

**The use of 'abundant life' in John 10:10 and its interpretation
among some Yoruba prosperity gospel preachers.**

by

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Declaration

I, Abiola Ibilola Mbamalu, Ph.D candidate, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Faculty of Humanities, Religion and Social Sciences, School of Religion and Theology, hereby declare that unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, this thesis is my own original work and shall only be submitted for the purpose of the above mentioned degree.

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As the supervisor, I hereby approve this thesis for submission

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memory of my parents: Professor Gabriel Ogundeji Ogunremi and Mrs. Grace Olatutu Ogunremi.

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND, METHOD AND SCOPE

1.1 Introduction and Background of Study

This is a case study that focuses on how John 10:10, with its mention of abundant life, has been interpreted by some Yoruba preachers of the 'prosperity gospel' in the course of preaching and teaching. The quotation below is one way in which John 10:10 has been understood:

No one has an inheritance in a family to which he does not belong. In the same way being born again is a prerequisite for you to be an inheritor of the rich heritage made available by covenant through the shed blood of Jesus. It is our heritage to be fruitful, prosperous, healthy and to enjoy long life among other things because Jesus came to give the believer an abundantly good life (Jn. 10:10).¹

The underlying presupposition that has facilitated this understanding is usually left undisclosed; rather all the congregation hears is that "this is the word of God". The manner in which this understanding is attained and grounded is the concern of this study. Is this type of reading responsible or legitimate? Does it commit God to do what the preacher says God would do? Does it adequately reflect the message of Jesus as portrayed in the fourth gospel? To what extent is the interpretation in continuity or discontinuity with past understanding of other readers of the same text? From what vantage point is this type of reading taking place? These are the issues that this study grapples with. The hypothesis of this study is that the context of the Yoruba prosperity preacher has a great influence on his/her understanding and interpretation of this passage of scripture.

In terms of the social location of the researcher, she is a Yoruba who has lived in the Yoruba context since birth until about a decade ago to engage in further studies. She got exposed to Campus Christianity in the early 80s and became

¹ David O. Oyedepo, *Possessing your possession*, (Lagos: Dominion Publishing House, 2006), p. 9.

'born-again' then. She is a member of one of the Classical Pentecostal churches in Nigeria.

1.2. Literature Study

This study focuses on three areas of concern: Pentecostalism, The Yoruba culture and church, and the text of John 10:10.

1.2.1. Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism is broadly defined as that brand of Christianity that lays emphasis on the gifts and operation of the Spirit.² However, in Nigeria, 'Pentecostalism' is not an all embracing term, for African Initiated Churches that wear white garments are referred to as Aladura Churches;³ though in a broad sense they are Pentecostals.⁴ Many scholars note that the 'prosperity gospel' manifests itself within the general rubric of Pentecostalism and particularly within the 'word of faith movement'.⁵ The prosperity gospel is sometimes referred to as the 'health and wealth gospel'. The teaching

² Alan Anderson, 'Introduction. World Pentecostalism at a crossroads, in Allan Anderson and Walter Hollenweger (eds.), *Pentecostals after a century. Global perspectives on a movement in transition*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), p. 20; *An introduction to Pentecostalism. Global charismatic Christianity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.13-14; Walter Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, (London: SCM, 1972), p.149.

³ See J.D.Y. Peel, *Aladura: a religious movement among the Yoruba*. (London: O.U.P., 1968),

⁴ Ruth Marshall prefers to use the term "born again" to capture the peculiarity of the Nigerian context for she notes that the term 'Pentecostal' presumes "a specific set of doctrinal tenets and rituals" and thereby "ignores the heterogeneity of the movement", see her 'Pentecostalism in Southern Nigeria: An overview', in Paul Gifford (ed), *New dimensions in African Christianity* (Nairobi: All Africa Conference of Churches, 1992), p. 8. With regard to the "born agains" view of Aladura churches, she notes "...but the main enemies of the born-agains are any Christian church which has connections with 'traditional' Nigerian belief and ritual such as the Aladura churches" 'Power in the Name of Jesus', *Review of African political economy* 52 (1991), p. 24.

⁵ See Marshall, 'Pentecostalism in Southern Nigeria. An overview', p. 15. See also, Harvey G. Cox, *Fire from heaven. The rise of Pentecostal spirituality and the shaping of religion in the twenty-first century*, (Addison-Wesley Publishing Coy., 1995), p. 318; Daniel R. McConnell in his book *A different gospel. A historical and biblical analysis of the faith movement*, updated version, (Peabody: Hendrikson, 1995) attributes the origins of the 'faith movement' to cults such as New Thought and Christian Science. He, however, acknowledges the fact that it was as a brand of Pentecostalism that the faith movement and its teachings were mediated and introduced to orthodox Christianity. In this study we shall examine the 'prosperity gospel' under the aegis of Pentecostalism.

basically states that prosperity is an aspect of the redemption, even of the atonement, as will be seen later:

...Success is your birthright! If you are born again, it is your redemptive right, your destiny in God...Success is your kingdom right...success is your heritage in Christ; it is your covenant birthright in redemption. Failure is an abuse on redemption, because Jesus came down to take you up.⁶

Quite a substantial amount of work has been done on Pentecostalism given that it accounts for the growth of Christianity in many countries and especially in the two-thirds majority of the world. Walter Hollenweger's *The Pentecostals*, a descriptive analysis of Pentecostalism in terms of its history, beliefs and practices takes a pride of place among other works. Harvey Cox's *Fire from heaven* is noteworthy for its sympathetic presentation of Pentecostalism and its presentation as a world-wide phenomenon. Hollenweger's relatively more recent *Pentecostalism: Origins and developments worldwide* traces the five roots of Pentecostals and appeals to Pentecostals to be involved in ecumenical efforts. These works are similar in that they capture Pentecostalism as a global phenomenon traceable to the Azusa revival of 1906. Allan Anderson's *An introduction to Pentecostalism* also shares this similarity albeit from a Pentecostal himself. Foremost among scholars on the African continent is Paul Gifford, a sociologist,⁷ who writes on the Pentecostal experience in Africa generally as well as particular countries such as South Africa, Ghana and Liberia. He often focuses on the impact of such Pentecostal expressions in the society. He notes that a focus of teaching on 'prosperity' is a feature of the new churches in these countries and attributes the rise of this teaching to the influence of American televangelists.

⁶ See David O. Oyedepo, *Exploring the secrets of success*. (Dominion Publishing House: Lagos, 2004), pp. 5, 6.

⁷ Paul Gifford, 'Prosperity: A new and foreign element in African Christianity', *Religion* 20 (1990), pp. 373-388; *Ghana's new Christianity. Pentecostalism in a globalizing African economy*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004). This researcher is grateful for the encouragement received from Professor Gifford when he was on a visit to the School of Religion and Theology, UKZN in 2008.

Blazing the trail in giving an account of the Nigerian pentecostal experience among the youth is Matthews A. Ojo's Ph.D dissertation titled 'The growth of campus Christianity and charismatic movements in Western Nigeria'⁸. In this seminal work, Ojo traces the origins of organized Christian youth movements in the country, discusses the rise, practices and beliefs of non denominational charismatic movements on campuses and the emergence of denominational churches as an out growth of such expressions. His more recent work partly based on the dissertation is *The end-time army*. Ruth Marshall, following after Ojo and yet carving a niche for herself, examines the churches that emerged as a result of campus Christianity. She prefers to refer to them as 'born-again' and goes on to describe the differences observable among them in terms of their teaching and preaching emphasis on holiness and on prosperity. This difference she notes is clearly observed between the older churches (Classical Pentecostals) and the newer ones, the latter being prosperity preaching while the former holiness. Like Gifford, she comments on the impact of Pentecostals in the society⁹. Her newest work, *Political spiritualities: the Pentecostal revolution in Nigeria*, succinctly presents the fruits of her observations and views over the years on the Nigerian phenomenon.

