



Social Practices and Teachings of the Church



**PRIESTS
PEACE & JUSTICE
INITIATIVE [PPJ]**

The Social Arm of Palace of Priests Assembly PPA

THE JOHN D. AND CATHERINE T.
MACARTHUR
FOUNDATION



Social Practices and Teachings of the Church



**PRIESTS
PEACE & JUSTICE
INITIATIVE (PPJ)**



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A research work that is meant just for internal consumption is a product of intense work that demands a lot of rigour, hours of painstaking search for not just topical but relevant materials, time given to poring over countless pages of documents, attention to details and long and laborious and finally sifting and scrutinising the end product. Where the research is for external consumption it is doubly harder to undertake and where it involves matters of Christianity and corruption it becomes a task of enormous complexity with possibility for explosive verbal exchanges.

These are two topics for which anyone who has reached the age of knowledge believe he or she has an opinion. Both are known world over to be capable of generating intense passion during discussion. Although corruption is as old as mankind, there is hardly a definition that captures it rather there are acts that constitutes corruption and the debate is still on-going. That is one with a basis for endless argument. However, if corruption defies a readily acceptable definition, there is no doubting the consequences, for they have become part of our daily existence in the abysmal failure of service deliveries in governance, health care, education, housing and has contributed to the increase in poverty, unemployment, insecurity and underdevelopment.

On the other hand, Christianity across the world causes emotions to run high amongst the several adherents. The issues could be as mundane as the days of the week like Sabbath and Sunday, or the calendar for the celebration of Christmas. The doctrinal differences which should be a less divisive issues among people whose foundation is still setting groups against one another while at the deeper level of canons, as the denominations proliferate so the tension is escalating and the gulf between the children of Christ is getting wider.

We are eternally grateful to God for providing the knowledge, understanding and wisdom for the idea of using the Pentecostal perspective in the fight against corruption Nigeria which eventually birthed the campaign of Mobilising Christians against Corruption (MOCAC). There are so many people who contributed to what became the nationwide movement which grew out of this idea. We acknowledge the invaluable role played by Dr. Otive Igbuzor, General Overseer of Palace of Priests Assembly, Dr. Ejiro Otive-Igbuzor, Assistant General Overseer of Palace of Priests Assembly who worked behind to ensure that the mobilization campaign was successful.

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FOREWARD

Christianity is over 2,000 years and has a rich history. In the first three centuries, church growth was accelerated by the persecution of the church. In the fourth century, Christianity became the official Roman religionⁱ. In the seventh century, Islam was founded. By the tenth century, 50 percent of former Christian areas were under Islam. By the 14th century, John Wycliffe translated the Bible into English and emphasized the sole authority of the scriptures and the priesthood of all believers. In the 16th century, the years of reformation promoted by Martin Luther King and others emphasized justification by faith and priesthood of all believers. The protestant reformation was anchored on three key issues:

1. The sole authority of the scriptures,
2. Justification by faith and
3. Priesthood of all believers.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the emphasis was on revival, missions and holiness. In the 20th century, the emphasis was on Pentecostalism- Holy Ghost baptism and empowerment. With the rise of Pentecostalism, there was emphasis on material prosperity, loyalty to the nation state and individualism and social dimension of the church decreased immensely. This has led to the public perception today that is a challenge to all true Pentecostals. This public perception has led to the non-recognition of Pentecostal Charismatic social contribution of goods and services valued at more than 2.3 billion US dollars and with more than 250 million people in over 100 countries since 1980ⁱⁱ. The perception is that Pentecostals are only interested in prosperity and not concerned about social issues in society.

The Pentecostal Movement is characterised by emphasis on baptism of the Holy Spirit and the manifestation of the gifts of the spirit. Christian Historians have characterised the Pentecostal movement into three wavesⁱⁱⁱ:

1. First wave beginning in 1901 with a rediscovery of and a new experience of the supernatural with a powerful and energising ministry of the Holy spirit.
2. Second wave starting in the mainline churches in 1960 with Christians affiliated to non Pentecostal denominations (Anglicans, Protestants, Catholic, Orthodox) experiencing baptism in the Holy Spirit.
3. Third wave beginning in 1980 with evangelicals and other Christians receiving baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Scholars have pointed out that between Pentecost in Acts Chapter 2 in AD 100 and 1901 when the first wave started is 1,800 years. Some have argued that the 1,800-year period can be regarded as spiritually dead. But others point out that there was a range of spirit activity during this period ranging from hundreds of cases of prophesy to discernment of spirits and divine healing^{iv}.

The Pentecostal movement has grown from a handful of believers in the early twentieth century to a global movement now numbering over 600 million people, and those who embrace the Holy Spirit and His gifts are now the fastest growing religious group in the world^v.

It is continuing to grow especially in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Today, the countries with the highest number of Pentecostals is in the global south as can be seen from the table below:

| Country | Pentecostals 1910 | Country | Pentecostals 2010 |
|---------------------|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| South Africa | 989,000 | China | 95,316,000 |
| Nigeria | 111,000 | Brazil | 82,000,000 |
| USA | 53,400 | USA | 76,000,000 |
| Germany | 22,000 | Nigeria | 43,920,000 |
| Trinidad and Tobago | 11,800 | India | 30,000,000 |
| China | 2,100 | Philippines | 27,000,000 |
| India | 2,000 | South Africa | 22,150,000 |
| France | 1,000 | D.R. Congo | 21,000,000 |
| Canada | 1,000 | Mexico | 14,800,000 |
| North Korea | 1,000 | Colombia | 14,507,000 |

Source: World Christian Database, Brill, June, 2009 (Cited in Synan, V (Ed) (2011), Spirit Empowered Christianity in the 21st Century.

As shown in the table above, the highest number of Pentecostals are in the global South. Therefore, changes to the content and practice of Pentecostalism can come from the global south. Nigeria occupies a special place in the scheme of things.

When God gave us the vision to establish Palace of PRIESTS ASSEMBLY in 2016, two areas of emphasis was impressed on our hearts- Priesthood of all believers and the social dimension of the church. This is why right from the beginning; we established the Priests Peace and Justice Initiative (PPJ) as the social arm of the Church. It is our contribution to building a peaceful, just and orderly society. It is hinged on the dignity of the human person as created by God and the need to create an enabling environment for evangelism and holistic prosperity (3 John 2). At Palace of PRIESTS ASSEMBLY, we believe that the church should play a role in ensuring democratic governance, peace and stability of society. We see it as a duty to bring biblical perspective to the challenges of democracy, development, insecurity, injustice, service delivery and humanitarian crisis. The vision of PPJ is a world of prosperity and social justice. Our mission is to act as catalysts to empower citizens to reign as Priests and work for peace and social justice. We are guided by the values of leadership, empowerment, royalty, integrity and discipleship. PPJ has five thematic areas of focus:

1. Democracy: Elections, transparency and accountability and stewardship
2. Peace Building: Human Security and Conflict transformation.
3. Social Justice: Poverty, Inequality and Justice.
4. Emergency and Humanitarian services
5. Education and Health

The conceptualisation of the SHUN CORRUPTION project is in furtherance of our mission as a church and the mandate that God has given to us. The project is conceived by the Priests Peace and Justice Initiative (PPJ)/Palace of Priests Assembly (PPA) to mobilise Christians, especially

Pentecostals, to join the fight against corruption in Nigeria. The project which will be implemented within a period of three years (2018-2020) is supported by MacArthur Foundation. The project will commence with a research on the role of Christians in the fight against corruption and will include the production of a manual on Christianity and corruption; capacity building of Christian leaders and workers; production and distribution of Information, Education and Communication (IEC)/Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) messages and materials; creation of a platform for the promotion of Christian ethics and values; creation of a platform on Christianity and accountability; mobilisation of Christian leaders for credible, free and fair elections; projection of Christian role models; and creation of a movement of Christians advocating and campaigning against corruption from a Christian perspective.

