a trust-

ed god of justice in Ife to which typical indigenes will prefer to go for adjudication. The feature of the shrine includes the notion of truth, the notion of fair and instant judgment, the notion of *Ile-ase* which simply means *so be it, so it is or it definitely shall be*.

Ògún Láàdìn is the sacred temple of the god of iron, according to *Daily Trust*, the god of iron does not tolerate falsehood and that whoever makes false claim at the temple would die within seven days. If there is a dispute and people failed to agree among themselves, they would be brought to the temple to swear before the god of iron and whoever lied among them must die within seven days. (*Daily Trust*)

***Ògún Láàdìn* Shrine: An Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanism in Ile-Ife**

The *Ògún Láàdìn* shrine in Ife symbolizes the relationship of smith and the King. It consist of blacksmith banner, two stone anvils (*okuta ogun*) a stone fish and a crocodile to guard them near the entrance. The shrine was named the mythical ancestor blacksmith and serve as a meeting place for Chiefs to debate judicial matters and to swear oaths. This use reflects the mediating role and the smith that is often found in West Africa.

The language of *Ògún* Progenitor of Iron and warrior king is prevalent in many of the Yoruba related kingdom, although it takes vaIt is on this premise that this study explored the mythological powers and history attached to *Ògún Láàdìn* Shrine, making it an alternative dispute resolution mechanism for justice in Ile-Ife, this was carried out with utmost attention to their sacredness which will be reflected in the materials used, hence a promotion of the great significance of the cultural site, as well as its contribution to socio-economic diversification in Nigeria.

According to Fabumi (1969), *Ògún* has several designations derived from the names of the place where he is the prominent divinity or from personages or functions connected with him, *Ògún* is the god of Iron worshipped by devotees, this reflects in associating the god *Ògún* with; names and life's activities: for instance *Ògún* Alara (the *Ògún* being worshipped by Alara of Ara), *Ògún* Ikola (the *Ògún* of surgery), *Ògún* Gbenagbena (the *Ògún* of the artisan) and so on. *Ògún Láàdìn* is thus the *Ògún* of *Ogboru*, an Ooni of Ife who was banished to ife-Odan after he had reigned, it is said for about 120 years but the supernatural powers of this Ooni were so strong that none of his successors lived long until his pardon was obtained and his grandson was with his consent placed on the throne. It is said that his *Ògún* was on the mainstays of the magical powers of that monarch, all oaths were taken before it and a son of the Oba *Ogbord* himself was the Onisoro of this shrine and the first blacksmith of the land. False swearing in this shrine were very quickly attended by fatal consequences, the deity became popularly known as *Ògún Aladi* that is the *Ògún* which determined the veracity of falsity of one's character, adin being Ife dialect for character, for instance *Adin l'ewa* (One's character is his or her beauty). In the course of time, *Ògún Aladin* became contracted to *Ògún Láàdìn* and the *Onisoro* in charge became known as La-

din. This title has since ranked high in the hierarchy of the traditional Ife chieftaincies that are recognized both in religious and State affairs. The shrine is within the walls of the Palace,

According to Willet (1967:101), the relationship between Kingship and Iron deity also was explicit at Ife, the Yoruba Kingdom which as indicated was believed to have provided the founder *Òràn míyàn* (Oranya) of Oyo's ruling house in Ife, Barnes field notes (1984), attests that, *Ògún Láàdìn* shrine, named for the first mythical blacksmith was housed within the Palace walls and was used by chiefs for debating judicial matters and swearing oaths. The shrine consisted of a large tear shaped lump of iron.

Conclusion

Ògún Láàdìn is the sacred temple of the god of iron, located at the Ooni's palace, amongst several others at Ile Ife, this serves as a mechanism for resolving disputes of which it detests falsehood which comes with a repercussion. *Ògún Láàdìn* is a trusted god of justice in Ife to which typical indigenes will prefer to go for adjudication. A strong power is associated to shrines as a place where prayer is answered and a final place for adjudication in the entire Ife. This unusual power is attributed to *Ògún Láàdìn* shrine that attracts people from far and near to it both for worship and in search of solutions to certain problems. Hence, the objective of adjudication processes, the role of traditional courts or the forum of elders, and the methods is to settle dispute, whereas in some cases, especially in shrines it's usually associated with power and instant judgment. These methods of settlement of disputes are by-products of the practices, customs and traditions of the people that were devised as ways of maintaining peace and tranquility, and thereby upholding the rule of law.

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On the Definition of African Philosophy: An Interrogation of Analytic and Traditional Schools

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Abstract

The debate over the existence of African philosophy is no longer a contemporary issue; its existence has been widely acknowledged. However, the pivotal issue that scholars face today concerns how African philosophy should be defined in light of external influences such as the slave trade and colonialism. The traditionalist school argues that African philosophy should be defined by the collective worldviews of African communities, asserting that it must protect African identity by focusing on traditional worldviews. In contrast, the analytic school maintains that philosophy is a universal phenomenon rooted in scientific approaches, and that African philosophy should align with universal standards before it can be considered valid philosophy. While both schools are ethnocentric in their respective biases, this paper demonstrates that both schools' positions reflect ethnocentric interests due to their conventional outlooks. Through comparative and critical analysis methods, the paper shows how these biases can be addressed through Asouzu's concept of transcendental existential conversion. Therefore, the paper argues that the establishment of African philosophy requires acknowledgment of the historical and identity-related disruptions caused by external influences. It asserts that the reality of African society should be understood in relation to both internal and external factors, rather than in isolation.

Keywords: Africa, analytic philosophy, Asouzu, complementarity, traditionalist

Introduction

PHILOSOPHY GENERALLY GREW OUT OF SPECULATION; THE SPECULATIVE PHILOSOPHERS in the ancient period of the western philosophy justified this through their cosmological and ontological arguments, which resulted to the questions about human existence, knowledge and values, society and culture, man's origin and others.¹ If that is the case, the situation of Africa cannot be different; the issue of whether philosophy exists in Africa or not can no longer holds. Similar to other human groups, Africans are endowed with the ability to speculate about their lives and the world around them. Denying Africans this ability is equivalent to denying them the ability to philosophize. This approach to philosophy has been crucial in bringing about a significant shift in the debate from questions about whether or not Africa has a philosophy to questions about the nature of African philosophy and the best way to approach it.²

Therefore, to define what African philosophy is, different approaches have been

introduced by some African scholars, particularly Paulin Hountondji, Peter Bodunrin, Sophie Oluwole John Mbiti and others; the traditionalist scholars defend the identity of the Africans through the acknowledgment and celebration of the African collective worldviews. They argued that African philosophy is a product of culture and it deserves to be celebrated through the use of indigenous approaches.³ On the other hand, the Analytic school of African philosophy holds that philosophy is a general phenomenon that is based on scientific methodology. On the basis of this, African philosophy should reflect the universal approach before it can be classified as being a philosophy.⁴ In an attempt to address the problem of definition in African philosophy, the two schools of thought are biased in their position by virtue of the conservative reasoning. It is on the basis of this, the paper acknowledges Innocent Asouzu's complementarity theory as a sustainable approach to the definition of African philosophy; he shows that both the analytic and traditionalist schools commit the fallacy of ethnocentric dogmas in the process of defining African philosophy. However, in order to justify these views, the paper will be divided into four parts. The first part considers the idea of African philosophy and the existential factors that revolve around it.

African Philosophy and its Existential Factors

According to Edwin Azenabor, there are challenges in defining African philosophy. Two main issues contribute to this definitional crisis: first, the ongoing debate over the philosophical legitimacy of African philosophy, and second, the lack of a single, universally accepted definition of philosophy itself.⁵ As a result, various African thinkers have proposed different ways of addressing these challenges. Some argue that the issue should be approached through the lens of scientific Africanity and scientific philosophy, while others focus on African intellectual literature and authorship. Additionally, some scholars have suggested using historicity and periodization as criteria. However, if the primary determinant of any academic discipline is its content, then these differing views may be reconciled. In this study, we will adopt the "complementarity-based definition of African philosophy," which will serve as the foundation for defining African philosophy.⁶ This definition suggests that any claim to African philosophy must involve a logical analysis of both the factual and metaphysical aspects of African reality. All other criteria for identifying African philosophy should be seen as subsidiary to this "complementarity-based" approach. It is the ultimate standard from which all other definitions derive their validity. An important qualification for an African philosopher is their focus on African reality from a philosophical perspective. Without this focus, an individual might be considered an "African thinker," but not an African philosopher. In this sense, being an African philosopher is not determined solely by one's place of birth, but by their philosophical approach.⁷ Any attempt to categorize intellectuals as African philosophers purely based on their origins is both misleading and intellectually irresponsible. Such practices are an example of what could be called "patriotic fallacy," or "robbery at the altar of intellectual merit." When defending the philosophical legitimacy of African philosophy, some histori-

ans of African philosophy fall into this trap. They unintentionally descend into excessive extremism and zealotry during this process. As a result, their historical index strand is riddled with ambiguities since it fails to distinguish between philosophers who are African by birth and those who are so because of their philosophical inclinations, or both. Based on the “complementarity-based definition of African philosophy,” then, this work understands African philosophy as an organized, critical, and logical attempt to incorporate African realities into the digestive and classificatory rational system of philosophy in order to rationally fractionally distil the truths contained therein. The filtered truth is then downloaded or contextualized into different human situations. The goal of African philosophy is the rational fractional distillation of realities, which is why the aforementioned realities are subjected to the philosophy’s classificatory system. Several facets of African reality are simplified by this type of distillation, much as occurs in the fractional distillation of water and crude oil. As a result, these realities are eventually downsized or downloaded for application, which exposes the theoretical and application domains of African philosophy. African reality continues to be a crucial component of the conversation even when African philosophy conducts comparative analysis. The fundamental raw ingredients are the reality of Africa. Someone like Hountondji called it pre-philosophy; Kwasi Wiredu called it folk philosophy, which involves myths, folklores, proverbs, worldviews, and oral tradition that characterize a people. The role of philosophy is to access the depth or deepest of the collective worldviews. It is on the basis of this, Bartholomew Nnaemede asserts that:

It is philosophy that answers the most basic questions concerning the goals of all disciplines on the ground that it is the singular discipline that does not adopt a fragmentary approach in its interpretation of reality... therefore, it is not a bogus claim or an arrogant intellectual display of “philosopho-maniac superiority complex” to infer that any discipline which fails to realize the philosophicality of its set objective may end up a relic of immemorial past; or at best, an extinction-bound discipline, gasping for air of integral intellectual redemption which only philosophy can guarantee.

Hence, philosophy can be understood as man’s methodical, logical, and critical pursuit of the point at which human cognition is most deeply engaged in reality inquiry. At this point, a philosopher is more equipped to assess many arguments on his or her subject of study and determine the relative merits of each. Until a thinker delves into the most profound part of the reality under investigation, the truth he seeks remains “a-not-yet,” and hence, “a project.” Naturally, the previous layers of the object of inquiry he had already reached are still true even if he was unable to reach this fact.