We shall note that in all these works no mention is made of the mode of interpretation employed by these prosperity preachers to get their message from the Bible. It is this gap that this study is set to address.

1.2.2. Yoruba Culture

Culture is used in an inclusive sense here to talk about values and norms that underlie realities in human communities.

⁸ Matthews A. Ojo, 'The growth of campus Christianity and charismatic movements in Western Nigeria', unpublished Ph.D dissertation, King's College, University of London, 1986.

⁹ Ruth Marshall, ' "God is not a democrat": Pentecostalism and democratization in Nigeria', in Paul Gifford (ed), *The Christian Churches and the democratization of Africa* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), pp. 239-260. See also her, 'Pentecostalism in Southern Nigeria: An overview', in Paul Gifford (ed), *New dimensions in African Christianity* (Nairobi: All Africa Conference of Churches, 1992), p. 9.

These values are deduced from the religious systems and stories of the people. In this particular case we shall briefly examine the Yoruba religious system and note the worldview that lies behind such a system as Charles Kraft says:

Cultures pattern perceptions of reality into conceptualizations of what reality can, or should be, what is to be regarded as actual, probable, possible, and impossible. These conceptualizations form what is termed the 'worldview' of the culture.¹⁰

One of the surprises that visitors to the Yoruba culture encounter is the multitude of objects of veneration. They range from physical features like mountains and rivers to dead kings and ancestors; inexplicable plagues like small pox; personal destiny/inner head (*ori*); gods and goddesses. As G.J.A. Ojo says:

... the multiplicity of Yoruba gods is a logical consequence of their keen recognition of the numerous elements in their physical and biological environment, their awareness of the associated problems and their determination to solve the problems in the ways they know best ...¹¹

By this Ojo means that the Yoruba while observing some inexplicable phenomena like the outbreak of small pox, decide to worship or venerate it with the intent of ameliorating or curbing its deadly influence. This, of course, betrays a certain worldview, one in which matter is not self-existing, something happens because something else caused it. Samuel Johnson's *The history of the Yorubas*¹² only devotes about fourteen pages out of a total of more than six hundred pages to a description of the Yoruba religion, his concern being about the origin of the Yoruba and their numerous wars. His is purely descriptive, identifying the objects of worship without providing any

¹⁰ See Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in culture. A study in dynamic biblical theologizing in cross-cultural perspective*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1984), p. 53.

¹¹ G.J.A. Ojo, *Yoruba culture. A geographical analysis*, (London: University of London Press Ltd, 1966), p. 184.

¹² Samuel Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas. From the earliest times to the beginning of the British protectorate*, (London: S.C.M., 1921).

interpretation to his observations. Omosade Awolalu's work¹³ engages the Yoruba religion; he enumerates the objects of Yoruba belief like God, divinities, ancestors and what he calls mysterious powers. He goes on to identify the types of sacrifices and the purposes for sacrifices. Yet his work is not far reaching enough to unearth the underlying worldview behind sacrificial rites. This void is ably filled by Peel in his *Religious encounter and the making of the Yoruba*. His observation of the prayers offered by Yoruba people led him to conclude, "Yoruba religion was directed to certain ends - health, prosperity, long-life, and so forth, in a word *Alafia*"¹⁴. He describes *alafia* as "a term usually translated 'peace' but which has a much broader connotation, to embrace health, success, and prosperity"¹⁵. Christianity's promise of *alafia*, he posits, was a main point of its attraction for the Yoruba:

Personal protection from enemies seen and unseen, healing and fertility, practical guidance through the uncertainties of life all summed up in that state of worldly well-being called *alafia* - these were the fruits of power which Yoruba most looked for from Christianity, as from all other cults¹⁶

Peel notes the relationship between *alafia* and the prosperity gospel when he says:

When a leading born-again advocate of the fashionable 'gospel of prosperity' defines it as a state of well-being in your spirit and body...a life of plenty and fulfilment...life on a big scale his idea of it hardly differs from the traditional notion of *alafia*¹⁷

An earlier work¹⁸ that corroborates Peel's understanding of Yoruba traditional religion, written, albeit, for the purpose of justifying the propagation of Christianity among the Yoruba from a Western missionary perspective is quite insightful, though pejorative. Farrow concludes that the

¹³ Omosade Awolalu, *Yoruba beliefs and sacrificial rites*, ((Essex: Longman Group Ltd., 1979).

¹⁴ J.D.Y. Peel, *Religious encounter and the making of the Yoruba*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 185.

¹⁵ J.D.Y. Peel, *Religious encounter*, p. 91.

¹⁶ J.D.Y. Peel, *Religious encounter*, p. 219.

¹⁷ J.D.Y. Peel, *Religious encounter*, p. 318.

¹⁸ Stephen S. Farrow, *Faith, fancies and fetich or Yoruba paganism*, (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1926).

purpose of worship by pagan Yoruba was "...entirely mundane and materialistic. He is seeking a physical salvation from present evil".¹⁹ His observation of the sacrifices and prayers offered by the Yoruba leads him to posit: "we see that the whole aim and object of our Yoruba pagan appears to be temporal advantage, prosperity, comfort and peace"²⁰.

1.2.3. The Text and Context of John 10:10

One of the distinctives of the gospel of John is its usage of the word *life*²¹ (ζωή) and its cognates. The word is sometimes used interchangeably with *eternal life* ζωή αἰώνιον, and sometimes the adjective is used to modify a noun for instance, as in living bread, living water. John 10:10 is one verse where the word is not explicitly linked to eternal life in its usage. This, perhaps, accounts for the different ways this verse has been understood. Quite a number of scholars²² understand John 10:10 in light of John 1: 4, which has an implicit reference to eternal life because of its juxtaposition with light. R.V.G. Tasker's interpretation of John 10:10 is worth quoting in full:

Those who are really 'His own' listen to His voice. They recognize that He has been sent from God, and are ready to follow him as the good Shepherd, who by his sacrificial love rescues His flock from evil and death, and leads them into the best of all pasturage where they can enjoy a richer and a fuller life (9,10). He does not offer them an extension of physical life nor an increase of material possessions, but the possibility, nay the certainty, of a life lived at a higher level in obedience to God's will and reflecting His glory²³.

¹⁹ Farrow, *Faith, fancies and fetich*, p. 138.

²⁰ Farrow, *Faith, fancies and fetich*, p. 140.

²¹ Leon Morris notes that John uses the term 36 times and this accounts for more than a quarter of the use of the term in the New Testament, *The gospel according to John. The English text with introduction, exposition and notes*, (Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1971), p. 82.

²² Morris, 1971, p. 82; C.K. Barrett, *The gospel according to St John. An introduction with commentary and notes of the Greek text*, (London: S.P.C.K., 1978); Craig Keener, though, does not directly link this verse to John 1:4, but he also understands life in John 10:10 as a synonym of eternal life, *The gospel of John. A commentary*, vol. one, (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers Inc., 2003), p. 813.

²³ R.V.G. Tasker, *John: an introduction and commentary*, (London: The Tyndale Press, 1960), p.130.

Tasker seems to have at once dealt a terrible blow to the interpretation of preachers of the prosperity gospel. Yet, his is not the only interpretation, though he seems to speak for the majority of Western scholars. Hendricksen has another related angle to the same verse:

The exact opposite of killing and destroying is *making alive*. And the exact opposite of the thief is the good Shepherd, Christ. So Jesus says "I came in order that they (i.e., people; here *the sheep*) may have *life*...and may have *abundance* (of grace, 1:16; cf Rom. 5:17, 20; Eph. 1:7,8; of joy II Cor. 8:2; of peace, Jer. 33:6)²⁴.