We hope that with this project we will create a platform that will bring together Christian leaders across Nigeria to focus on Christianity and Accountability. The platform will be based on a recognition that there are Christian ethics based on the word of God (the Bible) which should guide the behaviour of Christian adherents. The ethics include holiness, faithfulness, worship, humanitarian spirit, liberality, self-discipline, defence of the poor and oppressed, opposition to cruelty, deceit, luxury and selfishness (Ex 20:3-17; Deut 6:5; Luke 3:10-14; Matt 22: 35-40; Colossians; 1 Peter; John 13:34; John 15: 20; John 13:14-15; Ps 14:6; Is 25:4; Ps 140:12).

As noted above, the conceptualisation of the SHUN CORRUPTION project is conceived by the Priests Peace and Justice Initiative (PPJ)/Palace of Priests Assembly (PPA) to mobilise Christians, especially Pentecostals, to join the fight against corruption in Nigeria.

The overarching goal of the project is to mobilise Christian leaders and workers to join the fight against corruption in Nigeria.

The specific objectives include:

- To enhance the knowledge of Christians on their role in the fight against corruption.
- To create a platform for promotion of Christian ethics, values and accountability.
- To mobilise Christian leaders and workers for credible, free and fair elections.
- To project positive role models to serve as motivation for others
- To empower Christians to advocate and campaign against corruption in Nigeria.

The project is being implemented within a period of three years (2018-2020) supported by MacArthur Foundation. The project commenced with a research on the role of Christians in the fight against corruption. The study was commissioned based on the understanding that there are ethical values in Christianity which abhor corruption. The study scoped the Holy Bible in its entirety to document reasons, with scriptural backing/references why Christians should not engage in corruption and why they should fight against corruption.

The focus of the study was on five main research topics:

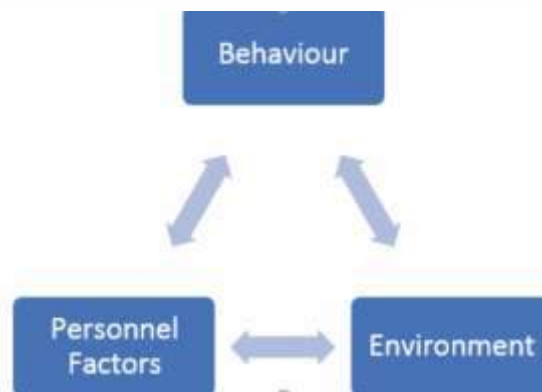
1. Social Teaching of the Church-The Pentecostal Perspective
2. Christianity and the Struggle for Social Justice
3. Christianity and the Fight Against Corruption

4. Christianity and Political Leadership of Nations
5. Christianity and Accountability

Other aspects of the project include the production of a manual on Christianity and corruption; capacity building of Christian leaders and workers; production and distribution of Information, Education and Communication (IEC)/Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) messages and materials; creation of a platform for the promotion of Christian ethics and values; creation of a platform on Christianity and accountability; mobilisation of Christian leaders for credible, free and fair elections; projection of Christian role models; and creation of a movement of Christians advocating and campaigning against corruption from a Christian perspective.

We are aware that several governments in Nigeria have launched anti-corruption programs since 1966 when corruption was mentioned as one of the reasons for the military overthrow of the then civilian government. Despite the plethora of legislations and agencies fighting corruption in Nigeria, the issue has remained widespread and pervasive partly because the norms and behaviour of citizens have remained unchanged. It has reached a level that the members of the public do not seem to disapprove of corrupt activities. Even persons who have been convicted are given heroic welcome at the end of their jail terms and rewarded with extravagant thanksgiving services in churches. But churches are supposed to be the epitome of morality and good conduct. However, the social cognitive theory of behaviour reminds us that behaviour is shaped by personal factors (instincts, drives, traits, and other motivational forces) and environmental factors (situational influences) as shown in the diagram below:

PPJ Behavioural Change Model



Social Cognitive Theory Model

There is therefore the need to build the personal factors and motivate people to act on the environment to change behaviour in order to maintain public support for anti-corruption. Meanwhile, members of the congregation in the church have a lot of trust in their leaders. The trust is based on embedded Christian values and the solid reputation of the church for meeting the spiritual and physical needs of its members. But there is a huge challenge in the world today. Many people appear not to know what is morally right or wrong. People commit

atrocities and post them on the social media. The behaviour of many people, even those who profess religion are guided by secular mindset which is based on the notion that the source of knowledge is not divine as against religious mindset anchored on revelation from God. But it is clear that secular mindset has limited scope of its worldview to the physical aspect of life only and does not play a crucial role in shaping moral character as religion. Unfortunately, as from the 16th century, the years of reformation promoted by Martin Luther King and others leading to the growth of the evangelical and Pentecostal movements neglected the social teachings of the church. The result is that many professing Christians not only participate in corruptible transactions but do not take any action among their members or participate in the larger society to fight corruption. There is therefore the need to improve the knowledge of Christians, motivate them and provide a platform for them to join the fight against corruption.

This booklet is based on the research that has been conducted as indicated above. It is grounded in the scriptures and will be very useful to Pentecostals across the world. It is our expectation that with this and other efforts, the face of Pentecostalism will change not only in Nigeria but across the world.

Pastor Otive Igbuzor, PhD

General Overseer, Palace of PRIESTS ASSEMBLY, Abuja, Nigeria.

23rd May, 2020

PREFACE

There is an urgent call for the rescue of the Nigerian nation from the grip of corruption and the attendant malicious crisis spurned over the years. So much seems to have been done but much more requires to be done because the approaches hitherto used, including several declarations of wars on corruption by different administrations in the country to deal with the scourge of corruption have not created the expected impact. Scholars have written volumes on the causes, costs and consequences of corruption in the country while the anti-corruption war can boast of a few success stories, but victory is still largely a mirage. Those solutions have fallen dismally short in providing relief in the war against corruption.

Apparently, what is missing is the failure to mobilise the people through a language and a system that they can readily understand and relate to in their daily lives. For Christians especially, this language is that of faith and the authority of the Scriptures. Faith is the instrument with which a Christian can have a firm hold on the flow of life and provide an inspirational framework to act with conviction and courage while also acting as a check. This is the background to the publication of this pamphlet. The pamphlet is therefore a tool for mobilizing Christians across Nigeria through the Pentecostal perspective to join in the fight against corruption.

This pamphlet, along the others is a creation of an intensive and extensive research by a group of writers who were propelled by their passion to frontally tackle corruption through an evangelical- type approach that takes the content of the Bible and reproduces the instructions, promises, principles and sanctions in a simple manner to reflect God's position in dealing with the challenges of corruption. However, this pamphlet read together with others in the series is not just about corruption, but a bouquet of other related issues that will help to make the fight against corruption meaningful and effective. The other pamphlets are Christianity and the Fight against Corruption, Christianity and Accountability, Christianity and Political Leadership of Nations Christianity and the Struggle for Social Justice.