Nevertheless, the two schools on how African philosophy should be conceived will be examined in the next sections

Traditional Schools and its Positions

The traditionalist or ethnophilosophic scholars defined African philosophy as the collective African worldview regarding nature, man, and society.⁹ These worldviews are represented in the people's sociocultural practices and are ingrained in their proverbs, myths, and folktales—in other words, in their oral traditions. The advocates of this ideology believes that philosophy is a product of culture; since there are different societies in the world with different cultures, then the case of Africa cannot be different. They believe that there is African philosophy and such philosophy is embedded in African trial traditions. What is necessarily done in this regard is to investigate, and analyze and document the traditions and also pass them from one generation to another without the inclusion of western methodology. According to the advocates, African philosophy does not emerge from the analytical and contemplative pursuits of modern, university-educated philosophers. Instead, these philosophers have something to learn and spread from the collective worldviews of the Africans.¹⁰

The idea of African philosophy highlighted above is what is embedded in John S. Mbiti's popular book, entitled "African Religions and Philosophy, in the year 1998. According to Mbiti, African Philosophy "refers to the understanding, attitude of mind, logic and perception behind the manner in which Africans think, act or speak in different situations of life."¹¹ It is a collective worldview that is found in the relevant society's religions, proverbs, oral traditions, ethics and morals.

The traditionalists contend that traditional African worldviews are a philosophy that can be investigated in a variety of ways, including by drawing on the religio-anthropological or ethnographic writings of academics like John Mbiti, Bolaji Idowu, Asare Opoku, Marciel Griaule, and Isidore Okpewho; conducting fieldwork that entails observing the daily activities, occupations, and sociocultural practices of the relevant population; or even documenting the opinions of poets, elders, and other specialists in traditional conceptions and social practices. Peter Bodunrin has stated that "authentic African ideas uninfluenced by alien accretions" would hopefully come from these contacts. This is supported by a broad definition of philosophy, which is the collection of notions or concepts that a person or group of people use to understand, experience, and interpret reality. This definition's main goal is to dispel the prejudiced notion held by certain European missionaries and academics that Africans were a people without a history of thoughtful reflection on nature, humanity, and society, and as a result, were unable to have developed one of the essential components of a modern civilization. The traditionalists' adoration of traditional notions and even their attempt to relocate African customs and culture away from criticism can be attributed to this nationalistic impulse.¹²

The advocates argue that every type of intellectual endeavour, including knowledge, is a byproduct of the particular sociocultural environment in which it exists and strives to mould. The rejection of the traditional foundations of this sociocultural existence can only provide us with a partial understanding of its nature. Thus, the traditional foundations of all knowledge and intellectual endeavours exist. If this is the

case, then it is impossible to divorce African philosophy from its traditional foundations as a body of knowledge or as an intellectual endeavour. As a result, any attempt to exclude traditional ways of thinking from African philosophy would be unnatural, abstract, and fruitless. This is due to the fact that doing so would rob African philosophy of its identity and vigour as well as its sense of origin. African scholars would therefore still have had to accept African traditional worldviews even in the absence of the colonial myth of African inferiority.¹³

Analytic School and its Position

From the above discussion, it can be argued that African philosophy is viewed from the collective worldviews and the African philosophers' duty as stewards of tradition is highlighted. However, in the ideology of the traditionalist, there are strength and weakness therein. This is because it gives traditional African ideas about people, society, and the natural world a unique status. This kind of thinking prevents a critical engagement that could lead to the creation of a new synthesis relevant to African life today. Due to this limitation in the traditionalist perspective, some African philosophers; whom Oladipo calls "universalists" —argue that the work of an African philosopher cannot be limited to merely reporting the collective worldviews of African communities. For these philosophers—such as Peter Bodunrin, Anthony Appiah, Paulin Hountondji, Henry Odera Oruka, and Kwasi Wiredu, among others; African philosophy must be conceptual, critical, and reconstructive. The distinction between "folk philosophy" and "critical philosophy" is central to the Universalist response to the traditionalist viewpoint. "Folk philosophy," according to analytic scholars, refers to the traditional worldviews passed down orally across generations. These worldviews are communal, unwritten, unsystematic, and transmitted through socialization. On the other hand, "critical philosophy" is an individualistic, systematic, and rational form of intellectual inquiry that employs modern logical and conceptual methods.¹⁴

The primary reason for this distinction is to ensure that African philosophy is recognized as a serious intellectual discipline, rather than something anyone can casually engage with. However, we should not let this aspect of the Universalist position hold us back for two reasons. First, it is difficult to arrive at a universally accepted definition of philosophy. Second, the claim that African philosophy is valid only if it aligns with Western philosophical practices is problematic. African philosophy should be appreciated and valued on its own terms. That said, there are important considerations that cannot be ignored. Analytic scholars emphasize the importance of self-understanding for Africa's progress. They argue that Africa must understand itself in order to move forward, and achieving this self-understanding requires critical self-examination. This means critically assessing both traditional and contemporary African beliefs and socio-cultural practices, which is one of the key responsibilities of African philosophy. Moreover, analytic scholars insist that African philosophers should critically engage with the various strands of the African experience as they work to develop a modern tradition of African philosophy. They also emphasize the

need to reconstruct the African mental landscape and foster the development of science and technology as essential for achieving an African modernity. In this regard, they advocate for the development of a rational outlook on life in Africa. According to Kwasi Wiredu, in a rationalist outlook, claims and theories are tested against facts, and beliefs are adjusted based on evidence¹⁵. In the view of analytic scholars, developing this rational outlook would not only help distinguish between cultural elements that are no longer suitable for contemporary life and those that still promote human flourishing, but it would also facilitate a conscious appropriation of humanity's cultural heritage, which can be existentially beneficial.¹⁶

Thus, the primary focus of analytic scholars is on modernization as a means of social transformation in Africa. This explains their impatience with those who seek to ground contemporary African philosophy in traditional conceptions, or what Kwame Gyekye refers to as "African traditional philosophical thought."¹⁷ For analytic scholars, the development of African philosophy's identity requires a focus on modern science and technology. Their emphasis on these as tools for social development has led some African philosophers to label them as logical positivists.

The issue of the appropriateness or otherwise of this label as a description of the concerns of the modernists should not bother us here. What is important to note is that their position on the idea of African philosophy privileges transformation over tradition in the quest for development in post-colonial Africa. At play here is a construal of tradition which emphasises its conservative role. This conception of tradition is, at best, one-sided. For although tradition, as a set of enduring or recurrent beliefs, values, linguistic or other symbolic usages and social practices which determines a people's way of life, plays a regulatory and conservative role in communal or social relations, it also serves as a source of reference which can provide inspiration or stimulate reaction. If this is the case, then the incompatibility between tradition and social transformation is only apparent than real. The point, then, is that although it is no longer possible to rely entirely on traditional culture for solutions to our myriad problems, it is not possible to reject this culture in its entirety; and even if it were possible, it would not be desirable. In the same vein, it is possible to exploit the scientific and technological resources of the modern world without engendering a loss in our cultural identity.¹⁸

Ethnocentric Interest and the Question of African Philosophy

Ethnocentric interest arises when we misinterpret or misuse our sense of ethnic identity. It occurs when we tend to favour and support those who are seen as part of our own group, while neglecting those perceived as outside or distant. Each individual within an ethnic group has a strong sense of belonging, and when this sense is combined with a divisive mindset, it leads to prioritizing those who are close to us and dismissing others. In essence, ethnocentric interest means placing more value on and offering greater support to those who are perceived as closest to us.¹⁹ Asouzu argues that our instinct for self-preservation plays a significant role in this, shaped by our

deeply held beliefs. This influence our actions and decisions within the framework of ethnocentric interest. It is on the basis of this, he asserts that:

Since we tend to act under this impulse mind to act in an unintended of our primitive instinct of innate drive compels us to protect and prioritize those we see as part of our group, as it creates a sense of security and belonging.²⁰ These deeply rooted convictions and instincts strongly

self-preservation always and often unintentionally, one can say that in most multi-cultural and multiethnic contexts, there is often the tendency for the ethnocentric fashion, in view of securing certain interests and privileges it defines as very important for the inner circle.²¹

Therefore, our natural inclination to protect ourselves often leads us to view things closer to us as better and safer. As Asouzu suggests, this belief becomes a guiding principle in our personal and global relationships. We tend to prioritize and preserve what is near to us, sometimes disregarding the ideas, culture, and beliefs of other parts of the world.²² According to Asouzu, this inclination to prioritize our own culture and beliefs can contribute to societal conflicts²³. It also influences the approach to philosophy and science in Africa, where some African philosophers seek to demonstrate the superiority of African philosophy. This ethnocentric commitment is influenced by both our instinct for self-preservation and the ontological framework we adopt. Asouzu even points to Aristotle as a precursor to this divisive mindset. Aristotle's approach to ontology has greatly influenced the way many Westerners perceive the world and interact with others. According to Asouzu, Aristotle introduced a mindset that led Westerners to define themselves in relation to those they deemed less wise. This mindset, characterized by a hierarchical view of metaphysics, has contributed to a divisive mindset, comparing the wise to the unwise, the essential to the accidental. Asouzu argues that this mindset has influenced Western philosophy and has also affected Africans through education and socialization.²⁴ He accuses Aristotle of being the main cause of ethnocentric reduction, where some individuals are seen as essential and others as inconsequential. This mindset shapes our perception of interpersonal relationships as well.²⁵

Asouzu posits that numerous philosophical debates in Western philosophy exhibit a mindset of complete negation, which can be traced back to the influence of Aristotle's thinking. Additionally, Asouzu argues that African philosophers have also been influenced by this mindset, given that the education and leadership structures in Africa often reflect a Western-style education.²⁶ According to Asouzu, the transmission of the Aristotelian mindset to Africans can be attributed to Western education, socialization, and indoctrination, which were introduced to Africa through historical events like colonialism.²⁷ Wiredu supports this viewpoint, asserting that Africans who have studied philosophy in English, for instance, have been conceptually influenced by the West due to historical circumstances.²⁸ Furthermore, Asouzu suggests that due to the influence of Western education and socialization, Africans

have developed a mindset of either feeling superior or inferior. This mindset is often seen in literature, politics, and historical narratives that highlight the superiority of African heritage compared to the West. These works often criticize Western intervention and exploitation, leading to an ethnocentric perspective. They portray an idealized image of Africans, contrasting it with Westerners and promoting communalism as a uniquely African trait in contrast to Western individualism. However, Asouzu argues that both Africans and the West exhibit characteristics of transcendence and immanence, as well as different logical approaches.²⁹ Considering one as exclusively African and the other as exclusively Western only perpetuates division. This mindset also influences theories on African science, philosophy, ethics, and logic, as well as debates like Black Athena and Afrocentricism.³⁰