We have seen how these two interpreters have filled the *gaps*²⁵ they perceived in the texts. Interpretations are undoubtedly influenced by the reader's context among other things and these interpretations are no exceptions. They are influenced by the modern context of these readers: a context that separates the material world from the spiritual. This is especially noteworthy considering the fact that the fourth gospel sees life as the present possession of a believer in the present world and not just a future possession. The use of a figure of speech (sheep/shepherd) in this verse is not in doubt, what is, perhaps, problematic is the extent to which one can or should extend the figure of speech. Carson notes that within the confines of the analogy, "*life... to the full suggests fat, contented, flourishing sheep, not terrorized by brigands*"²⁶. However, in relating the passage to the disciples he opts for an understanding that sees life only in its spiritual dimension. The fact that the adjective 'abundantly' has been used to qualify the noun *life* is also to be taken note of, for in its ordinary usage, the adjective has a sense of surplus.

Of note also is the position of chapter 10 in John's gospel; directly preceding chapter 10 is an account of the man born blind whom Jesus healed in chapter

²⁴ William Hendriksen, *New Testament commentary. Exposition of the gospel according to John*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953), p. 110.

²⁵ Wolfgang Iser in many of his works mentions gaps and sometimes calls them blanks, or places of indeterminacy or vacancy. See *The act of reading. A theory of aesthetic response*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 169; *Prospecting. From reader response to literary anthropology*, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1989), p. 9.

²⁶ D.A. Carson, *The pillar New Testament commentaries. The gospel according to John*, (Leicester: Apollos, 1991), p. 385

9, and following after chapter 10 is an account of the resurrection of Lazarus in chapter 11, where the concept of life from death took a literal form in the raising of Lazarus, an event that foreshadowed Jesus' own resurrection. Perhaps, nearer home to John 10:10 is verse 9 of the same chapter that talks of the sheep going in and out to find pasture, an allusion to the fact that pasture is needed for the sustenance of the sheep. This understanding has been at the background of the social concerns and praxis of some Christian organizations such as the World Council of Churches²⁷, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America²⁸. This study shall tease out these different understandings and the underlying presuppositions.

To engage the attention of this study, in addition to the aforementioned, is the socio-cultural background of the gospel of John in terms of the events it records and the background discernible from the writing.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

In light of the discussion above, one of the objectives of this study is to gain an understanding of the prosperity gospel in terms of its hermeneutics and motivation. In order to achieve this, this study will define the prosperity gospel and ask what is the religio-socio-economic-political crucible that forged it? To answer this question, this study charts the trajectory of biblical hermeneutics among the Yoruba until present time. In this frame, particular attention is given to the period between 1970 and the present time, for this period captures the immediate context of the prosperity gospel.

Fundamental to the argument that prosperity is for believers today, as advocated by the prosperity preachers, is the contention of these preachers that prosperity is enshrined in the atonement. This shall lead us to inquire

²⁷ Stuart J. Kingman, the director of the Christian Medical Commission of the W.C.C. alludes to this view in his article 'Mere survival or a more abundant life', *Ecumenical Review* 33:3 (July 1981), pp. 257-271.

²⁸ Frederick.J. Gaiser's editorial comment, 'abundant life: here and hereafter', *Word and World* 21:4 (Fall, 2001), pp. 331-332.

how prosperity is enshrined in the atonement. Of related interest also is how the preachers of prosperity gospel describe the principles they employ to interpret scriptures. So we shall pose the question: how do preachers of prosperity gospel describe the hermeneutical principles they employ to interpret scriptures? These questions and aims shall guide our discussion and analysis.

1.4. Principal Theories employed in the Study

1.4.1. Draper's Tripolar Model

This study shall adopt the contextual model of Jonathan Draper.²⁹ This model is tripolar, for it consists of three basic elements or poles that should be in conversation: the text and its context, the reader and her context, and appropriation. This model is appropriate for an analysis of the use of John in the prosperity message. This is because it has its roots in the Yoruba culture (the pole of the reader) and draws on scripture passages to authenticate its claims (the pole of the text) and results in praxis. Two basic texts that are often used by the prosperity preachers are John 10:10 and 2 John: 2.³⁰ I choose to work with John 10:10 because it is related to a theme that is well discussed in the fourth gospel – the theme of life, so there is more context of the passage to work with and this is quite helpful for analysis.

In one sense, the prosperity gospel is an *appropriation*. This is because it is seemingly the product of an interaction between some texts of Scripture and the reader (Yoruba in this case), as Peel seems to suggest in his work. However, it is without any analysis of the text and its context or reader and

²⁹ Jonathan Draper explains this model in his 'Reading the Bible as conversation. A theory and methodology for contextual interpretation of the Bible in Africa', *Grace and Truth. A journal of catholic reflection for Southern Africa* 19 (2000:2), pp. 12-24; 'Old scores and new notes. Where and what is contextual exegesis in the new South Africa', in McGlory T. Speckman & Larry T. Kaufmann (eds), *Towards an agenda for contextual theology. Essays in honour of Albert Nolan*. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2001), pp. 148-168.

³⁰ John 10:10 "...but I am come that they mayest have life and have it abundantly"; 2 John: 2 "beloved I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health as thy soul prospereth". The passages have been rendered in the King James' version for this is the favorite of most Nigerian Pentecostals.

context, so that the appropriation of the text does not arise out of a genuine “dialogue” in Draper’s sense. It is to this end that this study is urging a re-reading of one of these texts of scripture, John 10:10 and explore a new appropriation.

1.4.2. Relevance Theory

Relevance Theory (RT) as a theory of communication is being used as a sub-theory in this work to tease out what happens in the interaction between a Yoruba reader and the text of John 10:10. Relevance theory, henceforth called RT, looks principally at communication from the perspective of the hearer and is therefore, very helpful in analysing the second pole of the tripolar, known as *contextualization*. RT is a linguistic theory of communication that is based on human cognition as propounded by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson. RT is used in this study as an analytical tool to unravel the underpinnings behind the prosperity gospel preachers’ use of John 10:10.

The first pole of the tripolar model is called *distantiation*. Draper in this pole urges an interpreter to note that these texts were not written directly to us and so we must maintain a respectable distance from the text so as to allow it speak for itself in its own context. Literary approach shall be used to explore the contours of the text in terms of its grammatical-literary cues within its cultural context.

‘Prosperity gospel’, by virtue of its close affiliation with Yoruba culture, poses no challenge to it. Marshall, talking about the ‘prosperity’ churches says:

...they inevitably reinforce the existing class and status divisions, play into the same strategies of getting and keeping power, and reproduce, albeit in a modified form, the same symbols of prestige that are found in Nigerian society in general.³¹

³¹ Marshall, ‘Pentecostalism in Southern Nigeria’, p. 18.

It is to this end that the third pole of Draper's model about appropriation which includes interpretation and praxis is relevant. This deals with the implication of the interaction between the text and the reader, and how this affects the conduct of believers.

1.5. Research Methodology and Methods

This study is both a literary and an empirical study. A literary study in terms of its textual (literary) analysis of the scripture passage, John 10:10. It is also an empirical study because it focuses on a "contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context"³² and hence adopts a case study approach. This is because the study investigates the use of *life* in John 10:10 and its interpretation among some Yoruba preachers of the prosperity gospel. Broadly speaking then, the study falls under the purview of qualitative study for the quest of this study is to "make sense of feelings, experiences, social situations, or phenomenon as they occur in the real world, and therefore want to study them in their natural setting."³³

1.5.1. Methods:

1.5.1.1. Open-ended Interviews

Preliminary open-ended qualitative interviews with various members and clergy from different denominations was conducted. This was to ascertain their viewpoints concerning the prosperity gospel and its preachers. 19 people were interviewed with the following breakdown: 3 women, 16 men, only one of the men was not a clergy. The interview was conducted in January 2009 and later in January 2010 in the city of Ibadan. Cities are epicentres of the prosperity gospel.³⁴

³² Robert K Yin, *Case study: Design and methods*. (Beverly Hills: SAGE publications Inc., 1984), p. 13.