The researches were further validated by another group of Pentecostal Christians scholars and leaders who subjected the work and their content to a rigorous analysis session, vetted it and gave a stamp of approval as a body of literature ready and appropriate for use to mobilise the Pentecostal community in the fight against corruption.

As a result, its content is made simple and easy to read, understand & applied along with others in the series among which are the role of the Church in promoting accountability, the Church and the struggle for social justice, the Church and the Social Dimension of Christianity, the Church and political leadership of nations as well as the role of the Church in elections in Nigeria. The pamphlets will serve as the literature for reading along with the Bible for training, instruction & edification on winning the war against corruption. It is good for pastors for whom it is originally intended but it is also a keepsake for those, who must be carried along in the fight against corruption. In this way the message will reach a very large segment of the nation and

dwell richly in the heart of all those that will read it and use it for good works.

This pamphlet is conceptualized to be an enduring work for generations to come on the strategy to fight corruption by Pentecostals. Our prayer is that this pamphlet will both be spiritually and intellectually stimulating for everyone who will read it and be galvanized, energized & emboldened by the Spirit of God to be enlisted into the rank of those prepared to speak against & stand against any form of corruption wherever it may occur across the nation. In addition, we encourage anyone who will want to take this pamphlet just as we regularly use tracts to spread the message & become Anti-Corruption Champions in Nigeria.

CONTENT PAGE



**SOCIAL PRACTICES AND TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH:
THE PENTECOSTAL PERSPECTIVE**

Professor Jibrin Ibrahim



INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is the Church, its social practice and teachings and how it engages the community. The ideological perspective taken is that of Christianity which sees the Church as an expression of God's unrestricted love for humanity. God built the Church through Christ, as a conduit pipe for gaining salvation at the end of Man's sojourn on earth. The essence of the Church of Christ, therefore, is to spread the love of God and that of Humanity. This concern is further amplified by the testimony of the Gospel of John 3:16 where it is noted that "For God so Loved the World that He gave His only Begotten Son, and that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have Everlasting Life."

Thus, the Passion and Suffering of Christ on the Cross consummated this mission to the extent that His command during His suffering on the Cross – "Do this in memory of Me" (Zondervan NIV Study Bible, Luke 22:19) strongly manifested in the life and times of the early Church that lived together sharing the word and love of God. The Church therefore is about the salvation and the hereafter. The pathway the Church has taken historically towards this goal has been through social work.

To understand this pathway, we have adopted a social science methodology, which would allow us to understand the social processes that produce the social outcomes that emerge. Conceptually, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary suggests that the term social refers to anything that is of or relating to human society, the interaction of the individual and the group, or the welfare of human beings as members of society. Also, the Cambridge Dictionary in a related manner considered the term to mean: relating to society and living together in an organized way. The hereafter therefore makes sense within the context of how human beings live in society and improving social life is often the passage to a more fulfilling spiritual life.

Religious Life in the Nigerian Context

Nigeria is a very religious country and actors in the religious field are among the most important in society. All forms of religions, Islam, Christianity, Eastern religions and traditional African religions are experiencing a phase of intense activism in the country. The result is a multiplication of the production of religious movements, leaders and followers. Most of the new religious actors operate in the field of popular religion. Jeff Haynes (1995:101) defines popular religion as one, which serves "as a community expression of a group desire to achieve a religious satisfaction which is not forthcoming from a mainstream religion". The new religious actors are therefore defined primarily by their autonomy from established religious orders. It is this context of the breakdown of hierarchies, established orders and the emergence of new and often youthful actors that makes the study of the social action of religious actors important. The fact is that religious actors and leaders are key interlocutors in social, political and economic development as well as in conflict generation and conflict prevention. Religion is today one of the key elements in defining the personality of the Nigerian. The said personality is a complex and multifaceted one characterised by the seeming incompatibility of the coexistence of the following traits:

- 1) Very high level of Christian and Muslim religiosity in society – one of the highest in the contemporary world. This is expressed by the very high commitment of time and resources to religious activities and the infusion of religious discourses into everyday language. Today, the mundane is almost always expressed in religious terms.
- 2) An extraordinarily high level of belief in and fear of spirits and forces of darkness closely resembling the forces of the cosmology that defined practices previously considered “pagan”. This has become a driver pushing towards increased religiosity.
- 3) An extremely high level of public, private and community corruption – both at the moral and material levels which apparently contradict key religious tenets such as honesty, modesty and hard work.
- 4) A high level of violence, intolerance and conflict in society in apparent contradiction to key religious tenets and values such as peace, love, forgiveness and fraternity of humankind.

Given this context, it is not surprisingly that the activities of religious actors often generate passion sometimes resulting in pervasive inter and intra faith exchanges and conflicts. Underlying this effective tendency for intense levels of mobilisation is the growing, but often neglected interplay between spiritual beliefs and development–related action by faith-based organisations (FBOs).

Historically, FBOs have been playing an important role in promoting social and economic development. They have propelled physical and qualitative improvement in the quality of life of Nigerians. Even more important is the fact that the religious arena produces very rich and intensive social dynamics cutting across a large and grossly marginalized population. The important question is how does the activity of FBOs influence what is taking place in the wider society? For example, the government is currently pursuing an anti-corruption agenda that seeks to change the behaviour of Nigerians for the better. What are the indications of a growing interface between religious and political leaders to support this noble anti-corruption agenda? What is happening or not happening and are there opportunities for such interface to lead to a broad adoption of a shared agenda for change which goes beyond isolated statements by persons in the leadership of religious movements and FBOs?

Addressing Conceptual Issues

Clearly there are linkages between religion and what can be termed 'world construction' and/or 'world maintenance'. Religion produces the ideology that pulls together people of the same faith. On the other hand, FBOs as organs bear, propagate, construct and give expression to religious beliefs, profane actions and ideological utterances by individual believers and institutions. As a result, FBOs produce ideas and values that order lives and seek to influence society through such ideas. In this regard, FBOs are the symbols that legitimize, prescribe, forbid and/or advance the beliefs of adherents of different religions. They help to re-produce experiences, which become dominant in society. Working on this hypothesis, there is need not

only to identify the structure for FBO formation but also to understand the context for mobilization, the role of knowledge, actors and social norms in generating cohesive practice by FBOs. Even in the most unacceptable instances, FBOs are not exclusive nor are they immutable; managing their change and re-organization remains attractive because they are clearly powerful and effective organs that create agency for social action. While some FBOs easily fit into the categories of formal non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations, others are tied much more closely to religious orders and spiritual systems.

In general, FBOs act in an atomistic manner because they are tied to specific religious organisations that formed, motivate and fund their action. They therefore rarely form broad based coalitions, which create synergy and multiply the impact of their individual sets of action. Were FBOs to begin to work in concert, say for example most Christian FBOs, their impact on society would be immense especially because they tend to support the poorest and most marginalised members the society. They could easily become formidable agents of change and social upliftment.