Ethnocentric interest pertains to our innate inclination to safeguard ourselves, which is shaped by our convictions. Asouzu proposes that this self-centered viewpoint can obscure our understanding and impede our grasp of reality. He contends that African philosophers should adopt a more receptive stance, acknowledging diverse perspectives and acknowledging the interdependence of all elements. By liberating ourselves from ethnocentrism, we can attain profound insights and foster a harmonious unity through mutual cooperation. Asouzu believes that in order for our minds to truly understand how everything is interconnected, we need to go through a process called “transcendent existential conversion.” It is like a journey where our consciousness reaches a higher level of understanding and intuition about the nature of reality. This process helps us see that every single thing that exists is like a piece of a puzzle that contributes to the bigger picture. According to Asouzu, the idea of “the nearer, the better” can sometimes lead to having a narrow and exclusive mindset³¹. However, when someone goes through existential conversion, they start to realize that physical proximity is not always the best option. It is like a light-bulb moment when they understand that all individuals, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds, are part of a unified existence. Through this conversion, their consciousness expands to a higher level of understanding. Instead of seeing reality as fragmented and divided, they begin to see it from a more comprehensive and universal perspective. It is like a shift from a limited mindset to a global mindset. This transformation helps the mind move away from divisions and towards embracing complementarity. It is about embracing inclusivity and equality.³²

Hence, when one undergoes existential conversion, the idea of “the nearer, the better and safer,” takes on a new significance. It becomes universally applicable, where everyone is considered better and safer, rather than limited to specific groups. Instead of creating separate philosophies for different groups, African philosophers aim to develop a philosophy that encompasses everyone and goes beyond ethnocentric limitations. The focus shifts from debating the superiority or inferiority of philosophies to advancing knowledge and expanding our understanding. After experiencing existential conversion, the mind aligns with what Asouzu refers to as the “transcendent categories of unity of consciousness.” These categories include fragmentation,

unity, totality, universality, comprehensiveness, wholeness, and future reference. The mind operates based on these categories, recognizing the interconnectedness of everything. The harmonizing faculty, as described by Asouzu, plays a crucial role in understanding the various aspects of being. It harmonizes forces that tend to divide and exclude, allowing the mind to grasp the fragmentation, unity, totality, universality, comprehensiveness, wholeness, and future implications of reality. With this harmonious mindset, we can embrace the uniqueness of others as an extension of ourselves, without discrimination. It is a collective “we” perspective that erases ethnocentric boundaries.³³

Conclusion

From the discussion so far, it can be argued that Ibuanidanda philosophy aims to liberate human reason from ethnocentric impositions. It reminds us not to elevate a limited perspective to an absolute truth. Instead, we should strive to capture being in a comprehensive, total, and future-oriented manner. Only by encompassing the universal, total, and comprehensive whole can we gain true insight into the nature of being. Any philosophy that fails to operate from a global and inclusive mindset falls short of providing authentic knowledge. Ibuanidanda philosophy encourages all philosophers, including African philosophers, to view reality as interconnected missing links rather than absolute modes of existence. This perspective helps eliminate the “we-them” mentality that has plagued philosophers worldwide. Thus, embracing this mindset, philosophy can be practiced without ethnic interest or sentiments; it is all about breaking down barriers and fostering a more inclusive and holistic approach to understanding reality. It is on the basis of this complementarity approach that the idea of African philosophy should be considered.

One of the two urgent demands that characterise the issue of social reconstruction in post-colonial Africa is emphasised by each of the leading perspectives in the discussion of the concept of African philosophy that we have already looked at. They are the need for modernization and the demand for cultural identity. The traditionalists tend to emphasize the importance of cultural identity, while the modernists focus more on the need for modernization. The debate often presents these goals as incompatible, but upon closer examination, they do not have to be. We can strive for cultural identity without rejecting scientific and technological advancements that can benefit everyone. Similarly, we can modernize our society without completely disconnecting from our cultural heritage. It is all about finding a balance that allows us to embrace progress while still honoring our roots. The cultural identity people can be celebrated without necessarily rejecting the opportunities of the modern world.

Through Asouzu's transcendent existential conversion, acknowledging complementarity approach is essential to achieving a balance between pursuing cultural identity and embracing modernization. By being aware of our choices and actively initiating them, we can ensure that our path of change is deliberate and aligned with our values and aligning them with the present reality of the world. It is about taking

ownership of our decisions and actively shaping our future. With this self-awareness, we can navigate the complexities of societal transformation while staying true to our cultural heritage. It is crucial to recognize that the African cultural landscape today is multifaceted and dynamic. Restricting African culture solely to its traditional or contemporary expressions would be unrealistic and limit our understanding of the contemporary African experience. As Kwame Nkrumah highlighted, Africa's cultural heritage consists of a triple strand: the traditional, the Islamic, and the Western. To truly grasp the richness of African culture, it is important for African philosophers to explore all aspects of these determinants. Hence, embracing this holistic approach, we can gain a deeper understanding of our cultural identity and the diverse influences that shape it. When it comes to defining African philosophy, we must consider the unique context and circumstances in which it is being explored. One crucial aspect of this context is Africa's rich heritage, consisting of three cultural strands that call for a meaningful synthesis. By acknowledging and embracing this diverse cultural tapestry, we can gain a deeper understanding of African philosophy and its multifaceted nature. It is through this synthesis that we can truly appreciate the richness and complexity of African thought. The second is that Africans are members of civilizations that have endured decades of foreign exploitation and dominance, and that are currently beset with "indigenous misgovernment" and, frequently, a dearth of justice and freedom. Thus, the third characteristic, which is that Africa is essentially a miserable place where people are seen as less valuable than they really are, is present. It is suggested here that there should be more items on this agenda than what analytic scholars and traditionalists are now pursuing. These engagements ought to be among them. In order to achieve a better quality of life, socio-political action should aim to produce rigorous and persistent idealisations of that form. So, it would appear that the goals of modern African philosophy would need to be wide-ranging and go beyond those of Universalists and traditionalists. Therefore, African philosophy as an organised, critical, and logical attempt to incorporate African realities into the digestive and classificatory rational system of philosophy in order to rationally fractionally distil the truths contained therein. The filtered truth is then downloaded or contextualised into different human situations.

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Religion, Ethnicity and National Integration

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Abstract

N^{at}ional integration has been the major concern of Nigeria prior to the time of her independence in 1960. Nigeria has been a major trade market for the early Europeans in the expansion of her trade networking in Africa. Nevertheless, the light of Nigeria's independence was brought about by nationalism owing to the principle of national integration is the process of building an institutional framework within which the various ethnic, religious and commercial groups can co-exist under a genuinely democratic and just social order. The main aim of this study is to investigate and propose solutions to the problems that have been brought by ethnic chauvinism in undermining the role of national integration for peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. The methods employed in the paper are the qualitative and quantitative research methods which were based on the historical analysis. It thus uses historical analysis which gives us the opportunity to contextualize the beliefs, practices, objects and symbolic forms in their social context noting their changes and transformation over the years. It was discovered that due to ethnic chauvinism, national integration has been jeopardized and even reduced both political and economic growth. It is therefore recommended that, every member of the society must embrace integration on the national level rather than localizing their interest in nation building and also shun every acts of evil such as corruption, injustice, dishonesty, killings, kidnapping that has in years past hindered peace and progress in Nigeria.

Keywords: religion, ethnic chauvinism, national integration

Introduction

BEFORE THE COLONIAL RULE, THERE WERE MULTIPLE ETHNIC GROUPS WITH complete systems of government each operating independently within what is to later be called Nigeria. These ethnic groups had a system of government and are situated in strategic locations such as the Fulani empire, Oyo empire, Benin People and among others.¹ Eventually, Nigeria became an independent nation in 1960 with the hope that Nigerians will be integrated with one another for the purposes of coexistence, administration, and development of the nation. But this seems to be difficult. Nigeria is a heterogeneous society which comprises Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo as the most dominant ethnic groups. Other smaller groups include the Fulani, Ijaw, Kanuri, Ibibio, Tiv, Ebera, Edo among others.²

Is-haq Oloyede identified ethnicity as the most threatening of the problems faced by the country, where there is dangerous and constant competition between the eth-

nic groups in the country for the scarce resources and allocation of political appointments including the appointment of vice chancellors of federal universities.³ Ethnicity is a phenomenon limited not only to the developing world but can also be found in developed countries. This is because many villages, bands and isolated communities due to one reason or the other come together to form a nation and maintained their cultural heritage.⁴ The practice of ethnic superiority in Nigeria has done more harm than good to the society. Ethnicity and religions are not in themselves negative and impediment. All societies of the world are knitted either in their emergence or in their consolidation, in multi-ethnic and multi-religious functionalities.⁵

Religion is a body of truths, laws and rites by which man is subordinated to the transcendent being.⁶ It is to be noted that religion in time past has been able to bring ethnicity down to the level of national integration. It played a prominent role in the running of the day-to-day activities of the states in the pre-colonial era. Priests were held in high esteemed and gave advice to the political head on the affairs of the state. For instance, the Gobirawa government was replaced by that of Fulanis headed by the Shehu Usman Danfodiyo who, through the use of Islamic religion, established and nurtured to maturity the Sokoto caliphate.⁷ With the help of religion, ethnicity was relegated to achieve the independence of 1960, this can be termed the “ancient unity” of Nigeria. The study aimed to examine the effects of ethnic chauvinism in Nigeria; proffer solutions to the damages caused by ethnic chauvinism; and examine the role of religion in bringing down ethnicity for national integration. Furthermore, data employed for the study were gathered from historical analysis obtained from libraries, bookstores, online journals, e-books, and websites among others have been categorized as secondary sources for this study. The historical data gotten grants the avenue to get useful information based on historical facts, assembled them to know the changes so far and the relevance in this contemporary age.

The Concept of Religion

Akiti Alamu opined that religion as a concept has been defined by gamut of scholars, yet no universal definition has been offered.⁸ Religion has been defined by people of different walks of life such as the moralists, sociologists, economists, psychologists among many others. However, the word religion is etymologically derived from the Latin word *religare* which means “to bind”, “to bring together”, “to come together”, “to exist side by side”, and “to fuse”.⁹ Going by the above definition of religion, it is therefore important to seek an audience of what religion is in the 21st century Nigerian society.