³³ Terre Blanche, Martin & Kevin Durrheim, *Study in practice. Applied methods for the social sciences*, (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1999), p. 287.

³⁴ See Asonzeh Ukah, 'Pentecostalism, religious expansion and the city. Lessons from the Nigerian bible belt' in Peter Probst and Gerd Spittler (eds.), *Between resistance and expansion*.

1.5.1.2. Focussed interview

Focussed interviews with three church leaders was conducted. These are Bishop Francis Wale Oke of Sword of the Spirit Ministries, Bishop David Olaniyi Oyedepo of the Living Faith Church Worldwide (Winners' Chapel), who reports that he received a commission from God in 1987 "to make my people rich".³⁵ The researcher could not meet with Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye, the General Overseer (GO) of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), but met with Pastor Olu Obanure, Special Assistant to the General Overseer. While the open-ended interview gives what we may regard as outsiders' view of the prosperity gospel, the focussed interview gives the practitioners of prosperity gospel's view, although largely limited to male clergy.

1.5.2. Participant Observation

The researcher attended some of the activities of some of the churches, like Sunday services, night vigil, Sunday school/bible study meetings.

1.5.3. Documentation

Some of the literature produced by these churches is examined.

They are church news bulletins, programs of service, books, pamphlets, newsletters and other document of interest. As Yin states, documents are most useful for the corroboration of evidence³⁶.

1.6. Structure of dissertation

Chapter 1 of the work is an introduction to the study and deals with issues of background, motivation for the study, study problem, and definition of terms. This chapter introduces the reader to the issues that the study shall address.

Explorations of local vitality in Africa, (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2004), pp. 415-417.

³⁵ David O. Oyedepo, *Breaking financial hardship*, (Lagos: Dominion Publishing House, 1995), p. 56.

³⁶ Yin, *Case study*, p. 80.

Chapter 2 sets the theoretical framework and methodology of the study. It discusses the theories and sub-theories that are used in this work, noting their interactions and limitations. Chapter 3 describes the socio-cultural and political context of the Yoruba. The chapter sets the general context in which to situate the Yoruba prosperity preacher and his audience.³⁷ Chapter 4 describes the inception and growth of Christianity among the Yoruba and how it is impacted by the Yoruba culture. Chapters 5 and 6 are about the context and text of John 10:10 respectively, links with the Yoruba culture that facilitate a conversation are noted as well. Chapter 7 describes and analyzes the message of the three prosperity preachers mentioned earlier. Chapter 8 serves as conclusion to the study.

³⁷ Most of the preachers within the Pentecostal tradition are male.

CHAPTER 2 - THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0. Introduction

This study employs Draper's tri-polar model, which in turn is modeled after Christina Grenholm and Daniel Patte's tri-polar interpretive process.³⁸ The objective of this chapter is to describe Draper's tri-polar model and how Relevance Theory (RT afterwards) shall be applied within it. Put succinctly, the research questions of this chapter are: What constitutes Draper's tri-polar model? What is RT and how does it operate within Draper's tri-polar model? And finally, what are the critiques of RT in light of this research?

2.1. Draper's Tri-polar Model

Draper's tri-polar model is a modification of Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte's scriptural criticism³⁹. Grenholm and Patte's scriptural criticism employs a tri-polar model that consists of the pole of scriptural text, the pole of the life context of the believer-reader and the pole of the religious perception of life of the believer-reader⁴⁰. The interpretative model advocated by Draper is contextual. For Draper, the quest of interpretation is not for a historical meaning that must then be applied to a contemporary context. Meaning is made in the interaction between the text and the reader; there is room, therefore, for multiple meanings. Draper asserts:

The same text will have a significantly different meaning depending on who is engaging in a conversation with it. Even if the text stays "the same", the change of conversation partner will result in a shift of point of view small or great, depending on what the new conversation partner brings to the dialogue⁴¹.

³⁸ Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte's *Reading Israel in Romans. Legitimacy and plausibility of divergent interpretations*, (Harrisburg:Trinity Press International, 2000), p. 14ff.

³⁹ Jonathan Draper, 'Old scores and new notes. Where and what is contextual exegesis in the New South Africa?' in McGlory Speckman and Larry Kaufmann (eds.) *Towards an agenda for contextual theology. Essays in honour of Albert Nolan*, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2000, pp. 153.

⁴⁰ Grenholm & Patte, 2000, p. 35

⁴¹ Jonathan Draper, 'Reading the bible as conversation. A theory and methodology for contextual interpretation of the bible in Africa' *Grace and Truth*, vol.19:2, 2002, p. 13.

Draper's model has three poles namely: distantiation, contextualization and appropriation. Let us take time to look at each one of them.

2.1.1. Distantiation

Basic to the idea behind distantiation is that all texts originate in a specific context which determines the meaning for its original hearers/readers. In the case of John's Gospel, we are dealing with an ancient text written at a time that is far removed from our contemporary time. In addition to this is the fact that the texts were not primarily addressed to us. Furthermore the mode of 'reading' envisaged by the text is a hearing of the text in a communal setting.⁴² These differences and more make it an imperative that:

The readers or reading community allow the text to speak for itself by creating space or critical distance between themselves and the text. It must be allowed to be the other, different, over against ourselves and our concerns and questions. It is rooted in a specific historical, social, cultural and economic context. It is addressing its own questions relating to its needs. Its language of composition and rhetorical conventions are different to ours and so is its world-view. Hence, exegesis should consider both the *context of the text*, and how it came into being, and the *structure of the text*, and how it signals meaning and seeks to manipulate the reader.⁴³

2.1.2. Contextualization

The focus of this pole is the reader-believer who is to engage the text in a conversation. The underlying assumption behind the idea of contextualization is that perceptions are determined by expectations. In the case of the act of reading texts, there are no "innocent readings". Readers approach the text with their cultural assumptions, presuppositions, questions, hopes and expectations. Making the context of the reader explicit brings to the fore the fact that the reader is engaging in a contextual reading of the text. There is some sense of transparency and an acknowledgement that there is plurality of understandings of a particular text. The text is not an object of scrutiny by a neutral observer, the world of the text is called to engage the

⁴² Draper, 'Old scores and new notes', pp. 151-2

⁴³ Ibid, pp. 155-6

world of the reader. Roughly speaking, while distantiation may be said to take care of what the text meant, contextualization is more about the possibilities of the text for the present reader. Contextualization, Draper says, focuses:

Specifically on analysis and evaluation of the context of the reader/hearer today. We need to understand who we are as readers and what the questions are which we bring to the text. ...All of the analysis we undertake at this stage will be aimed at understanding ourselves as historical beings rooted in a specific time and place⁴⁴.

2.1.3. Appropriation

This is the result of the interaction between the poles of distantiation and contextualization. Together, the text and the reader create meaning that informs the behavior or praxis of the believer. Herein lies the integrity of the interpretive process, that it informs the conduct of believers.

Appropriation ... is a process of owning the Word, of accepting the meaning I have discovered in my own context and community and taking responsibility for it. In other words, my understanding of this phase of the interpretive process includes the understanding that it results in changed behaviour, in action in and through the community of faith in society⁴⁵.

2.1.4. Application of the model in the study

In a concrete sense Draper's tri-polar model charts the course for the rest of the chapters of this study. Chapters three and four shall explore the pole of contextualization by locating the Yoruba reader within her socio-cultural cum political context. Chapters five and six shall engage the distantiation pole by looking closely at the text under consideration: John 10:10. The text shall be analyzed in terms of its socio-historical and literary context. Chapter seven shall engage the appropriation pole by focusing on some of the preachers of the prosperity gospel. The contention of this study is that, at a certain level we may say that, the prosperity gospel is an appropriation. It may be seen as the

⁴⁴ Draper, 'Old scores and new notes', p. 157.