Religion and Faith-Based Organisations

We asserted that Religion-based organisations are the core of agency in contemporary Nigerian society. They are the “happening locations” in our social dynamics and can be defined as religion-based organisations that engage in social provisioning and seek to generate social change that helps members of society. Catering for the social and material needs of people is therefore part of the core functions of religious organisations. This definition does not however assume that such organisations necessarily impact significantly on social welfare and social change. What is evident is that they do set out to impact on the said social welfare and social change, so their purpose has to be part of their definition. While emphasising the religious aspect of such organisations, there is need for caution about the usual dichotomies that abound in the literature – secular/religious and spiritual/profane. In Islam for example, helping the poor through social provisioning is a religious duty and not a secular action. Indeed, Teri Sarch (2003) argues that the ideal Islamic world is one that is pro-poor and in fact incorporates concerns about achieving what are today called the millennium development goals.

FBOs are:

- I. Organisations emanating from a religious community and they are therefore guided by the said religious ideology.
- ii. They respond to perceived needs – spiritual, social, economic and political needs emanating from a community or the society.
- iii. To do so, they draw staff and support from their religious order, but also draw from other sources.
- iv. They engage in a wide span of activities that cover religious, political, economic and

social needs of communities.

- v. The purpose of their intervention is to promote positive social change.

Christianity in Contemporary Nigeria

Nigerian Christians are not all the same kind. Some classification put them broadly into at least four categories. However, these categories cannot be regarded as fixed or static; change, even rapid change, is a feature of Christianity in many parts of Africa.

- i. Firstly, there exist the mainline denominations, founded by the Christian missionaries and still part of international Christian bodies.
- ii. Secondly, there are the African Independent or Instituted Churches (AICs), an African expression of Christianity, often dating back decades.
- iii. Thirdly, we have the modern churches, the ones currently mushrooming luxuriantly and referred to broadly as the 'charismatic' or 'Pentecostal groups'.
- iv. Lastly, there are those on the fringes that combine the practice in the second category with some distinct traditional values.

Exact statistics for these different categories of Christians are not readily available. Paul Gifford puts the figures as Anglicans about 16 million and Catholics perhaps 13 million. AICs that form a sizeable bloc consist of big churches counting membership in the millions. For instance, the Celestial Church (founded in 1952) has about 3 million, the Christ Apostolic Church (1917) 1.3 million, the Church of the Lord (Aladura) (1930) 1.4 million, and the Sacred Order of the Cherubim and Seraphim (1925) about one million. While the fourth category of churches has the Brotherhood of the Cross and Star with membership of over one million. The charismatic churches that represent the third category have experienced rapid increase of membership and may in fact have more followers than the other three categories. The examples include Church of God Mission International (1968) 1.2 million; Deeper Life (1973) about a million; The Redeemed Christian Church of God, perhaps 2 million or more. Others are Christ Chapel, founded in 1985, has about 80,000; Holy Spirit Ministries, founded five years later, boasts about 250,000. It should be noted that these different categories are found unevenly around the country with the mainline Catholics and Anglicans spread throughout the country, as are the AICs. For the charismatic churches, they start as an urban phenomenon, and remain primarily so. Nonetheless, these churches are characterized by aggressive evangelistic outreach, so the numbers are changing, and their presence and impact go far beyond their main centres¹.

A major transformation of Christianity has been occurring in Nigeria over the past four decades; new religious movements have been displacing the more established denominational churches. The most successful strand within the new religious movements is the Pentecostal one. The Pentecostal movement has a wide appeal, especially among the

youth, and the upwardly mobile. The Pentecostal movement is characterised by a myriad of fellowships, missions and churches that are not held together by a common organisational framework except the umbrella cover provided by the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria. Indeed, even a common doctrinal framework is difficult to discern because so many of them had been established by individuals. The sizes of Pentecostal churches vary from less than ten for new churches being planted to millions for the largest ones. Despite the large group of organisations however, all of them have certain common characteristics, revolving around a charismatic approach to Christianity and ritual elements such as speaking in tongues, deliverance from evil spirits, testimonies of miracles and so on. They also place a lot of emphasis on music and dance in their form of worship. Members often move from one fellowship to another or attend multiple fellowships simultaneously. The Pentecostal movement is non-denominational, and they have been able to go beyond a lot of the denominational factionalism that has affected Christian organisations in Nigeria.

The Pentecostal movement is transforming Nigerian Christianity in a profound way. At one level, it is deepening the integration of Nigerian Christianity into various global nexus while at the same time developing local roots to sustain itself. At another level, it has introduced two key markers that distinguish it from the rest of the Christian belief and practice in Nigeria. The first is the gospel of prosperity. It has reversed the anti-materialism associated with the early colonial Church and justifies, and indeed, legitimises the acquisition of material wealth. In this context, it has been a major ideologue for liberal economic thinking and the promotion of capitalism. The second element is the gospel of power. It attracts new converts and maintains existing members on claims of a continuous capacity to perform miracles and change lives. This aspect of Pentecostal belief promotes agency as a mode of social action.

Within this context, the transformation of Christianity in Nigeria is occurring within a framework of rapid changes in doctrine, structure, membership, liturgy and eschatology. The high points of the transformation are the emphasis on agency and requirements for demonstrated proof of the efficacious nature of the religion. The following issues are significant in understanding current dynamics of Nigerian Christianity.

- I. The definition of Christianity and the articulation of its foundational principles is extremely difficult in contemporary Nigeria, indeed, in the contemporary world. ⁽²⁾ It is presumptuous and difficult to define Christianity in a social science project. While it is possible to map Christian groups, attempts at definitions might lead to the exclusion

²⁾ In his polemical lecture at Regensburg University on 12th September 2006, Pope Benedict XVI defined Christianity as “a rapprochement between Biblical faith and Greek philosophical inquiry”, arguing strongly that the Christianity we know could only have developed as part of Western thought, and could not have developed in the East. Many Nigerian Christians would of course find this definition of Christianity unacceptable as it questions the universality principle.

of some “Christian movements”. Finally, people's claims to religious belief and piety are extremely difficult to verify even with the aid of a behavioural checklist.

- ii. The most successful strand within the new Christian movements in Nigeria is Pentecostalism. This observation must however be considered along with two others. First, that the “category” Pentecostal hides wide variations within the movement itself. Second, the Pentecostal movement has not displaced other forms of Christianity. Nigerian Christianity is therefore characterised by a myriad of fellowships, missions, prayer groups and churches. The key word in understanding Nigerian Christianity is therefore diversity.
- iii. A lot of the literature about Nigerian Christianity refers to the concept of “new” movements. It is however difficult to establish what is new about new Christian movements. One point of entry is that of demography. Most of the present generation of Nigerian Christians have little or no knowledge of the character of colonial “orthodox” Christianity, which defined the first phase of the development of the religion in the country. They are also no longer imbued with the nationalist passion and cultural affirmation that was responsible for the popularity of the African Churches of the early 20th century. Not surprisingly, they have no respect for some of the values associated with earlier forms of Christianity such as the focus on the hereafter rather than the here and now, a life of service and poverty while waiting for heavenly wealth. The categories of agency, equality, rationality and individualism are important conceptual points of entry in interrogating the category “new” in investigating Nigerian Christianity.
- iv. Sociologically, Christian belief in contemporary Nigeria is becoming increasingly evidence led as adherents demand for and obtain “rational proof” of the efficacy of the religion in the form of miracles and real changes to their life. Failure by religious leaders to provide concrete results of course leads to exit from the site of failure and experimentation at the doorsteps of potentially more effective sites of Christian powers.
- v. In terms of the sociology of organisations, new Christian movements are generally new until the founder dies, and a second generation without the charisma of the founder emerges. The new leadership usually finds out that it needs the security and stability provided by routinisation and bureaucratisation. Indeed, with the development of routinisation of many movements, a certain convergence of Christian strands is now developing in the country as the old “new” Christian movement searches for its pathway to orthodoxy.
- vi. Nigerian Christianity is undergoing a painful debate and a search of modalities to address the question of values and ethics. The Church is seeking methods of addressing the changing values and ethics in our society. Currently, some churches are addressing the question of corruption in our society while others appear to be led by charlatans who are on the cutting edge of scams, primitive accumulation and moral decadence. As freelance evangelism grows, this contradiction deepens.