According to John Onimhawo, religion is the complex of belief and behaviour of men in the supernatural sphere and realities and in the dynamic linkage of supernatural with the natural.¹⁰ So be it Islam, Christianity and or Afrel, religion is a wider concept and only depicts two important factors which are man and God. Some scholars such as Idowu, Oshitelu, Karl Marx, Max Webber among many others gave a meaningful definition on the concept of religion. In the words of Patrick McNamara, he said,

‘try to define religion and you invite an argument.’¹¹ On this basis, it is sufficient for this study only to consider what religion means in a typical Nigerian society which may not be so in the general world-view but since as a Nigerian, the definition of religion must accommodate how religion is practiced and how it should be practiced among the people of Nigeria

Ethnicity

The word Ethnicity can be further broken into ethnic. Ethnic is from middle English word *ethnik*, from Latin *ethnicus* (“pagan”, “heathen”), from Ancient Greek *ethnikós*, meaning “of or for a nation, heathen”, from *éthnos*, “a company”, later “a people or nation, heathens.”¹² Ethnicity can be approached as a socially used cultural symbol of complementarity of “we are what they are not.”¹³ The phrase “we are what they are not” showcases that ethnicity is held in high esteemed similar to particularity, superiority and individuality as contrary to the principle of togetherness and equity which a society should embraced hence this has led to many havoc and unrest situations in the society.¹⁴ Ethnicity, according to Okwudiba Nnoli, may be regarded as a social phenomenon associated with interactions among members of different ethnic groups.¹⁵ Ethnic groups are social formations distinguished by communal character. Ethnicity refers to the shared social, cultural, and historical experiences, stemming from common national, ancestral, or regional backgrounds that make subgroups of a population different from one another. At the same time, the importance we attach to ethnicity illustrates that, in many ways a social construction, and our ethnic membership thus has important consequences for how we are treated.¹⁶

It is important to note that ethnicity in Nigeria context means above all, identification, belonging or associating to a particular group. Nigeria has over 250 ethnic groups, the most populous and politically influential being Hausa-Fulani 29%, Yoruba 21%, Igbo (Ibo) 18%, Ijaw 10%, Kanuri 4%, Ibibio 3.5%, Tiv 2.5% and so on. It also has over 500 languages, with English being the official language.¹⁷ These groups serve as a means of identifying an individual in Nigeria. By the virtue of nationality people from different groups can be called Nigerians but in a narrow sense of ethnicity, a Yoruba man is different from an Igbo or Hausa man. Akiti Alamu quoted Francis who was cited by Is-haq Olayode, remarks that ethnicity has cultural affinities that manifest in shared linguistic, religious, racial or other faces, which enable one community to differentiate itself from others.¹⁸

National Integration

The word integration is a French origin *intégration* and directly from Late Latin word *integrationem* which means “renewal, restoration” and also further means “act of bringing together the parts of a whole.”¹⁹ National integration is the awareness of a common identity among the citizens of a country. This implies that despite the heterogeneousness, the country is still united. Although we belong to different castes, religions and speak different languages, we recognize the fact that we are all one. It is

not just a national feeling, but the spirit which brings people of all dialects and beliefs together in a similar endeavor. It is the duty of every person as a citizen to oppose the forces and ideas that weaken national unity and integrity.²⁰

National integration, otherwise termed nation-building, national unity, national cohesion, national loyalty, or the national question “involves consensus on the limits of the political community and on the nature of the political regime.”²¹ In this process, members of the social system develop an escalating sequence of contact, cooperation, consensus and community.²²

National integration refers to the process of bringing diverse cultural and social groups into a single territorial unit and the establishment of a national unity.²³ The term presumes the existence of an ethnically plural society in which each group is characterized by its own language, or other self-conscious cultural qualities, which generate the problem of creating a sense of territorial nationality, which overshadows or eliminates subordinate parochial loyalties. One of the renowned attempts made by the government for national integration was the formation of National Youth Service Corps during the regime of General Yakubu Gowon.

Ethnic Chauvinism in Nigeria

Chauvinism is the unreasonable belief in the superiority or dominance of one's own group or people, who are seen as strong and virtuous, while others are considered weak, unworthy, or inferior. It can be described as a form of extreme patriotism and nationalism, a fervent faith in national excellence and glory.²⁴ Ethnic chauvinism is the sense of ethnic superiority and dominance, that is, it is a situation where by an ethnic group placed itself over other groups that exist in the society. It ranges from showing superiority in political, economic, social and military influences. Ethnic chauvinism is incompatible with public morality since, it involves the use of one's position for wrong ends, motivated by religious and ethnic considerations and calculated to promote tribal inclinations to the detriment of the wider and legitimate national interest and the principles of fair play and merit. Ethnic chauvinism has been a major player in the multiple conflicts post-independent Nigeria has witnessed.²⁵

In the time past, ethnic chauvinism has led to series of communal conflicts. The 1966 anti-Igbo pogrom was a series of massacres committed against Igbo people and other people of southern Nigerian origin living in northern Nigeria starting in May 1966 and reaching a peak after 29 September 1966. The majority of farmer–herder clashes have occurred between Muslim Fulani herdsmen and Christian peasants, exacerbating ethno-religious hostilities. This violence stems from the relationship between the Bororo Fulani and the Yoruba farmers.²⁶

Ethnic chauvinism has brought a lot of damage to the Nigeria society, leaving it in ruins and contempt. One of the effects of ethnic chauvinism to the Nigerian society is the unending power tussle among people of different ethnic groups have been the order of the day. Before years 2009 and 2010, Nigeria suffered a devastating and constitutional leadership crisis due to the illness and death of the erstwhile President,

Umar Musa Yar'adua. There was a disagreement between the Northern majority and the Southern minority over the choice of Goodluck Jonathan who was the then Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This was resolved by the constitutional backing of the national assembly citing the 'doctrine of necessity'.²⁷ It is no doubt that power tussle has eaten the mind of an average Nigerian where everyone wants his ethnic group to continue wielding the scepter of power not minding the thought of other groups. In recent past, during the reign of Umaru Yar'Adua, between 2007-2009, the Fulani began to agitate for recognition and political supremacy or dominance in Plateau State, and that led to unprecedented massacre. Plateau which was the home of peace for all residents became a theatre of war and cemetery of souls.²⁸

Killing on the rise has been another effect of chauvinism among the ethnic groups in Nigeria. The Igangan of Southern Oyo attack, the Ondo Church massacre; St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church, Owo massacre on Sunday June 5, 2021 among many others has shown the negative effects of ethnic chauvinism in the country. Favouritism in place of work and employment opportunities has also grown wider over the years due to the prevalence of superiority or dominance of an ethnic group. According to *Collins Dictionary*, favouritism is the showing of more kindness and indulgence to some person or persons than to others; act of being unfairly partial.²⁹ In most employment opportunities, preference is usually given to applicants who are from the same locality or ethnic group with the management or the interviewer. This has not only made those qualified for a job to be rejected but has also made it more difficult for people to help others since it has become normal in the circle. The numbers of unemployed graduates are overwhelming. These unemployed adolescents will engage in meaningless endeavours as a result, and some will be incited by little amounts of money to start fights and destabilize some neighbourhoods.³⁰

Mingling religion with ethnicity is the greatest of all effect. A critical consideration at the historical emergence of the Fulanis, shows that they established an aristocratic Islamic elite of scholars where they practiced the, "craft of religion and craft of politics," which consolidated their dominance, control and expansion of the frontier of their religion.³⁵ Kukah established the fact that the foundation stone of Hausa/Fulani hegemony in the Nigerian polity was the consolidation of Islam through the jihad of 1804 of Uthman Dan Fodio which legitimized the expansions of Islam.³¹

Possible Solutions to Ethnic Chauvinism in Nigeria

It is no longer news to Nigerians that ethnic chauvinism is a cankerworm that has eaten up the entirety of the country and with no doubt has led the country into a state of visionless, mind-closure and selfishness, a situation whereby every ethnic groups want to wield power and use it the way pleases to them. In recent times, people have been burgled in their homes, killed, kidnapped and even raped. In farms, farmers are no longer safe as well as their farmlands where large or small produce are ripped for harvest. Likewise, travelers from different part of the country are afraid of the onslaught of some of these herdsmen, kidnappers and banditry. All these continue to

generate more tension on Nigerians who no longer remain patriotic but rather divided in ideologies and actions. On these premises, the following are suggested solutions that are pragmatic in nature and of which if employed will make the experienced disaster of ethnic chauvinism end in the history of Nigeria:

Returning to God is the first step to be taken. Nigerians are not only divided by ethnicity but also by religions, and this has brought about many atrocities even in religious circle making it difficult for prayers to be answered by God. The number of mosques and churches and even shrines, and the number of times people worship in these places is enough to bring back Nigeria to a normalcy but instead reverse is the case. Returning to God means acknowledging His supremacy over everything and worshipping Him in truth and holiness. Virtually all political office holders claimed to be religious alas their political life is different from their religious life. There is no more fear of God, as the face of God is not sought in day to day matters affecting the country.

The establishment of local security groups such as vigilante, local hunters (*olode*), and *amotekun* will help in curbing the insurgents of attackers such as Fulani herdsmen on residents. The *Amotekun* interpreted as the leopard, was established by the South Western Nigeria in order to put an end to the vicious menace of some Fulani herdsmen –who are on their way to Gethsemane.⁴⁰ It is no doubt that these groups have been able to freeze some attacks in the region. Though, this group is still having recognition issue by the government as they were not allowed to function properly all over the country.

Nigerian government should ban open grazing. From time past, the Fulani herdsmen have been loitering all over the places without chaos, however, there is change in narration as they now remain an unbeatable force in the country as a result of the leniency they enjoyed from the government. It is time the Nigerian government enforced a law that prohibits open grazing which serves as a threat to lives and properties of her citizens. The implementation of this will no doubt raise opposition from Fulani herdsmen, however, with necessary implementation forces, the government can achieve it.

The issue of “Grazing Reserve Bill or Rural Grazing Area” (RUGA) should not be implemented or enforced on any community. As Alamu cited Adamu, RUGA will be an avenue where all Fulani will be allowed to own a land mapped out for them in all 36 states of Nigeria. This will not end there, as they will be allowed to live there with their families and establish emirates throughout the states.⁴¹ The need for conscious deliberations by lawmakers, stakeholders and security agents on the implementation of the RUGA policy in order to avert any unforeseen challenges it might brought in the nearest future.

Government must see it as her topmost priority to protect the lives of her citizens. This can also be ensured by upholding the principle of equality among the existing ethnic groups. Members of the country should be treated with care and equal before the law, a member or an ethnic group must not be treated to be equal to or above the

law. Bringing everyone under the law makes everyone to be responsible at least in instilling the fear of going against the law brings conscious and cautious living among members of the country.

Taking up security responsibilities is also a necessary step every Nigerians must take in order to curb the menace of ethnic chauvinism. No one should live a careless life, not taking the responsibility of protecting your life first in all situations. Avoid walking alone late at night, be careful of every journey you embarked on, and avoid being in a silent or abandoned areas and also do well to have contacts of security agencies such as Police force. These are necessary security measures that should be put in place by an individual hence protection of lives and properties is the responsibilities of all Nigerians. Like Kukah would say, “every religion has the seeds of its own redemption or destruction,”³² in similar vein, Alamu pointed that “every community has its seed of its redemption and destruction, therefore, no one has the monopoly of redemption and destruction, it is a matter of choice.”³³

National Integration as a course should be accredited for studies in Nigerian educational system from the basic educational level to the tertiary level. This can go a long way in understanding what national integration really entails and the importance; why it should be promoted in a heterogeneous society like Nigeria. Also in this, teachers from various ethnic groups should be allowed to take rotational classes for proper understanding of the concept.

The Role of Religion in Bridging Ethnicity for National Integration

National integration accepts ethnic and cultural pluralism. It is the process of building an institutional framework within which the various ethnic, religious and commercial groups can co-exist under a genuinely democratic and just social order.³⁴ Religion is the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find full expression and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself, known its maker and appreciated the true correspondence between the makers of itself. No man can live without religion.³⁵ Among other roles is the ability of religion to serve as checks and balances in the political landscape of Africa.³⁶ The following can be said to be the roles of religion in bringing down ethnicity for national integration:

Religion accommodates different people irrespective of their races or ethnic groups. Nigerians are very religious and the progress Nigeria can be undermined if the country embraces ethnic superiority and religious particularity which will no doubts bring about degradation in national interest of other groups. Different ethnic groups practiced Islam, Christianity, and even African Religion and there are adherents of these religions all over the country among various ethnic groups. In every religious gathering, there is always a possibility of counting different people from different ethnic groups; this implies that religion has brought them together under the same garb for worship purpose.