⁴⁵ Draper, 'Reading the bible as conversation', p. 18.

product of the interaction between the context of the believer and that of the text. It may be argued that we, perhaps, have more of the context of the reader than that of the text in this form of appropriation (the prosperity gospel). However, the fact remains that the prosperity gospel with its rich cultural root and an overlay of scriptural texts informs the praxis of its adherents. Other believers' concern⁴⁶ that this appropriation needs revision, because neither the pole of distantiation nor the pole of contextualization was given full voice in the interaction of the poles, is one reason why this study seeks a re-reading. It is hoped that such a re-reading will lead to a new appropriation.

However, a few modifications are made to Draper's tri-polar model. For instance, where Draper would mainly employ socio-historical or literary analysis⁴⁷ this study seeks to use RT in addition to interrogate the text. RT shall also come in handy in the analysis of the context of the Yoruba reader. Let us then have a look at what RT is all about.

2.2. Relevance Theory

While RT is a full-blown theory on its own, in this work it is being used as a sub-theory within Draper's tri-polar model. RT is a linguistic theory of communication that is based on cognition. It is concerned with the speaker's meaning and how hearers access it. RT seems to have a bias for verbal communication but this does not render it unuseful for analyzing written communication. Biblical scholars such as Gene Green, Margaret Sim and Stephen Pattemore have successfully applied RT to Biblical Studies, Green has analyzed the relationship between RT and biblical interpretation, Sim has

⁴⁶ Gordon Fee, *The disease of the health and wealth gospels*, Beverly: Frontline Publishing, 1985; Kenneth E. Hagin, *The Midas touch. A balanced approach to biblical prosperity*, (Tulsa: Faith Library Publications, 2000); E.M. Okwori, *Godliness for gain*, ((Jos): CAPRO Media Services, 1995).

⁴⁷ Gerald West, 'Interpreting "the exile" in African biblical scholarship. An ideo-theological dilemma in post colonial South Africa' in Bob Becking and Dirk Human (eds.) *Exile and suffering. A selection of papers read at the 50th anniversary meeting of the OTWSA*, Leiden: Brill, 2007, p. 247-267.

applied RT to Koine Greek and Pattemore has applied RT to the study of the book of Revelation⁴⁸. RT makes two basic claims⁴⁹:

- (1) Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance.
- (2) Every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance.

The first claim is known as the first principle of relevance or the cognitive principle, while the second claim is the second principle of relevance or the communicative principle. It is on these two principles that RT rests, and we, therefore, need to look more closely at these principles.

2.2.1. The Cognitive Principle

Human cognition (knowledge, intuitions, perceptions, etc) has a tendency for maximizing relevance. *Relevance* in this sense is a technical word depicting a state of affairs that results from the interaction of old and new information or assumptions. Humans by way of socialization hold assumptions, have beliefs and perceptions about states of affairs in the world. In the course of interaction with other people and other contexts new information is acquired. The interaction between the new piece of information and the old information (assumptions, beliefs, perception) can result in three states of affairs. One is a situation where old information/assumption is confirmed or strengthened, second is where old information is contradicted and therefore abandoned, and third is where the interaction between the old and new leads to a new conclusion which is known as contextual implication.⁵⁰ All of these three

⁴⁸ I am grateful to Professor Gene Green who made his work available to me. See Gene Green's 'Context and communication: relevance theory and biblical interpretation' unpublished manuscript, University College London, 2001; I am also grateful to Dr. Ronnie Sim who made available to me some chapters of Stephen Pattemore's dissertation. See Stephen Pattemore's Ph.D dissertation: "The people of God in the Apocalypse. A relevance-theoretic study", University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand, 2000, The dissertation has been published into a book *The people of God in the apocalypse. Discourse, structure and exegesis*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Thanks also goes to Dr. Margaret Sim who forwarded some relevant sections of her dissertation to me. See Margaret Sim's Ph.D dissertation: "A relevance theoretic approach to the particle 'hina' in Koine Greek", University of Edinburgh, 2006.

⁴⁹ Sperber and Wilson, 1995, p. 260.

⁵⁰ Sperber and Wilson, 1995, p. 118

possible results of the interaction between old and new information are gains to cognition and known as *cognitive effects*⁵¹. It is at the point of achieving cognitive effects that relevance is said to have been attained. That is, the new piece of information that interacts with the old to produce any cognitive effect is said to be *relevant*. The greater the cognitive effect, the greater the relevance. However, this is only part of the story, for achieving any cognitive effect comes at a cost. The interaction of new information with the old involves expending mental processing effort. The lesser the processing effort expended to achieve the greatest cognitive effects, the greater the relevance. *Relevance* is, therefore, the modification of one's cognitive environment at little cost or the achievement of cognitive effects at little cost.

2.2.2. The Communicative Principle

Every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance.

This principle is not just about any form of communication, but about ostensive communication. Generally, an ostensive behavior is one that seeks to draw the attention of someone to something. Gene Green puts it clearly:

In ostensive communication, the desire of the communicator is to make known not only information or set of assumptions but also she wants the addressee to recognize her intent to communicate those assumptions.⁵²

Ostensive communication is a deliberate act, where both partners are aware that certain thoughts, information, assumptions are being put forward in the public arena for their attention. Therefore, we can say that ostensive communication is all about *mutual manifestness*.

A fact is said to be manifest to an individual at a given time if and only if he is capable at that time of representing it mentally and accepting its representation as true or probably true⁵³

⁵¹ In the earlier writings of Sperber and Wilson cognitive effects was referred to as contextual effects.

⁵² Gene Green, 'Context', p. 6

⁵³ Sperber and Wilson, 1995, p. 39.

In other words, we can say that ostensive communication is one where a communicator draws the attention of her interlocutor to what she wants to make manifest to him. In that case both of them experience mutual manifestness concerning the assumptions or information. Recasting the communicative principle in ordinary parlance, we may state that every instance where a communicator shows her intention to communicate something to her interlocutor gives an assurance to the interlocutor/addressee that what she wants to say is optimally relevant to him.⁵⁴

Common to both principles (the cognitive and the communicative) is the notion of *relevance* and we find that this notion is crucial both for the writer and the reader⁵⁵. It motivates the writer to use the most relevant means to communicate in a manner that guides the reader to infer her meaning, and it also creates in the reader an expectation of relevance that urges him to make sense of the writing. The aspect of relevance is so prevalent that it determines how we read and what context we choose for our interpretative task among other things. However, before we look at the relationship between the notion of relevance and other concepts that are important for communication, let us look at some background matters that give rise or significance to the notion of relevance.

2.2.3. Background Issues

2.2.3.1. *Underdeterminacy of the text*

Quite a number of scholars like Robyn Carston⁵⁶ and Gene Green⁵⁷ agree on the fact that meaning is more than syntax and morphology, and more than coding and decoding. In addition, it is virtually impossible for a writer to

⁵⁴ I have followed the practice of some literature written on RT that uses feminine pronouns for writers/speakers and masculine pronoun for readers/ hearers

⁵⁵ 'Writer' here is being used to refer also to speaker and 'readers' to hearers.

⁵⁶ Robyn Carston, 'Code and inference. The meaning of words in context' in C. Fabricius-Hansen et al (eds.) *Explicit and Implicit information in text information structure across languages* (Pre-proceedings of the SPRIK conference, Oslo 8-10 June, 2006), pp. 3-6.