- vii. Another challenge is that of democratic governance. Christian actors are beginning to seriously reflect on the relationship between Christianity and democratic governance. Religious movements are veritable arenas for expressing democratic demands. Entry into the religious arena is easy but actors have limited voice except when they exercise their right to exit the space. A contradiction therefore seems to be developing between a democratising external environment and an increasingly authoritarian internal religious environment for members. This process is heightened by growing tensions between rising religiosity in the society and demands and movements for secularity. One problem that has emerged is about Christian minorities in Muslim dominated areas whose democratic rights are being threatened especially with the adoption of Sharia Penal Laws by some states.
- viii. Christian movements operate at both the local and global levels. It is therefore important to integrate the global nexus into the local expressions of Christian belief and action.

Christian FBOs in Nigeria

In terms of faith-based stakeholders, we have major organizations that are generally considered representative organs of faith-based Christian groups. The major ones are the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN). Other important faith-based organisations are the Fellowship of Christian Students, the Scripture Union, Christian Businessmen's Fellowship, the Justice Development and Peace Commission of the Catholic Church (JDPC) and Nigeria Prays led by General Yakubu Gowon among others. There are also quasi-ethnic organisations that have strong religious identities. These include the Southern Kaduna Peoples Union (SOKAPU), the Coalition of Berom Organizations (COBO) and the Middle Belt Forum (MBF).

Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN)

The Christian Association of Nigeria is the umbrella organization for all Christian Churches and movements. Its main objective is to protect the interests of all Christians and attend to their welfare. It has branches in all states of the federation. However, since it was founded in Kaduna in the 1950s, there is a northern branch that coordinates the activities of all branches in this region. As a coalition of churches, most of the work of CAN is at the level of advocacy on general political and welfare issues concerning Christians particularly when it concerns their relationship with Muslims and the government.

During the campaign on the inclusion of Shari'a Appeal Court in the Constitution during the 1977 Constituent Assembly, CAN led the opposition. The same happened when General Ibrahim Babangida took Nigeria into the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). CAN mobilized campaigns and public protest that forced the government to down grade Nigeria's status in that organization? In the North, CAN has been at the forefront of the campaign against instituting Shari'a Law in the country. During the 2015 general election, CAN was perceived to be closely allied with the Goodluck Jonathan campaign team.

Pentecostal Federation of Nigeria (PFN)

The PFN is the umbrella body for Pentecostal churches and has been growing fast in recent years. Its wealth and relatively strong control over its adherents have made it a powerful actor in the religious politics of Nigeria. Its active evangelism and loud assertive preaching both in the media and assortment of churches, has often placed it on the battle line with Muslims. Its tendency for building churches in any available space in both residential and corporate areas has also brought its members into conflict with government authorities.

Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC)

The Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) is a faith-based organization affiliated to the Catholic Church. Its organizational base is the Catholic Church, but its services are targeted at all irrespective of faith. The ideas that provide foundation for the JDPC can be found in the social teachings of the Catholic Church (NCCB/USCC, 1991):

Founded on the life and words of Jesus Christ, who came 'to bring good tidings to the poor...inspired by the passion for justice of the Hebrew prophets and the scriptural call to care for the weak....., shaped by the social teachings of our church...insisting that work for justice and peace and care for the poor and vulnerable are the responsibility of every Christian (Contemporary Catholic Social Teachings by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the USA, 1991).

It was founded in the early 1990s as a faith-based NGO. It is coordinated nationally by the department of Church and Society of the Catholic Secretariat, Lagos. One of its key objectives is to promote sustainable and integrated human development through a holistic approach targeting people in need irrespective of ethnic or religious affiliation.

JDPC has a broad approach to human development. At the human rights level, JDPC responds to human rights violations by investigating cases to verify claims and then use administrative processes to seek redress. Such processes include writing to agencies like the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and the Public Complaints Commission (PCC) to solicit for their intervention. In rare cases, JDPC has taken human rights violation cases to court. In the area of democracy monitoring and civic education, JDPC has engaged in a variety of activities. They include training and deploying monitors during elections to checkmate rigging and violence, monitoring of elected local government officials, monitoring of local government policies and budgets and constituency cultivation through making critical information about local governance accessible to CBOs and trade unions to enhance their oversight functions. The peace-building programme of the JDPC is carried out in partnership with CARITAS. Since the return to democracy in 1999 and the increase in the spate of violent conflict, the JDPC has started working in the area of peace (Ibrahim and Bagu, 2004).

Christian Rural and Urban Development Association of Nigeria (CRUDAN)

CRUDAN is an NGO established by protestant churches to build the social and economic capacity of church organizations. It currently has members in 22 states of the federation. It has over the years provided skills training on strategic planning, holistic development, participatory approaches and action research. Its services are available to organizations of all faiths. With its head offices in Jos, it worked with USAID/OTI in 2001 to enhance the capacity of Northern NGOs to apply participatory approaches to execute and facilitate effective conflict mitigation projects. To aid in achieving this, CRUDAN organized training workshops, which imparted skills on project planning, management and proposal writing using conflict resolution/mitigation as the core theme. Participating organizations came from both Northwest and Northeast geo-political zones and included both Christian and Muslim bodies.

The Ecumenical Commission of Justice and Peace (ECJP)

The ECJP is an NGO under the Methodist Church and conducts democracy and governance monitoring, human rights activism and conflict management activities. In 2000, the Benue state branch responded to the increasing spate of conflict in the state and tried to promote civic education activities in communities aimed at uncovering the root causes of the conflicts and initiating forums for dialogue and the development and implementation of preventive measures. ECJP has successfully engaged the support of traditional councils, opinion leaders, state officials, religious leaders, community organizations and business leaders and has conducted several small-scale intervention efforts.

Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)

The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) is a Christian Organization founded by Sir George Williams in London in 1844. It has spread to over 130 countries in the world with total membership of 30 million. It is therefore the oldest non-governmental organization in the world today. It was founded in Nigeria in the city of Kano in 1925 and it is a not for profit organization. One of its aims is to serve the youths, irrespective of religion, tribe or creed.

In 2000, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) realizing that the rising level of youth unemployment constituted a security risk in Nasarawa State as many of these unemployed youth were often used in communal, religious and ethnic conflict, decided to reduce the population of the unemployed by providing them with education for self-employment. The organization ran short-term practical trainings on skills acquisition on bee keeping and extraction, pomade and soap making for 32 at risk youths in Mada Hills area of Nasarawa state.