Religion promotes societal peace which no doubts contributes to the sustenance of national integration in Nigeria. There are some religions that have ethnical foun-

dations indicating how their adherents should behave in any given society. Josephine Akah observed that religion is a source and guarantor of individual and societal peace. Furthermore, religious ethics are the mere principles that guide religions and set the standard for what is and is not acceptable behavior.³⁷ This societal peace enables people to travel from one part of the country to another irrespective of their ethnicity without the fear of being kidnapped, killed and or beaten brutally. And also, it helps people from different part of the country to migrate to other locations for business, marriage and political engagements without the fear of being killed. Religion played the role of societal peace in its various teachings and moral values that are embedded in its beliefs and practices. David Francis noted that the importance of peace to societal harmony cannot be ignored. He further opined that peace is the prime value in all human societies, he also described peace as the most valuable public good, and yet the most elusive in our human society.³⁸

Religion plays a vital role in harmonizing different ethnic groups in Nigeria through inter- ethnic/religious marriage. Integration is made possible through inter-ethnic/religious marriage. One of the significance of marriage is that it brings people together, thereby bringing about harmony, peace, emotional and sexual satisfaction. It is one of the socio-cultural institutions that encourages and sustains public morality, for it controls man's sexual activities and wears man the garb of responsibility. In Nigeria, it is unheard of that a Muslim from the northern part of the country would allow his daughter marry a Christian who hails from the same northern part but that same Muslim will be very enthusiastic if his son marries a Christian. This situation is also replicated among the Christians. However, this situation is different among the Yoruba and few other tribes, where it is a common sight to see a family where members practice or profess different religions such as Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religion.³⁹

Various religious activities and teachings have made national integration possible among the people of Nigeria. A Christian worldview considers human beings as God's image bearers who need to be treated with honour and dignity since a human being is more than his/her body. It emphasizes love and brother/sisterhood between human beings. Furthermore, a transcendental Christian religious worldview believes that social relationships such as marriage, family, ethnicity, race and nationality are not the inventions of human beings so that they may fashion them according to their own whims and wishes, but they are institutions made by God.⁴⁰ According to Lemu, the establishment of Islamic education by the Muslims makes an ethnically groomed person with all the qualities that mankind should have as a human being. It is a system of education that inculcates discipline and character building of a Muslim youth to enable them identify, understand a proper way of life and fight against evil deeds.⁴¹ The primary purpose of Islamic education is to teach the unity of Allah and the idea of promoting the well-being of human beings. This is possible through the equal treatment and respect for individuals, irrespective of their race, colour, age, sex or nationality.⁴²

The formation of the Nigerian Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) by the Federal government has been a pragmatic step to reduce the influence of ethnic groups over separate religions movements. The Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) is a voluntary Association made up of fifty (50) Members, (25 Christians and 25 Muslims) formed by the representatives of the two principal Religions – that is Christianity and Islam in Nigeria, on the 11th day of September, 1999. The establishment was occasioned by the incessant ethno-religious crisis which punctuated the sociopolitical landscape of Nigeria as a country. NIREC, also known as a Council, is a permanent and independent Body established to provide Religious Leaders and Traditional Rulers with a variable forum to promote greater interaction and understating among the leadership and their followers as well as lay foundations for sustainable peace and religious harmony in the country.⁴³ Different leaders from different ethnic groups are important personalities in this council such as Dr Sunday Mbang, the then Christian Association President (CAN) who was an Igbo, His Eminence Alhaji Muhammadu Maccido, the then Sultan of Sokoto who was from the Hausa and currently, the executive Secretary Prof. Is-Haq Oloyede who is a Yoruba. All these show that ethnicity is being relegated in the face of religion in order to foster national integration in Nigeria.⁴⁴

Recommendations

The study has shown the effects of ethnic chauvinism and the role of religion. Hence from the study, the following are the recommendations given:

- Religion has failed the country in recent times because it has been used as agent of manipulation, perpetuation of evils, and propagation of ethnicity in Nigeria, hence, Religious leaders from every part of the country should stand up to correct this misuse among adherents.
- Nigerians must be ready to embrace integration on the national level rather than localizing their interest in nation building through inter-ethnic/religious marriage, organizing religion sensitized programmes and the use of media to echo and re-echo the essence of unity among Nigerians.
- Shun every acts of evil such as corruption, injustice, dishonesty, killings, kidnapping that has in years past hindered peace and progress in Nigeria.
- The law should be made supreme, no one should be treated above the law, and this will however, serves as deterrent for lawbreakers.
- The perpetrators should be put under surveillance, stern warnings and justice in order to stop them from perpetuating evils.
- The need for educating the Fulanis on the importance of human lives and the banned of walking with arms such as cutlass and guns are necessary to put a stop to this evil of ethnic superiority.

Conclusion

Nigeria as a country cannot be ethnicized because of its heterogeneity, hence the absolute need for oneness and togetherness in achieving progress despite the common challenges faced. It is inappropriate to blame the agitators of independence for bringing different ethnic groups under the name Nigeria to attain her freedom, this is be-

cause, man's engagement in life has been designed by the Great Designer –God, even before man was born. However, despite our diversities, Nigerians should see it as appropriate living together in peace and harmony for the success of the entire community. Chukwu opined that one of the strategies that must be pursued to ensure a far-reaching national integration and peaceful co-existence is to create a meeting point that would ensure and enhance integration between one ethnic nationality or tribe and another.⁵⁵ One of these strategies is to fall back to Religion, the true ideology of religion which denotes a binding force without racial discrimination.

Ethnic chauvinism has gone a lot way polluting the country with different atrocities such as kidnapping, killing or massacre, raping and so and among others have generated into animosity among different ethnic groups in Nigeria. There is now an avenue where retaliation on the lives lost are sought and vengeance now at the hands of a common man. This absolutely has led into lawlessness, a situation whereby the offenders become the victims and are set free. Ethnic superiority is nothing but a devil in disguise of human endeavour to champion recognition, acceptance and rulership.

Religious personages are important figures in the defeat of ethnic superiority, this is because, everyone is religiously inclined that is said to practice one religion or the other. This, however, should ensure that proper teachings especially the value for human lives and the need for peaceful living in the society and most particularly the fear of God should be taught in religions circle among adherents of different religions. In a Muslim community, there are different people from different ethnic groups, likewise in a Christian circle too. It is also of importance to say that among the African Religion worshippers, divinities in different localities may vary but they share a large number of divinities but with different names according to the localities.

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Christian Response to Terrorism and Insurgency in Nigeria In Light of John 16:1-4

Olugbemiga, Boluwatife David

Abstract

The church has been victimized since 2009 as evidenced by the majority attack on the church. The purposes of the paper are to describe the menaces of terrorism and insurgency on the Nigerian church as obtrusively overwhelming; identify the responses of the church over the years and recommend some panacea. Using hermeneutical and historical-critical methodologies, John 16:1-4 was considered analytically and its reality was underscored on the Nigerian church. Findings show that terrorism and insurgency attacks are one of the signs of the Christian eschatology; that the Nigerian church, especially in the northern parts, has been at the receiving end of these menaces than other religions since 2009; and that conveys the idea that the attacks are more politically- cum religiously-oriented. Also, the church's response over the years has been insufficient to overcome the menaces. The paper therefore concludes that terrorism and insurgency are part of the eschatological signs, as such the Nigerian church should not be caught unprepared neither complacent. It recommends among others that, the church should focus more on her discipleship mandate, develop self-defense mechanism, and engage in public theology.

Keywords: terrorism and insurgency, Christian response, discipleship, self-defense, public theology

Introduction

TERRORISM POSES A GLOBAL THREAT TO SECURITY, ECONOMY, RELIGION, AND EDUCATION, affecting international security services and the church. It involves criminal acts causing public fear or panic, used by both state and non-state actors with varying goals and constituencies.¹ The issue is complex and influenced by politics, philosophies, ideologies, races, tribes, and religion. Terrorism targets unarmed and defenseless citizens or adherents of different ideologies. Sadly, many recent terrorist attacks in Nigeria claim a theological reason, citing Islamic theology where Allah commands them to kill infidels (Qur'an 2:108, 217; 3:90; 4:89, 137; 5:54; 9:5, 11-12, 66; 16:6; 88:22-24). However, it is not the aim of this paper to indict any religion, because one of the strategies employed in terrorism and insurgency is camouflage.

Terrorist organizations like Al-Qaeda, Boko-Haram, Hezbollah, Al-Shabab, and the Islamic State (IS) are classified due to their hierarchical structures, financial ties, and ties to other militant groups. Since 2009, Boko-Haram has targeted government institutions, mosques, and more of churches in Nigeria. The church is count-

ing her losses as she expects the Parousia wherein Christ's final salvation shall be obtained and all losses shall be recovered. Despite international and local intervention, the group has not been completely overpowered, highlighting the ongoing struggle against terrorist groups, especially by the Nigerian church.² Christians are divided among the opinions of activism, pacifism, and selectivism against terrorism, but the paper advances selectivism. The church may have responded more qualitatively but for political affiliation, economic recession, lack of self-defense, abandonment of discipleship, and watery public theology.

The scope of this work is the church in northern Nigeria. An analytic exegesis of John 16:1-2 and historical-critical methods were employed to establish the claim that terrorism and insurgency are eschatological and therefore, the church should prepare for these times. The paper is significant in establishing that terrorism against the church is a sign of eschatology and advancing selectivism.

Conceptualizing the Nigerian Church

Nigerian Christians, more populated in the South, make up 45.9% of the country's population.³ However, their share is declining due to lower fertility rates compared to Muslims in the north.⁴ The Nigerian church dates back to the 15th century when Portuguese arrived, but failed to establish it due to their involvement in the slave trade. Roman Catholic missionaries tried again in the seventh century.⁵ Nigeria has the largest Christian population in Africa and the sixth largest worldwide, with over half of the total population as Christians.⁶ The Nigerian church traditions are spited among the Catholic, and Protestant. Denominations of the Protestant traditions are the Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, Pentecostals, Evangelicals, Reformed Churches, and African Indigenous Churches (AICs).⁷ Protestantism, particularly Pentecostals, Apostolic, and Evangelicals, is the major Christian population.