⁵⁷ Gene Green, 'Context and Communication', p. 17

express or exhaust all she has in mind by writing/speaking. This necessarily means that literary works come to us with *gaps*⁵⁸. These gaps must be filled in or supplied by the reader. This scenario brings about an interaction between the text/author and the reader. The author leaves cues within the text that guides the reader into making inferences to fill in the gaps. Sometimes these gaps exist because the writer assumes that she shares the same context as the reader and for this reason leave a lot to his imagination. Some other writers, depending on the genre they are writing in, deliberately make use of ambiguities, allusions, figures of speech and so on for the sole purpose of tantalizing the imagination of their readers, so that together they make the meaning(s) of the text. We find this latter category mainly in poetry and fiction. We can conclude then, that to a lesser or greater degree, gaps are inevitable in any piece of writing. A host of contemporary writers help their readers by sometimes supplying some of the context that informed or served as background to their writing. Biblical scholars have found that we do not get so much help when reading ancient works. The importance of context in understanding ancient works is so crucial that for some it is a field they solely specialize on. Draper's tri-polar model makes much of the context of the text and that of the reader so that context is a big issue to deal with in this study. We may then wonder what RT has to say about context.

2.2.3.2. *Relevance Theory and Context*

For RT context is critical to a reader's understanding or interpretation of any piece of information⁵⁹. Context is defined or understood to be:

The set of premises used in interpreting an utterance....A context is a psychological construct, a subset of the hearer's assumptions about the world. It is these assumptions, of course, rather than the actual

⁵⁸ For Wolfgang Iser *gaps* in a text are omissions in the text that are left to the reader to repair. See *The implied reader. Patterns of communication in prose fiction from Bunyan to Beckett*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), pp 36, 40.

⁵⁹ As mentioned earlier, RT seems to have been developed specifically with verbal communication in view. This is understandable because it is a linguistic theory. In most writings on RT, mention is made of utterances, and examples of face to face communication between two interlocutors are often given. Necessary amendments to RT postulations shall be made where possible to suit written communication which is the focus of this study.

state of the world, that affect the interpretation of an utterance. A context in this sense is not limited to information about the immediate physical environment or the immediately preceding utterances: expectations about the future, scientific hypotheses or religious beliefs, anecdotal memories, general cultural assumptions, beliefs about the mental state of the speaker, may all play a role in interpretation⁶⁰

Though the definition above comes mainly from the point of view of the reader, the same definition can apply with minor changes to the context of the writer. One notable fact about this definition is that it impresses on one how large and, with regard to ancient writing, how intractable context can be. Sperber and Wilson echo a similar concern when they write:

We have so far suggested that the choice of a context for inferential processes in general, and for comprehension in particular, is partly determined at any given time by the contents of the memory of the deductive device, those of the general-purpose short-term memory store, and those of the encyclopaedia, and by the information that can be immediately picked up from the physical environment. These factors determine not a single context but a range of possible contexts. What determines the selection of a particular context out of that range? Our answer is that the selection of a particular context is determined by the search for relevance⁶¹

RT claims that the writer of the gospel has employed the most relevant means (genre of writing) within her capability and preferences to communicate.⁶² RT also claims that the original readers of the gospel would have received the gospel with the expectation that the piece of writing was relevant enough to be worthy of their effort of processing it. With regard to context, RT says:

... people hope that the assumption being processed is relevant, and they try to select a context which will justify that hope: a context which will maximize relevance⁶³.

⁶⁰ Sperber and Wilson, 1995, pp.15-16

⁶¹ Sperber and Wilson, 1995, p. 141.

⁶² Sperber and Wilson, 1995, p. 270

⁶³ Sperber and Wilson, 1995, p.142

Therefore, in a situation of multiple contexts, the deciding factor as to the choice of context is the notion of relevance, which is the maximization of cognitive effects at little processing cost.⁶⁴

2.2.3.3. *Cognitive Environment*

Mention has been made above of *cognitive environment* in our discussion of the cognitive principle. There, we defined relevance as the modification of one's cognitive environment at little cost. What is this cognitive environment and in what way, if any, does it differ from our understanding of context? Sperber and Wilson state: "a cognitive environment of an individual is a set of facts that are manifest to him."⁶⁵ Manifestness has been defined earlier as the capability of an individual at a particular time to represent a fact mentally and accept such a representation as true or probably true. Explaining further, Sperber and Wilson have this to say:

To be manifest, then, is to be perceptible or inferable. An individual's total cognitive environment is the set of all the facts that he can perceive or infer: all the facts that are manifest to him. An individual's total cognitive environment is a function of his physical environment and his cognitive abilities. It consists of not only all the facts that he is aware of, but also all the facts that he is capable of becoming aware of, in his physical environment. The individual's actual awareness of facts, i.e. the knowledge that he has acquired, of course contributes to his ability to become aware of further facts. Memorized information is a component of cognitive abilities.⁶⁶

If cognition is all about the acquisition of knowledge through reasoning, intuition and perception, then one's cognitive environment though would be informed by one's context, yet is bigger than one's context.⁶⁷ This is because it goes far beyond one's physical environment or cultural assumptions to include one's ability to intuit, infer or perceive. In this way also, though two

⁶⁴ One of the challenges faced by contemporary readers of the Bible is that the context shared by the writer and the original readers is elusive to them. Quite a number of them, in an attempt to make the message personal to them, forget that they do not necessarily share the same assumptions that formed the background to the writing of the book in the first place.

⁶⁵ Sperber and Wilson, 1995, p. 39

⁶⁶ Sperber and Wilson, 1995, p. 39.

⁶⁷ Gene Green, 'Context and Communication', p.10

people may share the same context, they will not necessarily have the same cognitive environment. In addition, for an ancient text that is considered sacred, the notion of cognitive ability or environment is quite poignant for our study, for it opens up the possibility of the writer receiving inspiration from the Divine.

To recap we may remind ourselves of the significance of cognitive environment for the notion of relevance postulated by RT. That is, an assumption or piece of information is considered to be relevant if it brings a modification to one's cognitive environment at little processing effort. Sperber and Wilson later revised this notion with respect to an individual with specific reference to cognitive effects. They noted that relevance in a context is different from relevance to an individual. For, while context is not a cognitive system an individual is. For this reason, while the truth or otherwise of a belief may not matter much in a context, it does matter to an individual whether what he believes is true or false.⁶⁸ For this reason, relevance to an individual is modified so that "an assumption is relevant to an individual at a given time if and only if it has some positive cognitive effect in one or more of the contexts accessible to him at that time."⁶⁹ The cognitive effect is said to be positive because of its positive contribution to the fulfillment of cognitive functions or goals, which may be a belief system. We can extend this to mean the positive modification of an individual's cognitive environment.

2.2.3.4. *Interpretation and RT*

One question that may arise from our reading so far is: from whose perspective is relevance viewed? Or put in another way, does the notion of *relevance* not promote/ lead to solipsism? Whereby all that matters is what is relevant for me, the reader? Sperber and Wilson have this to say:

To be consistent with the principle of relevance, an interpretation does not actually have to be optimally relevant to the addressee; it

⁶⁸ Sperber and Wilson, 1995, p. 265

⁶⁹ *ibid*

must merely have seemed so to the communicator. Conversely, the first optimally relevant interpretation may happen to be relevant in a way the communicator could not have foreseen; in this case, it is not consistent with the principle of relevance. In every case, the task of the addressee is to find an interpretation consistent with the principle of relevance – that is, an interpretation which the communicator could manifestly have expected to be optimally relevant. This task is of course made easier, but not essentially altered, when the addressee can trust the communicator, and can therefore assume that the intended interpretation is actually the first optimally relevant one to occur to him⁷⁰

While rescuing interpretation from the charge of solipsism, the quotation above seems to suggest that RT leans towards an author/text-centered interpretation. What then does this portend for the Draper tri-polar model?

Gene Green alludes to this when he says:

Authors speak, but readers truly do contribute something to the interpretive process. They are active and called upon to make inferences, but only those for which the author has given evidence and which are consistent with the communicative principle of relevance. Meaning is, therefore, not simply subject to readers and politics but rather the ones who speak are given full voice while readers enter into communication with them⁷¹.