Though its secretariat in Kaduna was burnt down during the November 2002 Miss World Beauty Pageant, it still provided a Basketball court for a project on using basketball to cultivate tolerance and peaceful coexistence among Christian and Muslim youth. Up to date the Basketball Court still serves as a "Peace Zone" in Muslim dominated Tudun Wada neighbourhood of Kaduna metropolis.

Women FBOs

All churches have a women fellowship that is active and vibrant. There is however no unified national Christian women organization, which the numerous autonomous groups are affiliated to. What we have is each church has its own federation of women organizations. For instance, the Catholic Church has the Catholic Women Organization (CWO), the Church of Christ In Nigeria (COCIN) has the COCIN Women Fellowship, etc. The activities of these women FBOs is focused on members of the faith they profess although their services are not exclusive to adherents.

Operating in the conservative milieu of religion, women FBOs have been careful to curve out roles for themselves that do not go beyond their roles in society as defined by the dominant patriarchal order. Indeed, women FBOs have tended to justify their existence by adopting more orthodox religious postures. The major areas in which they work on are reproductive health, poverty alleviation, HIV/AIDS, child pregnancy, rehabilitation of school dropouts and street children, etc. and increasingly, they partner with governments and are being funded by the same donor agencies. In the South East, women FBOs have become change agents and catalysts of community development and have developed a mode of operation in which all women FBO activists spread all over the country, and abroad return to their home communities every August to plan and fund community development activities.



**CHRISTIANITY, FBOS AND SOCIAL
PROVISIONING IN NIGERIA**



CHRISTIANITY, FBOS AND SOCIAL PROVISIONING IN NIGERIA

Pro-Poor Programming

Most FBOs are today engaged in social provisioning and prioritise activities that alleviate poverty among their members. They provide welfare and necessary services to poorer members of their religious community. One of the greatest indicators is that over the past decade, FBOs have taken the main responsibility of catering for over two million internally displaced persons who have been survivors of the Boko Haram insurgency. The number of people catered for by FBOs is far higher than the number catered for by governments and international non-governmental organisations combined.

Economic Empowerment

A new area of engagement is that of the economic empowerment of members. Many faith-based organisations are developing and implementing programmes designed to empower their members financially. Entrepreneurship training and financing has become a key activity for FBOs. This is in response to crippling economic difficulties encountered by their members.

Membership and Organisational Structure

In most cases, FBOs are also religious organisations. In such cases, the two categories are conflated and are part of the same organisational structure. In other cases, religious organisations register non-governmental organisations or commercial companies to carry out faith-inspired work. Finally, some FBOs are established by people from the same or similar religious and/or identity affiliation. Many FBOs have large membership running into hundreds. A significant number of FBOs are formal organisations with a leadership structure and formal rules and procedures and fee-paying membership and sometimes formal registration with the corporate affairs commission. Many FBOs are part of national structures but some are local and not affiliated to larger bodies.

Finance

Most FBOs are self-financing and the major source of revenue is donations and subscriptions from members. This means they have developed the capacity to tax their members and by implication, demand for accountability from their leadership. Wealthy members of the organisations also provide resources and funds. For the most part, FBOs receive almost no funding from government sources and are therefore sustainable organisations because they generate their own resources.

The Role of Women

The gender dimension of the work of FBOs is important because they provide opportunities for women to play significant roles. They are the key players in the organisation of activities and many women also play leadership roles, especially in women only FBOs. Many FBOs are also committed to promoting the welfare and education of women and therefore contribute to the edification of gender equality.

Captured Membership, Trust and Social Capital

FBOs are significant actors in social and economic development because they have large membership bases that are “captured” in the sense that they are already available as members of the Church. They are therefore happy to provide time, labour and resources to the FBO on a voluntary basis. They trust and believe in their organisation thereby producing significant social capital that can be tapped to achieve various objectives. This is the real strength of Christian FBOs, which can be further tapped for enhanced social development.

Public Enlightenment and Advocacy

Many FBOs have committed and skilled advocates that are deployed in carrying out their activities. This means that they can do great advocacy promoting good social causes that can move the society forward. Examples are advocacy and programming directed at addressing the consumption of drugs and promoting girl child education and female adult education.

FBOs and Institutional Reform

FBOs have one clear limitation. For the most part, they do not set out to play a major role in promoting institutional reform. Most FBOs are unable to develop the networking capacity to influence the exercise of state power or the local basis of power at the community, local or state levels. They tend to have a tangential relation to policy. In general, they tend to place themselves as “gap-fillers” in sectors where social and economic policies do not reach their members. In this regard, they remain largely in the service provision mode of action. The attitude of most FBO activists of seeing prayers as a panacea for bad governance also has implications for the commitment and drive to work towards institutional change. The next phase in the development of FBOs should therefore focus on increasing their institutional and political impact.

In this context, FBOs could and should become catalysts that can enable poorer and more marginalized citizens to make their demands in a more direct and effective way. FBOs can represent the demands of the poor in clearer and more understandable ways to state bodies, thus contributing to a more successful definition and implementation of programmes and policies. In this way, FBOs can successfully utilize policies and programmes to guarantee access of the poorest to, for example, good quality schools and health services, which would in turn improve the possibilities of their inclusion in the economic and political spheres. Ultimately, this should add up to creating better citizens who are able to contribute to social, political and economic development of the country while remaining faithful to the teachings of the Bible.

THE BIBLICAL BASIS OF SOCIAL/CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

It is important to emphasise that the social and civic commitments of the Church to humanity and the broader society are premised on the Biblical teachings of the Church. Christ from the very start has established the disparity between the secular Society and His body – the Church.

Invariably, His command of the Love of Neighbour and the Love of God is unarguably germane when one reflects on the connection between the Earthly World and His Heavenly Kingdom. In this section, we demonstrate the Biblical basis of the Social and Civic engagements of Pentecostal Churches and Christians all over the world. The following seven thematic issues are the means through which the Church can engage her members socially. These issues are discussed and reconciled with their respective Biblical teachings as follows:

Respect for the Sanctity and Primacy of Human Life

The Church realizes the essence of the Human life and respects its sanctity. This is because, the human life is prime and central to everything created by God. The creation of humans accentuates the divine love of men by God. The sanctity of human life is at the nucleus and foundation of the Christian Family. It is believed from Biblical accounts that human beings are God's handmaid created in His image and likeness. Therefore, every person, from birth to death, has innate dignity and infinite worth—including preborn children, the elderly, those with special needs and even those marginalized by society.

Therefore, Christians are called to shield, guard, and value human life. The church can enforce this teaching by deploying advocacy and campaigns against every sinister action or intention that can terminate Human Life. This is because, occasions like accidents, genocide, mercy-killings amongst others can lapse the regards for the sanctity and sacredness of the Human Life. As part of the Social Teachings of the Church, thus, Pentecostal Churches can organize regular sensitization programmes to educate their members and the wider public on the very essence of human life and how to eschew circumstances that can warrant its extinction.

Biblically, the book of Genesis 9:5-6 has this to say about the justification for the respect of human life: “Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man.” By way of magnifying this verse, Deuteronomy 5:7 reminds us that: “You shall not murder”. These verses amongst useful others appropriately sum up the fact that God is the source and summary of the human life. This is because, as the living God, He is not only the giver and taker of eternal life but also Life in itself. The people of God are hence, sustained by His (God's) life (Zondervan NIV Study Bible, Joshua 3:10; I Sam.17:26, 36; 2 Kings 19: 4, 16). This is the reason Man was formed to identify God and to be like Him as our Heavenly Father. To this end we have been endowed with honest and spiritual abilities, ingenuity and aesthetic sensitivities. This image is not limited to some part of our being, but what we are in our totality, including our physical lives.