The leading Protestant churches in Nigeria include the Church of Nigeria of the Anglican Communion, African Church, Assemblies of God Church, Nigerian Baptist Convention, Evangelical societies and African Indigenous Churches (AICs). From the 1990s to 2000s, there was significant growth in Protestant churches, including the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Living Faith Church (LFC), Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), Deeper Christian Life Ministry (DCLM), Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), and the Watchman Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement (WCRM), Seventh-day Adventist (SDA), Mountain of Fire and Miracles (MFM), Christ Embassy, Common Wealth of Zion Assembly (COZA), and *Aladùrà* Church.⁸

The Roman Catholic Church has about 19 million members in Nigeria, with Archdioceses in Abuja, Onitsha, Jos, Benin City, Calabar, Ibadan, Lagos, and Owerri.⁹ The ecclesiastical provinces of the Anglican Church of Nigeria are Lagos, Ibadan, Ondo, Bendel, the Niger, Niger Delta, Owerri, Abuja, Kaduna and Jos. The Anglican Church of Nigeria has about 17 million members and is divided among tribes. The Evangelicals and Pentecostals have most of the headquarters in the south western parts of the country such as Lagos, Ogun and Oyo. Christians are mostly found in the South

East, South-south, Southwest, Middle-belt and Northern regions.¹⁰ The Yorùbás and northerners are almost evenly divided between Islam and Christianity.¹¹ There can be found some traces of syncretism in the Christianity in the western and southern parts of the country.

Furthermore, Nigerian pastors are rumored to be wealthy.¹² These churches have different doctrinal stands such as salvation in Jesus Christ, divine healing, eternal destination of man, missions and evangelism to nooks and crannies, and speaking in tongues as evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit. Many Pentecostals/AICs are flooded because they seek miracles to solve their economic, spiritual, family, or neighbourhood problems. Evangelical and neo-Pentecostal churches are populated because they present the gospel with the touch of modern panache. These church traditions are not without problems such as poor funding, lack of current data, insecurity, government policies, corruption, poor leadership skills and disunity among church leaders.¹³

Hermeneutics of John 16:1-4

Chapter 16 begins with a continuation of 15:18-25 about the world's hatred towards the disciples, contrasting with Jesus' love (15:11-17) for them. It also discusses the persecution they will face from enemies of the Gospel to the end of wanting to eliminate their witnesses (16:1-4).¹⁴

16:1: Ταῦτα λελάληκα ὑμῖν ἵνα μὴ σκανδαλισθῆτε; Jesus warns his disciples not to “stumble/fall away” (μὴ σκανδαλισθῆτε) when persecuted by the Jews and Roman enemies because of the gospel. The form of persecution will be their expulsion from Jewish synagogues and killing (vs. 2). This warning is aimed at preparing them to face persecution from the enemies of the gospel. The phrase “stumble/fall away” does not mean apostasy but rather abandoning the preaching of the good news, as a result of the obstacle on their paths and not for inner tendencies of apostasy.¹⁵ Σκανδαλισθῆτε speaks of abandoning the preaching of the doctrine of Christ, waxing cold in faith, allowing scandals to discourage them from the ministry. It played out truly, that as the disciples travel the empire, some of their brethren sent them away from the synagogues and killed them (cf. Matt. 10:17-18; Acts 9:1-2). They must not allow the persecution from their fellow Jews and Roman government kill their testimony of Jesus (cf. Acts 4:15-22).

16:2: Jesus warns his disciples about the imminent time (ἔρχεται ὥρα) of persecution, when they will be “expelled away” (ἀποσυναγώγουσ) from Jewish synagogues and killed (ἀποκτείνας ὑμᾶς) by the haters of Jesus' gospel. The hostile odium of the Jews against all other nations is second to none, and the disciples cannot escape the eventuality.¹⁶ The Jews motives for the murderous acts of the disciples are driven by the belief that they are serving God (δόξῃ λατρείαν προσφέρειν τῷ Θεῷ), according to the Law of Moses.¹⁷ This persecution manifested in the early church, with the death of Stephen (Acts 7:58-60), the killing of James (Acts 16:2-3), and many other disciples by the hand of Paul (Acts 26:9-11; Phil. 3:5-6). Also, in Acts 4:15, they must have

been summoned *out of the synagogue* to meet with the Sanhedrin, and soon, believers met in each other's houses (Acts 2:46; 12:12; 16:15; 1 Cor. 16:19 and Col. 4:15) for more than two centuries.¹⁸

16:3: ὅτι οὐκ ἔγνωσαν τὸν Πατέρα οὐδὲ ἐμέ; the disciples' persecution was due to the Jews and Romans' spiritual blindness (ἔγνωσαν; primarily, ignorance of spiritual reality) of the Person and work of Jesus and God the Father (cf. Jn. 14:7; Matt. 11:27; 1 Jn. 5:20). Again, in 16:4, Jesus reminds his disciples of the persecution ahead of them, by repeating the opening statement in verse 1, ἀλλὰ ταῦτα λελάληκα ὑμῖν, but now with a positive tone. He informed them that it was pertinent for him to divulge the instructions and warning to them because of his imminent departure.¹⁹ Very similar was his instructions to them that because his departure was imminent, they need to fast and acquire swords (Lk. 22:36, 38) to defend themselves spiritually and martially in the upcoming persecutions.

Terrorism and Insurgency in the Nigerian Church

John 16:1-4, a passage about the reaction of Jews and Romans to Christianity, is relevant to the Nigerian church due to the dastard acts of killings by Boko-Haram and ISWAP. Jesus warns the church to prepare for such attacks and to be aware of their tactics losses. The Nigerian churches are having a taste of this terrorism and insurgency attacks and below are some of the instances:

Boko Haram, also known as the *Jamā'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l-Jihād* (JAS), is a notorious terrorist organisation in Nigeria, with over 40,000 followers and influence in Chad, Niger, and Cameroon.²⁰ Founded in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf and led by Abubakar Shekau since 2009, the group has displaced over 2.3 million citizens and killed tens of thousands in bomb attacks or manslaughter.²¹ The Global Terrorism Index (GTI) has identified the group as a notorious terrorist group.²² Boko Haram is a terrorist group with an organizational structure, hierarchy, central commander, and operational tactics in Nigeria and Africa.²³ Its finances come from kidnapping, extortion, firearm trafficking, Hawala systems, mobile technologies, bank robberies, taxation, zakat contributions, roadblocks, livestock pilfering, and ties to other jihadist groups. Despite attempts by international and local security agencies, they have failed but failed technically and absolutely.²⁴

Since 2009, the group targeted churches in northern Nigeria, with 13-15 attacks per year. The group targets Christians, political leaders, and anti-terrorist Islamic preachers.²⁵ Numerous bombings have occurred in Nigeria, including attacks on churches during the Christmas Eve in 2010 at Jos, the 2011 bombing of St. Theresa Church in Madalla, the 2012 bombing near Christ Embassy Church in Suleija, Niger, the 2012 bombing of Church of Christ of Nigeria in Jos, and a suicide bombing in Bauchi in September 2012.²⁶ Also in 2012, 17 people were killed in Christ Apostolic Church, Yola, Adamawa state, and 20 other Igbos were massacred in Mubi. Two churches were destroyed in Bauchi state.²⁷ In 2014, 56 people were killed and churches burned in Chibok, including the Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN), popularly known as the

Church of the Brethren Nigeria, alongside Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) and DCLM among others during a fresh attack by insurgents.²⁸

GTI reports that Nigeria has experienced high terrorism and insurgency impacts, with Boko Haram's growth leading to 11,000 deaths in 2015. In 2022, the number of attacks increased by 27%, ranking Nigeria as the 9th and 16th most fatal terrorist attacked territories. In 2023, around 5,000 citizens died, which is a 33 per cent increase in death tolls between 2022 and 2023, making Nigeria one of the worst 10 territories, alongside Pakistan and Somalia since 2011.²⁹

Church's Response to Terrorism and Insurgency

Ekundayo detailed that the church in Nigeria has responded to Islamic fundamentalists through the following: first, implementing anti-terrorist measures, including pressure groups, surveillance information and youth vigilantes. In addition, the church uses communication strategies to condemn terrorism, by organizing press conferences, retreats, conventions, and sending of communiqués. Again, the church has also increased church planting, like the planting 23 missionary Dioceses by the Anglican Church of Nigeria in the insurgent northern region; and lastly, using Christian unity to protest against Islamic terrorism and Shari'a law in the northern parts of the country. This has allowed the church to continue spreading and demonstrate the strength of unity in the face of terrorism.³⁰

Furthermore, Ige emphasized the need for the church to redefine her theology on war, and throw its weight behind one of activism, pacifism or selectivism, that will achieve peace in a multi-religious society. He advocated for political participation to promote good fortunes, security, and religious freedom. He suggested sponsoring inter-religious cooperation bills and using the escapist method when dialogue fails. He emphasized the importance of listening to the Holy Spirit.³¹

Hindrances to Church's Victory over Terrorism and Insurgency

The Nigerian church could have done more in forestalling further attacks and overcoming terrorism and insurgency but some factors have been inhibiting her progress, such as political affiliation of the church, economic recession in the church, lack of self-defense mechanism, abandonment of discipleship programme, and watery public theology. This section is the researcher's own opinion based on observation and gap found in literatures in addressing terrorism and insurgency.

Political affiliation of the church

The church's association with secular politics in Nigeria hinders its civil rights of speaking and protesting against terrorism and insurgency, as clergymen often engage in corruption, embezzle funds, and sponsor political candidates. This is evident in the ovation that greeted the Labour Party presidential candidate Peter Obi at the Dunamis International Gospel Center (DIGC) during the church's mid-year praise concert in 2022.³² Also, the pastor, Paul Enenche had earlier shown public supports for

Obi like posting a photo on his X handle showing the duo with Bishop David Oyedepo of LFC, with a message conveying political leanings: "...here is the way to go. #Elections2023."³³ This practice influences Nigerians' political franchise, with church leaders and members promoting these candidates as "God's candidates" to liberate the country from insecurities. However, the party games of the All Progressive Congress (APC) outran the former. It is noteworthy that the church and state were separated from the outset, and the church had always exercised spiritual and not political power in the fulfillment of her missions; with spiritual power, they quenched the threats against the church.

Economic recession in the church

In addition, the church faces economic recession, with many members' unemployed and underpaid, in this inflated- and consumerism-economy;³⁴ thus, limiting their financial power to purchase arms, ammunition, and train security staff. Most denominations, except for a few Pentecostal churches, have shifted their financial power for missionary purposes, to materialistic gospel, leaving the rest for administrative running. The early church economy was communal,³⁵ with wealth distributed to the poor (Acts 4:32-35), and the apostolic doctrines and ministries emphasised the church's possession of spiritual over financial power (Acts 3:6). Same can be said of most denominations today that lack the financial resources to address these issues.

Absence of self-defense mechanism

Again, the church, originally a spiritual organisation, aims to foster a relationship between man and God. However, some denominations, like DIGC, LFCW, and RCCG, have incorporated Nehemiah's self-defense mechanism (Neh. 4:14-18) into their church life, as it is a biblical, inalienable right.³⁶ Psalms 144:1 and Exodus 22:3 also establish that Israelites learnt war tactics and did fight against plunderers and invaders both in national and individual case scenarios. In the New Testament, the words: fully armed, guard, sword, and kept watch, used in Matthew 24:43; Luke 11:21; 22:36, and 38 are in the context of self-defense to protect one's possessions, life, and ensure safety in travels.³⁷ However, some denominations lack this strategy, primarily responding to terrorism and insurgency through flight rather than fight, more so that they lack well-equipped security personnel. Of the three views to self-defense, not to attack (activism), nor to be victimised (passivism), but should defend herself for a good course (selectivism).