In summary, the task of interpretation is the purview of readers, but this task is only made possible because of the existence of a text, so that we can say that there is a symbiotic relationship between the two (text and reader), each needs the other. RT's bias for authorial meaning fits in with the pole of distanciation in Draper's model that allows the text to be seen as the 'other'.

2.2.3.5. *RT and Inference*

An inferential process starts from a set of premises and results in a set of conclusions which follow logically from, or are at least warranted by, the premises.⁷²

⁷⁰ Sperber and Wilson, 1995, p. 169

⁷¹ Gene Green, 'Context and Communication, p.17

⁷² Sperber and Wilson, 1995, pp. 12-13.

Allusion has been made to the fact that readers are required to make inferences in order to fill in the gaps found in literature. By virtue of this, there is an on-going interaction between the text and the reader. There are different types of inferences that a reader can make. Some are explicit in the text such as assigning reference to pronouns or the disambiguation of deictic expressions, while some are implicit. The explicit ones, known as *explicatures*, are needed to complete the thoughts expressed in the statements. The implicit ones known as *implicatures* are the logical extensions of the thoughts expressed in the statement. Since these implicatures are not explicit in the text their derivation is traceable to the skill and sometimes the ingenuity of the reader. It is at this point that some writers protest that they were quoted out of context. But implicatures that are not warranted by the text are not binding on the author and cannot be considered relevant in RT terms. Perhaps some examples shall suffice at this juncture⁷³.

Peter: Would you drive a Mercedes?

Mary: I wouldn't drive ANY expensive car.

Conclusion: Mary would not drive a Mercedes.

This conclusion was reached on the basis of the inference Peter made in the process of finding Mary's reply relevant. This inference is not explicit and therefore is an implicature warranted by the communicative principle of relevance.

Peter could in fact go on to conclude the following:

A: Mary would not drive a Cadillac

B: Mary would not drive a Rolls Royce

While Mary has not specifically responded to the question of whether she would like to drive a Cadillac or a Rolls Royce, we may still say that her reply to Peter still warrants making these implicatures, for Rolls Royce and Cadillac are expensive cars. However, what if Peter in continuing to process Mary's reply constructs the following premise and conclusion:

⁷³ This example is from Sperber and Wilson , 1995, pp. 194-199

C: People who refuse to drive expensive cars disapprove of displays of wealth

D: Mary disapproves of displays of wealth

We can still suggest that D is warranted by Mary though it is weaker than A and B. But we can still get weaker implicatures such as the following:

E: People who would not drive an expensive car would not go on a cruise either

F: Mary would not go on a cruise.

There is really nothing in the utterance of Mary that she would not drive any expensive car to suggest that she would not go on a cruise. So that premise E and conclusion F are not really warranted by Mary's statement. Yet, it could be said that Peter has only interpreted Mary's speech in a manner that he finds relevant, in other words he has metarepresented Mary's utterance. This leads us to a consideration of the concept of metarepresentation.

2.2.3.6. *Metarepresentation and RT*

The notion of metarepresentation is critical for our study for it brings together the notions of meaning and communication. RT is a theory of communication and not of meaning, yet in a concrete sense it explains and explores the possibilities or vistas of meaning that a reader can access. The apparent discrepancy in RT's bias for author-centred (mediated through the text), and Draper's allowance of multiplicity of meanings is, perhaps, resolved in our understanding of the notion of metarepresentation. So what is metarepresentation? Metarepresentation is the "representation of a representation: a higher order representation with a lower order representation embedded within it".⁷⁴ It could be the representation of a thought or an utterance. All forms of quotations, whether direct, indirect, or paraphrase are considered as metarepresentation of utterances. However,

⁷⁴ Deirdre Wilson, 'Metarepresentation in linguistic communication' in Dan Sperber (ed.) *Metarepresentations. A multidisciplinary perspective*, London: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 411-448 as found on <http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/robyn/workshop/papers/wilson.htm>

there are varying degrees of resemblance between a representation and its original: it ranges from a rigid-resemblance end of the continuum typified by identity to a loose-resemblance end typified by content. Resemblance by identity between the representation and its original is metalinguistic and resemblance in content is interpretive.

Interpretive resemblance is resemblance in content: that is sharing of implications. Two representations resemble each other (in a context) to the extent that they share logical and contextual implications. The more implications they have in common the more they resemble each other. Identity is a special case of resemblance, in which two representations share all their implications in every context⁷⁵

Herein lies the contribution of the notion of metarepresentation to our discussion of Draper's model. RT acknowledges the plurality of understandings of writer's meaning by readers, for resemblance and not identity is the characteristic of metarepresentations.⁷⁶ RT, then, is concerned about the degree to which reader's meaning resembles the writer's meaning.

2.2.3.7. *Types of readers*

Deirdre Wilson in her paper⁷⁷ cites Sperber who differentiates between hearers, which for our purposes we shall take to read readers. RT states that readers will "follow a path of least effort in computing cognitive effects" by "considering interpretations in order of accessibility" and that the "reader stops further processing once his expectation of relevance is satisfied."⁷⁸ While the quest for relevance is common to all readers, they (readers) do not all have the same capability for comprehension. For this reason, readers have varying degrees of sophistication in their expectation of relevance.⁷⁹ Sperber as cited by Wilson identifies three degrees of comprehension strategies with varying degrees of sophistication. One comprehension strategy is *naïve optimism*.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

A naïve optimistic hearer looks for an interpretation that seems relevant enough: if he finds one, he assumes that it was the intended one and attributes it as a speaker's meaning; if he does not, he has no further resources, and communication will fail.⁸⁰

Another comprehension strategy is *cautious optimism*, here the reader/hearer asks "on what interpretation the speaker thought the utterance was relevant to him?"⁸¹ By asking such questions, the hearer is able to handle slips of the tongue and other mistakes of the speaker. However, the reader here believes that the writer is benevolent and for this reason has a hermeneutic of trust towards the text. A third comprehension strategy is *sophisticated understanding*, here the reader asks "what interpretation would the speaker have thought that the reader would think relevant?"⁸² This strategy helps the reader deal with a speaker's insincerity or outright lies; here the reader has a hermeneutic of suspicion towards the text.

2.2.4. Limitation of RT with regard to its application to Biblical texts

RT is essentially a theory of communication: it explains what happens in the process of communicating. It sees the goal of communication as the understanding of the speaker's view point and it is on the basis of this that the concept of relevance is defined. It affirms that for communication to be successful, the writer and the reader must share cognitive environment and context to a good extent. This brings us to the questions of the suitability of RT for interpreting Biblical texts and the goal of interpretation. Biblical texts are essentially ancient texts, written many centuries ago, addressing the concerns that arose within its particular context and embodying the socio-cultural elements in which the events it describes are couched. While there are many contemporary readers of these texts today, the focus of this study is the group of people who consider the text as sacred and read it as spiritual guide

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

for their lives. To this group of people, biblical texts are not read principally for their historical value: what they meant for the original readers. Present day readers of biblical texts are concerned about this to an extent and they indeed should be for these texts were not directly written to them. However, present day readers are most concerned with what these biblical texts mean for them today in their contemporary situation and how this meaning should bear on their praxis. Therefore, the goal of interpretation for present day readers of biblical texts is not just to know or understand what the author is communicating through the text. It is to transpose the text and its context into the life and context of the reader, (which is usually different from that of the text), and produce meaning that informs the praxis of the reader. What results should and will neither be identical to the text and its context nor identical to the reader and his context but would be a mesh of both. This is what the early Christians did with Scripture. The cataclysmic event of their life was the coming of Christ and on interrogating the scriptures with this event they came up with a new understanding that helped them make sense of their contemporary context and transformed their praxis.