Reverence for the Virtues of Social Justice, Equality and Equity

The Bible is not in any way silent about the need for God's faithful to revere the virtues of Social Justice, Equality and Equity. It is in recognition of this that the Book of Roman 3:29-30 aptly asked that: “Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also?” The book of Ecclesiastes 3:19 went further to give credence to this when it

upholds that: “For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity.” The point here is that because God exists for all men and that we are all equal before Him as Sons and Heirs to His throne, we are all called to the virtues of Social Justice, Equality and Equity. This emphasis is made clearer as Proverb 22:2 says that “the rich and the poor have a common bond, The LORD is the maker of them all”. This goes a long way in highlighting divine equality of all men before the sight of God and by extension the fundamental need to adhere to the principle of equality and equity in the dealings of men.

Again, in the face of utter deprivation and penury, the Bible emphasizes the need for the Church to regard all the followers of Christ as one united in the love of God. Thus, where and whenever tongues differ, the Church as a body of Christ is encouraged, without recourse to preferential treatment, to treat with equal measures all and sundry both within and outside the Church. Social Justice on the other hand has had a fair Biblical justification from the Pentecostal perspectives. This is anchored firmly on God's words especially in the Book of Isaiah 1:17, which say that: “we should Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.” Also the Book of Prophet Zechariah 7:9-10 reports that: “Thus says the Lord of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart”. Again, Proverbs 31:9 submits that we should “Open our mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

The Church on the authority of all of the above can institutionalize a framework for addressing the justice needs of her faithful. An initiative can be established that draws legal practitioners across boards who will under the guise of the Church, super-intend on the legal needs of those desirous of social justice and the principles of equality and equity. This can be done by occasional visits to Prisons, Destitute homes amongst others, where they can determine faithful who have longings for (social) Justice.

Regard for Constituted Secular Authority and Nation-Building

The Biblical call for patriotism, nation-building and respect for constituted authority ultimately epitomizes the social teachings of the Church. This is true to the extent that the respect for constituted authority is invariably, a respect for God. The ancient cliché that we should give to Caesar that which belongs to Caesar, and to God that which belongs to God comes to mind here. Hebrews 13:17 strengthens this premise when it instructed that we should: “Obey our leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you”. Romans 13:1 went further to declare that: “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God”. This unarguably goes to show that irrespective of the nature and character of a regime, absolute respect and regard should be extended to

those who are elected to supervise the affairs of men in the society as the authority to govern is strictly Gods.

This is why the book of Romans 13:1-5 (Zondervan NIV Study Bible) went further to submit that:

Therefore, whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not terrors to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God; an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore, one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.

It also warns that “Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment (Zondervan NIV Study Bible, Romans 13:2).

Meanwhile, it is the expectation of God that His servants decide who governs them. This can only be done by improving the rate of our political participation in the governance system. The letter to Titus 3:1 actually reminds us to be “submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, most importantly, to be ready for every good work”. However, whenever there is a difference between the will of secular leaders instituted to superintend over the affairs of men and the commands of God in Acts 5:29 assures that “We must obey God rather than men”.

Essentially too, constituted authority is not limited to secular leaders alone. The family – the nucleus of the human society – has a manifest responsibility to also represent God's will on earth. This is why the letter to the Ephesians 6:1-4 calls on Children to: “obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (for this is the first commandment with a promise), that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land”. It also admonishes the Fathers to “not provoke your children to anger but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord”. Hence, it is part of the social teachings of the Church to surrender wilfully to the authority of secular authority of humans (parents and secular leaders alike) as instituted by God.

Responsibility of the Church towards Family and her Members

The responsibility of the Church towards the Family and her Members is one of the primary reasons the Church itself was established. When God created humans, he designed them to live together as families. The Bible makes known the fact that family relationships are important to God. Hence, God continuously unveils Himself to the Family through the Church. This it does by the empowerment it gives the Church to relate the Word of God to the family, which is a basic unit of the composition of the Church. It is stressed here that the Church symbolizes the instruments through which the will of God is transmitted to the family. To begin

with, God created the first family by instituting the inaugural wedding between Adam and Eve. We learn from this account in Genesis that marriage was God's idea, designed and established by the Creator: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Zondervan NIV Study Bible, Genesis 2:24).

Again, the Church also performs a socialization role of helping to groom and breed the family to act in conformity with the expectations of God. It reminds it of the commitment to obey God's commands. For instance, the fifth of the Ten Commandments calls children to give honour to their father and mother by treating them with respect and obedience. It is the first commandment that comes with a promise. This command is emphasized and often repeated in the Bible, and it applies to grown children as well: "Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the Lord your God is giving you." (Exodus 20:12). The Bible goes further to insist that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. They are a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck" (Zondervan NIV Study Bible, Proverbs 1:7-9).

To the Leaders of God's flock, God calls his followers to faithful service, and Joshua defined what that meant so no one would be mistaken. To serve God sincerely means to worship him wholeheartedly, with undivided devotion. Joshua promised the people he would lead by example; He would serve the Lord faithfully and lead his family to do the same. The following verses offer inspiration to all leaders of families:

But if you refuse to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord (Zondervan NIV Study Bible, Joshua 24:15).

This Biblical authority has bestowed on the Leaders of the Church to not only guide and guard Christians but also to aid them in the enforcement and consolidation of their faith, especially, on whom they have chosen to serve.

Rights, Privileges and Responsibilities of the Human Person

This aspect of the study dwells on rights, privileges and responsibilities of the Human person. Meanwhile, conceptual and methodological issues surrounding the concepts of Right, Privileges and Responsibilities have given scholars burgeoning concern in terms of conception and understanding of same. This concern raises questions about the fundamental roles expected of the Church in securing the above issues within the perspectives of Pentecostalism.

Some of these questions as articulated by Nwankwo (2005:11) shades elementary highlights about the beginning and end of one's right. He asks for instance: where, after all do universal rights begin? In small places, close to home so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any map of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person. The neighbourhood he

lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seek equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination.

Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizens' action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world. By extension too, the Church is interested in examining the Biblical teachings of the rights, privileges and civil expectations of the community of body of Christ. Given this, the Rights and Responsibilities of the Human Person is essentially the reverence given to all human persons' rights and responsibilities. Rights are the aspects that are supposed to be given to each person in the world. Responsibilities are the works or tasks that every person must perform in order to enjoy the latter. Privileges are benefits accruable to one irrespective of the performance of any responsibilities or reach to rights. Each person should have their own responsibilities that they must complete. As the Catholic Church puts it, together, rights and responsibilities make up this sub-theme because every person should have their own rights, but also have responsibilities as well.

Specifically, the Pentecostal Church is interested in ensuring the security of the food, shelter, and clothing of the human race as part and parcel of the basic rights of the Human person. The Church is also interested in ensuring that the state hands out Education, Health Care, Employment, Political, Cultural, and Religious Rights/Privileges of the community of the people of God. This can only be gotten through the performance of responsibilities like voting during elections, serving the Country through schemes like the NYSC, Civil/Public Service and the Military/Paramilitary. Hence, the Church's teaching on the rights, privileges and responsibilities of her members is to this extent civil and also social.