Abandonment of discipleship programme

Another reason the Nigerian church is struggling against terrorism and insurgency is due to its neglect of discipleship, the great commission (Matthew 28:19-20.). This neglect has led to a shift from evangelistic gospel to the materialistic gospel, focusing on worldly desires and material wealth (Lk 12:15).³⁸ The focus on materialistic gospel has led to potential believers that could have been evangelised and disciplined are becom-

ing influenced by jihadists and political gladiators, who use their idleness or ignorance to cause destruction. The church's focus on evangelism has been the best it has done, but the church must prioritise discipleship for its success.

Watery public theology

Finally, Christianity is practiced more as a personal devotion than a religion that should be influencing the larger society in terms of policy making, on different societal issues. Nigerian Christians focus on Bible study, prayer meetings, and Sunday schools, making the church irrelevant in market places (Matt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-18), meanwhile, adherents of Islam and Traditional African Religions influence public spaces, such as military, business, education, and politics, because they are equipped for it by the provisions of their religion. The excuses made over the years are summarised in these axioms: "politics is a dirty game", and believers are not "of this world" (Jn 17:14, 16). These excuses could have been dealt with if biblical discipleship and secularism of Christian theology are advanced and adhered to *prima facie*. The researcher suggests that the Nigerian church, despite its secular nature in that it exists in a secular society, her members are primarily members of the society, and the church becomes nonfunctional if she abdicates her societal functions; must therefore adapt its theological standpoints to the public space to avoid becoming a breeding ground for terrorism and insurgency attacks.

Conclusion

The paper concludes that terrorism and insurgency are part of the eschatological signs in John 16:1-4, and the Nigerian church cannot but share in the rippling effects. This awareness should spur the Nigerian church to develop selectivism approach to the rising trends. All media by which the Nigerian church contributed to the spread of terrorism and insurgency should be blocked. The researcher suggests Nigerian church should prioritize discipleship over materialistic gospel, develop self-defense mechanisms, be faithful to discipleship, and engage in public theology to combat terrorism and insurgency attacks, while maintaining transparency with political leaders.

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A Psychotheological Exploration of Forgiveness as a Recipe for Peace

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Abstract

Psychology of forgiveness is an intraindividual, prosocial change towards a perceived transgressor within a specific intrapersonal and interpersonal context. On the other hand, forgiveness from a theological perspective is divine which corroborates the popular slogan, "to err is human, to forgive divine." Some scholarly works isolate the psychological and theological dimensions of forgiveness as means of achieving interpersonal peace, but the integration of both dimensions in the management of intrapersonal and interpersonal peaceful relationships has not been judiciously engaged. Therefore, this study integrates the psychological and theological dimensions of forgiveness, giving room for a psychotheological assessment and the realisation of peace that guarantees healthy personal and communal relationships. The study utilises the psychology of forgiveness theory and secondary data gathered through published works are descriptively analysed. The study observes that, it is more effective to combine spiritual and psychosomatic therapy of forgiveness in achieving a peaceful environment for intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships towards a healthy life and community. There must be an acknowledgement of human propensity to hurt one another in daily interactions and the psychotheological management of the outcome matters in the attainment of peace. Thus, for man to enjoy holistic wellness and validity in his trichotomous spheres (spirit, soul, and body), he must be at peace with himself, his neighbours, and God.

Keywords: healing, peace, psychology of forgiveness, psychotheology, psychotherapy

Introduction

Theological anthropology explores the perspective of human nature and existence from the standpoint of various religious traditions, emphasising the concept of humans being created in the image of a divine being, such as the *imago Dei* (image of God) in the Christian tradition. A proper understanding of humanity requires studying its physical and extra-physical components, which necessitates the irreplaceable role of theology. From theological perspective, the trichotomy view, examines humanity as a composite of spirit, soul and body (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Simply put, a person is a spirit (an incorporeal and eternal nature that connects with the spiritual realm); he has a soul (comprising of the intellect, will, and emotion which enable engagement with the intellectual and emotional realms); and, he lives in a body (the material aspect that allows interaction with the physical realm).¹

The primary goal of psychology is to understand, predict, and influence human behaviour and mental processes. Psychologists attempt this by studying human motivation,² cognition, and behaviour.³ The Bible also remains the sacred book that guides the beliefs and conduct of Christians and the basis for Christian theology; hence, this

study advances an aspect of healing from these two disciplinary angles (i.e. psychology and Christian theology). Psychotheology is an interdisciplinary focus examining the connection of spiritual practices, beliefs, and human psychological processes. It draws on concepts from both psychology and theology. This integration aims to create a more holistic approach to mental and spiritual health by examining how religious conceptions might affect psychological well-being and vice versa. Although the integration of psychology and theology is complex and has met with almost complete distrust because of their divergent worldviews,⁴ an attempt to synthesise them in this study is based on their agreement on forgiveness.

Scholars like Powlison see an interconnectedness between psychology and biblical counselling,⁵ however, others like Asamoah,⁶ Adams,⁷ and MacArthur⁸ criticise the integration of psychology and theology (psychotheology). They perceive the concept as counter to traditional biblical teachings and for potentially reducing the concept of God to a mere psychological construct, thus, emphasising the sufficiency of the Bible. While numerous works examine the psychological and theological dimensions of forgiveness separately, the literature integrating these aspects for a comprehensive psychotheological assessment is still developing. This study contributes to this growing field by adopting an integrative approach that combines psychological theories of forgiveness with theological insights. Utilising secondary data gathered from published works, the study conducts a descriptive analysis to explore the holistic benefits of forgiveness. The work affirms that emotional and spiritual healing are attainable through the therapeutic process of forgiveness. This process emphasises the significant interplay between spirituality and psychosomatic health, creating a peaceful environment that fosters healthy interpersonal, intrapersonal, and divine relationships.

Psychology of Forgiveness

The psychology of forgiveness is indeed a relatively young field within psychological research, but its roots can be traced back more definitively to the 1980s and 1990s. During these periods, researchers began to systematically study forgiveness as a psychological construct, exploring its definitions, processes, and impacts on mental health and well-being. Researchers like Enright,⁹ Worthington Jr.,¹⁰ and others in their category began to develop theoretical frameworks and conduct empirical studies on forgiveness, marking the formal beginning of the psychology of forgiveness as a distinct area of study. McCullough and Witvliet uncover a potential link between emotional adjustment and forgiveness, marking the initial steps towards understanding forgiveness as a significant psychological construct.¹¹

Forgiveness which connotes letting go of bitterness or rage is essential for the emotional health of people who have been harmed. However, in the thoughts of Luskin, forgiveness does not imply reconciliation or tolerance.¹² It is not necessary to tolerate the same damaging behaviours from an offender or get back into the same relationship with them. Forgiveness is not an attempt to forget the painful effects of de-

structive behaviour but a demonstration of grace when the offended is fully aware of the havoc and still chooses to let go. McCullough, Pargament, and Thoresen play a pivotal role in defining and expanding the understanding of forgiveness within psychological literature.¹³ They describe forgiveness as having a dual character – interpersonal and intrapersonal; thereby classifying it as a psychosocial construct. McCullough, Pargament, and Thoresen further define forgiveness as “an intraindividual, prosocial change towards a perceived transgressor within a specific interpersonal context.”¹⁴ This nuanced definition highlights the complexity of forgiveness, emphasising its internal and external dimensions.

A critical question arising from the above definitions is whether forgiveness is a developmental process or intentionality is indispensable to its manifestation. This inquiry delves into the conceptual progression of forgiveness, suggesting that it may evolve or require a deliberate decision by the individual to forgive. The theory of the psychology of forgiveness explores various facets of forgiveness, including its association with religion and spirituality, its impact on physical and mental health, and its influence on counselling, psychotherapy, and end-of-life care. One of the core tenets of this theory is the notion that forgiveness primarily involves a change within the forgiver.¹⁵ When someone forgives a transgressor, the forgiver transforms thoughts, feelings, motivations, or behaviours. This internal change is crucial to the process of forgiveness and underscores its significance as a personal and psychological journey. By focusing on the forgiver’s internal experience, the psychology of forgiveness highlights the potential for personal growth and healing that forgiveness can facilitate.¹⁶

Furthermore, the interplay between forgiveness and mental health is a critical area of investigation within the field of psychology. Friedberg, Suchday, and Shelov affirm that forgiveness can have profound positive effects on mental health, including reductions in anxiety, depression, and stress. Forgiveness is also associated with improved physical health outcomes, such as lower blood pressure and cardiovascular health.¹⁷ These findings underscore the therapeutic potential of forgiveness, suggesting that fostering forgiveness can be a valuable component of psychological and physical well-being. In addition to its health benefits, the psychology of forgiveness examines the role of religion and spirituality in the forgiveness process.¹⁸ The Christian religious and spiritual traditions emphasise the importance of forgiveness, providing frameworks and practices that support individuals in their journey towards forgiving others. This connection between spirituality and forgiveness can offer additional resources and support for those seeking forgiveness, enhancing the effectiveness of forgiveness interventions.¹⁹

Thus, the psychology of forgiveness is a multifaceted field investigating the intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of forgiveness, its developmental trajectory, and its profound impact on spiritual, mental and physical health. By emphasising the internal changes experienced by the forgiver, this area of study highlights the potential for personal transformation and healing, making forgiveness a powerful tool for psychological and spiritual wellbeing and growth. This informs the psychotheological

approach, which recognises the divine character of forgiveness in the context of man-man and God-man relationships.²⁰

Psychotheology and the Values of Forgiveness

A psychotheological integration can be complex regarding forgiveness, a complicated phenomenon including social, spiritual, cognitive, and emotional aspects of human experience. According to Denton, forgiveness can be used as a coping technique that facilitates escaping shame and guilt while dealing with unresolved emotional events.²¹ Unfortunately, forgiveness as a tool for mental and spiritual health has been lightly handled with deliberate acts of injury, which should not be the case. Alford accentuates that forgiveness must be considered as a psychological capability and a normative ideal if it is to be taken seriously.²² From a theological perspective, it also seeks to fulfil the admonition of the Bible that believers in Christ must forgive others their trespasses.

This aspect of the study however discusses the incredible values of forgiveness from a psychotheological perspective as it examines the interpersonal, intrapersonal and intercessional natures of forgiveness in the light of conflict, communication and character respectively.

Forgiveness and interpersonal conflict

The interpersonal nature of forgiveness is essential for understanding interpersonal conflict as it underscores forgiveness as an indispensable tool for achieving peace and healing. Obiefuna avows that interpersonal conflicts often carry psychological and social dimensions, which can act as motivating or opposing forces in forgiveness.²³ These conflicts, frequently marked by violence and interpersonal injuries, contribute to chronic issues in psychological functioning and can have long-lasting detrimental effects on individuals' mental health. The psychological dimension of interpersonal conflict pertains to the individuals' internal, emotional and cognitive responses. This includes anger, resentment, and hurt from being wronged or harmed. These negative emotions can lead to psychological distress, such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).²⁴ Forgiveness, however, provides a pathway for individuals to release these burdensome emotions and achieve emotional healing. By letting go of resentment and choosing to forgive, individuals can experience a reduction in psychological distress, which promotes overall mental well-being.