Responsibility towards the Destitute and the Vulnerable

Almsgiving is one of the foremost themes of the Bible and a basic essence of Jesus' ministry. As far back as the thirteenth century B.C., the Hebrews' law institutionalized assistance to the poor as follows:

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the LORD your God" (Zondervan NIV Study Bible, Leviticus 19:9-10).

Through service, we give others the things they lack, and we find meaning and fulfilment to our own lives. Both the Old and New Testament writings give many examples of the importance of service and charity. For instance, the Book of Proverbs submits that: "He who despises his neighbor sins, but happy is he who is gracious to the poor" (Zondervan NIV Study Bible, Proverbs 14:21). The Prophet Isaiah buttressed this when he instructed that we should:

Feed the hungry! Help those in trouble! Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you shall be as bright as day. And the Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy you with all good things, and keep you healthy too; and you will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring (Zondervan NIV Study Bible, Isaiah 58:10-11).

Also, when the crowds asked John the Baptist, "What then should we do?" In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise" (Luke 3:10-11). "But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (Zondervan NIV Study Bible, 1 John 3:17).

The Bible tells us to share generously with those in need, and good things will come to us in turn. We are not meant to live hard-hearted or self-centred lives. This is never made clearer than in . A greedy, miserly life leaves us devoid of anything but an empty craving for more possessions, more power or more status. Hence the Proverbs agrees that: "He who gives to the poor will never want, but he who shuts his eyes will have many curses" (Zondervan NIV Study Bible, Proverbs 28:27).

Respect for the Dignity of Human Labour

The Latin maxim: "Laborare est Orare" which translates to mean to work is to pray accentuate the position of the Pentecostal Church as regards the dignity of Human Labour. Like the Catholic Social Teaching, the Pentecostal Church takes a strong position on issues around the start and end of life (like the death penalty and abortion) but it also has big consequences for everything in-between. For example, it can affect how we think about how our society supports those with disabilities; how we address global inequality and the approach we take to civil rights issues.

The idea that each life has value is not something Catholic or Pentecostal Social Teaching has a monopoly on; it shares a lot in common with International Human Rights which are also universal, inviolable and inalienable. But Catholic Social Teaching differs slightly because of its basis. It grounds Human Dignity in the firm foundations of the Catholic Church's traditions thought about the sanctity of creation as told in the story of our creation (Genesis) and God's incarnation (Gospels). Hence, the Church as a body of Christ respects the sanctity/dignity of human labour.

PENTECOSTALISM AND SOCIAL/CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME

The import of Social and Civic engagement by the Pentecostal Church cannot be overemphasized. As an idea whose time has really come, the Pentecostal Church has a clear social responsibility and civic role to play in the Society. These Social and Civic engagement roles of the Church are patriotic measures employed by the Church to salvage its immediate community while consolidating on the efforts the state can make in performing its primary

role – welfare and security of her populace. These responsibilities can assume varieties of forms—from personal volunteerism, community engagement efforts, organizational involvement and government work such as electoral participation, service to fatherland and being socially responsible.

These engagements may include directly addressing a problem through personal work, community based, or work through the institutions of representative democracy. The Church can through this system, encourage her members on not just occasional basis but to always ensure that her members are involved in the Political, Cultural and Social aspects of the development of the society. This is increasingly important since many individuals feel a sense personal responsibility to actively engage as a sense of obligation to their community. For instance, "Youth civic engagement" has similar aims to develop the community environment and cultivate relationships, although youth civic engagement places an emphasis on empowering youth.

Concluding Remarks

As enunciated at the beginning of this paper, the focus has been the study of the church from the angle of its social practice and teachings and how it engages the secular community. The centrepiece of the work is premised on the fact that Christianity considers the body of Christ – the Church – as an expression of God's unrestricted love for humanity. Hence, the erection of the Church by God through Christ is a conduit pipe for gaining salvation at the end of Man's sojourn on earth. The prime purpose of the Church of Christ, consequently, is to spread the love of God and that of Humanity. This task albeit fundamental is geared towards gaining salvation but cannot be actualized in isolation with the community of Gods faithful. The union of Christians and the articulation of their collective needs as discussed in this paper is a manifest reflection of the exemplary lifestyle expected of them by Christ and as depicted by the life and times of early Christians.

The paper therefore yields that Nigeria as a very religious country hardly lives out the very essence of the love Christ preached. Therefore, this paper in view of this, has located the Pentecostal Church as having a divine responsibility to share the love of Christ by defining and implementing the above recognized social practices and teachings of the Church. These functions which the paper has brought to bear range from examining the Sanctity and Primacy of Human Life, Virtues of Social Justice, Equality and Equity, Constituted Secular Authority and Nation-Building, responsibility of the Church towards Family and her Members, Rights, Privileges and responsibilities of the Human Person, responsibility towards the Destitute and the Vulnerable to the respect for the Dignity of Human Labour. Ultimately, the paper concludes that Pentecostalism and social/civic engagement is an idea whose time has really come.

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The Priests Peace Justice Initiative (PPJ) is a faith based organisation and social arm of the Palace of Priests Assembly. Palace of Priests Assembly is a duly registered and incorporated Church of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Priests Peace Justice Initiative is set up to anchor the social dimension of the Church and to contribute to the building of a peaceful and orderly society.

It is hinged on the dignity of the human person as created by God and the need to create an enabling environment for evangelism and holistic prosperity. At Palace of Priests Assembly, we believe that the Church should play a significant role in ensuring democratic governance, peace and stability of nations.

We see it as a duty to bring Biblical perspectives to the challenges of democracy, development, insecurity, injustice, service delivery and humanitarian services.

Vision

Our vision is a world of prosperity and social justice.

Mission

Our mission is to act as catalysts to empower citizens to reign as Kings and Priests and work for peace and social justice.

Values

The Priests Peace and Justice Initiative will be guided by the following values:

1. Leadership: requiring us to build leaders because He made us in his own image and called us to lead. We build leaders that will impact this generation and the next generation.
2. Empowerment: requiring us to equip the saints in all aspects of life to live as Kings and Priests that bring honour to God and work for peace and social justice.
3. Royalty: requiring us to live as Kings and Priests in accordance with God's design as a chosen and peculiar people working for peace and social justice.
4. Integrity: requiring us to demonstrate faith and action as Children of the Most High. Our behavior will match our belief. We will trust God and work in integrity (Ps 26:1).
5. Discipleship: requiring us to make disciples in all nations with solid biblical foundations who are then able to disciple and empower others to live in peace and harmony.

Areas of Focus.

PPJ will work in the following five thematic areas:

1. Democracy: Elections, transparency and accountability and stewardship
2. Peace Building: Human Security and Conflict transformation.
3. Social Justice: Poverty, Inequality and Justice.
4. Emergency and Humanitarian services
5. Education and Health

PPJ Management and Governance

Priests Peace and Justice Initiative (PPJ) is managed by an Executive Committee made up of a Co-

ordinator and five thematic heads. The secretariat is supported by Programme Officers and Finance Officers. The governance and oversight is provided by the Board of Trustees of Palace of PRIESTS ASSEMBLY (PPA).

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The approach to work revolves around four key strategies:

- Research
- Capacity Building
- Advocacy and Campaigns
- Services

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