The social dimension of interpersonal conflict involves the relational dynamics between individuals. Conflicts can strain relationships, erode trust, and foster a hostile environment. Forgiveness plays a crucial role in repairing and restoring these damaged relationships. It encourages reconciliation, fosters empathy, and rebuilds trust between parties. When individuals forgive, they heal themselves and contribute to healing their relationships, promoting social harmony and cohesion. Violence and interpersonal injuries are pervasive issues that can have profound psychological impacts. These experiences often result in trauma, which can manifest as chronic psy-

chological issues. Akhtar and Barlow corroborate that there has been a growing emphasis on the benefits of forgiveness therapy for individuals who have experienced various forms of trauma, violence or hurt in recent years.²⁵

Forgiveness therapy involves guiding individuals through forgiving those who have wronged them. This therapeutic approach helps individuals to understand the nature of their interpersonal conflicts, process their emotions, and cultivate a forgiving mindset. By doing so, forgiveness therapy facilitates emotional release, reduces psychological distress, and enhances overall mental health. It also empowers individuals to move forward from their traumatic experiences with renewed peace and healing.²⁶ Therefore, the interpersonal character of forgiveness highlights its role in conflict resolution and peace-building. In contexts where interpersonal conflicts are prevalent, such as in communities affected by violence or in relationships marked by ongoing disputes, forgiveness can be a powerful tool for reconciliation. It enables individuals to break the cycle of retaliation and animosity, fostering a culture of understanding and compassion. This, in turn, contributes to a more peaceful and harmonious society.

Forgiveness and intrapersonal communication

Often, researchers focus on forgiving others as a coping mechanism for peace, healing and longevity of life. At the same time, less attention is paid to the study of intrapersonal peace emanating from forgiving oneself.²⁷ Man, being a tripartite being, can have an intrapersonal conflict. This may result from unsatisfied cravings, consequential decisions, or regret over wrongs done to oneself consciously or unconsciously. Self-forgiveness is a readiness to let go of self-loathing in the face of admitted wrongdoing while cultivating self-love, compassion, and generosity. Ayantayo supports the idea that “inner happiness is a creation of self, for self and the benefit of self.”²⁸ Although, humanly speaking, it might be challenging to forgive. If one finds it easy to forgive, it can be difficult to forget due to the detrimental psychological imprint of the ill actions. Even so, the offended must learn to let go because bringing the pain of the past to constant remembrance is like dressing an incurable wound, which may cause spiritual, physical and psychological damage to the health of the concerned victim. It is impossible for someone suffering from intrapersonal conflict to manage interpersonal relationships with an open mind because such lacks an internal process.²⁹

Furthermore, personality development which permits daily intrapersonal interactions can also lead to intrapersonal conflicts. Freud's psychoanalytic theory outlines three interactive hypothetical elements of human personality development (psychic apparatus): Id, Superego and Ego, which operate at different domains of the human mind - the conscious, sub-conscious and unconscious levels from childhood to adulthood.³⁰ The id is the instinctive part of the human mind that longs to satisfy its desire at all costs, even when it occurs to the mind. It is impulsive and always pleasure-seeking.³¹ For instance, when one is famished, the id does not care how the food will come; all that it is concerned about is to have something to eat at that instant.

The superego is the sphere of moral justification that aids in making the right decision on the action to be taken as mooted by one's id. This operates at a conscious level through the engagement of the moral guidance or training imbibed from parents or the society with which a person interplays. This is also the domain where the conscience either approves or disapproves the move of an action. The ego is the judicial seat of the mind that judges the reality of every idea or impression and mediates the conflict between the id and superego for a balanced and satisfactory outcome.

Cherry states that when discussing the id, superego, and ego, it is essential to remember that these are not separate entities with clearly defined boundaries.³² These aspects are dynamic and constantly interact simultaneously to influence an individual's overall personality and behaviour. Nevertheless, this Freudian personality theory and other psychologists are not without lacunae, which showcases the limitation of science in understanding man as a complex entity. Self-awareness, perception, and expectations must be considered. Thus, resolving intrapersonal conflict and forgiving oneself of some irreversible damages by taking responsibility for the results emanating from one's inordinate actions is a self-therapy that enhances psychosocial engagements, according to Moore.³³ Anyone without a peaceful intrapersonal dialogue with his spirit, soul, and body can never be a man or woman of peace in society.³⁴

Forgiveness and its intercessional character

Intercessional forgiveness means the act of acquiring forgiveness on behalf of others through religious rituals. However, the intercessional character of forgiveness as adopted in this work is limited to Christian theology and the mediatory work of Jesus Christ in the restoration of peace between God and humans,³⁵ a spiritual relationship that must be kept cordial. The acceptance of the Lordship of Jesus Christ firstly informs being at peace with God by obtaining forgiveness of sins and forsaking them, having been justified by faith through His atoning work³⁶ (Romans 3:22, 5:1-2; Colossians 2:14).

By extension, Watts submits that the Judaeo-Christian tradition situates human forgiveness in the context of divine forgiveness.³⁷ This spiritual relationship positively affects man-man relational affairs as the Bible encourages following peace with all men without which no one shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). It also encapsulates the interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships due to its vertical and horizontal nature. Chamburuka and Van Eck agree that Jesus Christ teaches His disciples to forgive others their trespasses so that they can obtain God's forgiveness as well (Matthew 6:12, 15).³⁸ In addition, Jesus Christ didactically used the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18:21-35 to emphasise the imperative of forgiveness and forewarned the wrath of God on the unforgiving. In response to Peter's question on how often he should forgive his offender, Jesus Christ replied seventy times seven as against the Jewish traditional three times limit deduced from Amos 1:6. Kim demonstrates that forgiveness as an embodied way of life is a hermeneutical key to *theosis* which is man's transformative participation in God's life.³⁹ Exemplifying forgiveness

is to partake in the will and nature of God, who desires mercy, love, and peaceful co-existence. Reflecting and distilling from the works of Freud and Rosenzweig, Santner underscores that the ethics at the core of both psychoanalysis and the Judeo-Christian traditions depict answerability to one's neighbour with an unconscious which is at the heart of man's aliveness to the world around him. He calls this the psychotheology of everyday life.⁴⁰

Moreover, one way to think of forgiveness for victims on their recovery journey is as a therapeutic tool. Louw perceives it as an offender's release (surrender) at God's mercy and the unqualified acceptance of God's favour via faith.⁴¹ Denton explains the fundamentals of Christian forgiveness, emphasising that it ends the victim's cycle of resentment that links them to the injuries of the past rather than denying their suffering or changing the past.⁴² Enright⁴³ and Worthington⁴⁴ observe that, while the faith in Jesus Christ, according to the Christian faith, can redeem guilt and shame, forgiveness can help quell feelings of guilt and humiliation, which in turn can help quell feelings of blame, rage, bitterness, and the desire for vengeance.⁴⁵ This shows that there is a relationship between spirituality and post-traumatic growth that forgiveness helps to mediate.⁴⁶ Forgiveness, therefore, can be seen as a means to divine healing.

Therefore, it is implied that man, being a composite of spirit, soul, and body, could become sick in these three spheres, which only theology can help to tackle adequately. Asaju opines that medicine is still baffled about man's innate structure, the human seed's miracle, the complexities of the workings of the human body sciences, and many unanswered questions about several incurable diseases that defy the superior claims of science and technology.⁴⁷ However, God had been involved in medicine from the outset of man's creation. He continuously claims responsibility for man's general preventive and curative healthcare – "I am the Lord that heals you" (Exodus 15:26). By the preceding, it could be deduced that man's health insurance and prosperity are part of God's plan for his existence. This is why Christianity teaches that sin against God (the Great Physician) is a sickness which can lead to death, and unforgiveness is equally a sin.

Forgiveness as a Psychotheological Recipe for Peace

Psychology and theology according to Sandage and Brown, consist of descriptive and prescriptive orientations respectively. While psychology emphasises the descriptive, establishing how things are, theology prescribes how things should be.⁴⁸ In the words of Rainer, secular psychologists operate on a biopsychosocial model of human development and behaviour. This model proposes that humans develop and operate according to biological, psychological and social influences.⁴⁹ One of the positions of psychologists is that man is a product of biology and environment. Although Christianity and psychology have some things in common, they both state that human actions are the product of inner processes. However, in describing what those processes are and how to change them, Christianity and psychology take the opposite approach.⁵⁰ The contribution of Klubnik has it that, psychological theories and tech-

niques are merely human solutions to spiritual problems and tend to mask the genuine issues.⁵¹ Klubnik's position thus reiterates that there is a danger in accepting human rather than supernatural methods of dealing with problems in life. However, a fusion of psychological and theological approaches balances humans' vertical and horizontal relationships in the context of forgiveness.,

Invariably, healing, which means becoming healthy again, teaches to appreciate the state of being well in all ramifications much better. The importance of being healthy and in the right frame of mind justifies the motto "health is wealth." This asserts that the accurate measure of wealth is in good health not in lucre. Unforgiveness fragments the life of the one harbouring it and aggravates spiritual and emotional sicknesses. Because the Bible teaches that the body is the temple of God, man may lose God's presence should he allow unforgiveness to overtake him. Congruently, healing becomes necessary when an injury or dysfunction occurs in any human tri-chotomic sphere (spirit, soul and body).

It has become apparent that forgiveness proceeds at different levels, that is, it can be personal and relational.⁵² According to Watts, religious teachings about forgiveness can be more fruitful and effective if it takes account of its psychological realities. This is because the religious and psychological perspectives to forgiveness are complementary.⁵³ Therefore, adopting a Psychotheological therapy of forgiveness is to harness the benefits of psychology and theology. Dealing with forgiveness from theological and psychological perspectives entails an emphasis on the diversity of each of the disciplines⁵⁴ and then find a common ground for their applicability and integration.⁵⁵

Conclusion

This study acknowledges forgiveness from an integrated psychotheological lens, and as a powerful tool for achieving peace and healing. As a psychological and theological construct, forgiveness has profound implications for mental and spiritual well-being. Psychologically, forgiveness involves changing thoughts, feelings, motivations, or behaviours toward a transgressor, reducing negative emotions such as anger and resentment and fostering positive emotions like empathy and compassion. Theologically, forgiveness is a fundamental aspect of many religious traditions, offering a pathway to spiritual renewal and reconciliation with the divine. By integrating these dimensions, the study has been able to underscore the benefits of forgiveness and how it promotes psychological health by alleviating emotional distress, as well as spiritual well-being by aligning individuals with their spiritual beliefs and practices. This integrated approach to forgiveness provides a more holistic understanding of its therapeutic potential, contributing to a healthier life and community.

It also concretises the fact that there is no way a person interplays with his environment without being hurt for one reason or another; hence, the need to foster peaceful coexistence and to also act in a God-like (divine) way when it comes to the subject of forgiveness (i.e. forgive as God forgives). To enjoy well-

ness and validity, a man must experience holistic peace and healing in his tri-chotomic spheres. Forbearance, therefore, is a crucial factor in overlooking the faults of others, and forgiving ahead of offences promotes good health, peace and healing for longevity of life.

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