Therefore, RT's advocacy for consanguinity of context and cognitive environment between writer and reader, while desirable, may not be attainable when dealing with ancient texts such as the Bible. For present day readers are not the direct addressee of the text. Does this mean that RT is unhelpful in dealing with cross-cultural communication or put differently, are we extending the use of RT far beyond the intention of its proponents? Perhaps, for it would seem that RT works best with verbal communication or where the interlocutors can engage in a back and forth dialogue or conversation. However, RT is useful as an analytical tool in explaining what factors come to play in the process of communication. With regard to this study, it shall be used to explore how prosperity preachers came to new conclusions from their re-reading of scriptures.

2.3. Conclusion

The assumption of this study is that prosperity gospel is attractive to the Yoruba because it is in continuity with their quest for *alafia*. RT's claims that "human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance" and that "every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance" suggests that a Yoruba reader would expect Christianity to serve the same purpose if not better than what is obtainable in traditional religion. In addition, a Yoruba would read claims of "abundant life" in light of his own context and cognitive environment to achieve cognitive effects with minimal processing effort, to mean "a state of worldly well-being - personal protection from enemies seen and unseen, healing, fertility, practical guidance through the uncertainties of life",⁸³ indeed a life of *alafia*. The next chapter explores the socio-cultural context of the Yoruba and in this way addresses the contextualization pole of Draper's model, and with regard to RT, it builds up the context in which to situate and understand the Yoruba.

⁸³ J.D.Y. Peel, *Religious encounter and the making of the Yoruba*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 219.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOCIO-CULTURAL CUM POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE YORUBA PEOPLE OF NIGERIA BETWEEN 1970-2010

3.0. Introduction

The Yoruba⁸⁴ people of South Western Nigeria are mainly found in six⁸⁵ out of the thirty-six states that presently make up the Nigerian federation. The Yoruba are about one-fifth of the entire Nigerian population.⁸⁶ In line with the contextualization pole of Draper's model, this chapter seeks to bring to the fore the context of the Yoruba, for it is within this context that the Yoruba reader engages the scripture passage under consideration: John10:10. To this end, we shall explore the worldviews, assumptions and values that the Yoruba hold dearly. This exploration shall be facilitated by an overview of the Yoruba traditional religion and the role played by the divinities in the everyday life of the people. We shall also see how the Yoruba have adapted to changing economic and political times and contexts. Context, as we may recall, is also essential for RT, our analytical tool, for it is

The set of premises used in interpreting an utterance....A context is a psychological construct, a subset of the hearer's assumptions about the world. It is these assumptions, of course, rather than the actual state of the world, that affect the interpretation of an utterance. A context in this sense is not limited to information about the immediate physical environment or the immediately preceding utterances: expectations about the future, scientific hypotheses or religious beliefs, anecdotal

⁸⁴ The Yoruba people are found not only in Nigeria but in other countries such as Togo, and Benin in West Africa. Yoruba descendants are also found in Cuba, Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago among others. 'Yoruba' refers both to the language and the people. In this work it shall mainly be used to refer to the people.

⁸⁵ These states are Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Ekiti, Lagos, and Osun. Kwara and Kogi states, the northernmost parts of South Western Nigeria have some Yoruba population also. The people who came to be known now as Yoruba had been known variously by their neighbors. In Sierra Leone they were known as Aku, the Oyo sub-group was referred to as Yaruba by the Hausa. Bishop Ajayi Crowther's adoption of the term Yoruba (from Yaruba) for the whole ethnic group in his *Vocabulary of the Yoruba dictionary* in 1843 seemed quite decisive in the re-naming of the group. This re-naming, where the name of a sub-group becomes the name of the whole group, was not without protests from other sub-groups see Peel, *Religious encounter and the making of the Yoruba*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), pp.283-285.

⁸⁶ See Toyin Falola, *The history of Nigeria*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999), p. 5

memories, general cultural assumptions, beliefs about the mental state of the speaker, may all play a role in interpretation.⁸⁷

3.0.1. Significance of Periodization

The 1970-2010 period with which this chapter is concerned is important because the 70s capture the period just before the prevalence of the prosperity gospel. Therefore, it highlights the precedents leading to the rise of the prosperity gospel. The 80s mark the commencement of the gospel and the 90s is the period when the gospel flourished. The 2010 year mark gives the benefit of hindsight by which we can reflect on the development and progress of the gospel. It does not in any way suggest the end of the gospel, for the gospel is still well and alive. However, it is obvious that any discussion of culture can hardly be circumscribed within a strict period of time, for there is always a sense of fluidity where the old merges with the new seamlessly. For this reason, while 1970-2010 serves as our benchmark and focus, this shall not preclude discussion that goes before this period. With regard to delimitation, this chapter does not provide an exhaustive discussion of Yoruba traditional religion, manners or customs. This has been well done by authors such as Bolaji Idowu, Samuel Johnson, N.A. Fadipe and others.⁸⁸ All we shall attempt here is to trace the contour of the Yoruba traditional religious system and explore the rationale or logic behind it.

3.1. Who are the Yoruba?

The Yoruba lay claim to a common ancestry in the person of Oduduwa, the first king of Ile-Ife⁸⁹. To his eldest son, Okanbi, was born “seven princes and

⁸⁷ Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance. Communication and cognition*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), pp. 15-16.

⁸⁸ See Bolaji Idowu's *Olodumare. God in Yoruba belief*, (London: Longmans, 1962); Samuel Johnson *The history of the Yorubas from the earliest times to the beginning of the British Protectorate*, (London: Lowe and Brydone Limited, 1921); N.A. Fadipe, *The sociology of the Yoruba*, (eds.) F.O. Okediji and O.O. Okediji, (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1970).

⁸⁹ Johnson records the myth that traces Oduduwa's ancestry to Mecca. Many analysts have posited that this account is informed by Muslim influence. Laitin considers that the “connection between Oduduwa and the Middle East has no historiographical basis”, See David D. Laitin's *Hegemony and culture. Politics and religious change among the Yoruba*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 111. There is another legend that considers

princesses... from whom sprang the various tribes of the Yoruba nation"⁹⁰. These "tribes" are: Owu, Ketu, Benin, Ila, Sabe, Popo and Oyo. Of course, the Yoruba are more than these "tribes" today, but according to Johnson, these are the original ones whose kings wore beaded crowns. These "tribes" gave rise to other towns and cities that later rose to prominence, for instance the Egba emerged from Oyo while Ibadan was originally an Egba village⁹¹. Each group among the Yoruba later grew to be largely independent with its king and chiefs assuming responsibilities for the town's relations, organization of wars and so on without making recourse to Ile-Ife, the ancestral city or to Oyo, the political centre.⁹² Johnson's description of the situation from the 15th century till the end of the 18th century generally posits the supremacy of the Alaafin of Oyo and the subjection of the other 'tribes' to him.⁹³ At the fall of the Oyo kingdom in the 1830s⁹⁴, war became rife among the "tribes", for supremacy, for independence and for the procurement of slaves.⁹⁵ Before the coming of the missionaries, in a sense therefore, referring to these peoples as Yoruba is anachronistic, for according to Laitin:

Oduduwa as *Obatala*, the god entrusted with creation, see Fadipe, *The Sociology*, p. 261. In some other parts of Yorubaland like Ile-Ife, Oduduwa is equated with *Olorun*, Yoruba word for God, see J.D.Y. Peel, *Religious encounter*, p. 119. Yet in other parts like the South Western part of Yoruba, Oduduwa is "represented as a female ancestor", Peel, *Religious encounter*, p. 296. Parrinder notes that in Ekiti Oduduwa is considered to have been a female, *Religion in an African city*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 23. Idowu also mentions that there is a female goddess in Ado by the name Oduduwa that is reputed to be the same as the Oduduwa that is mainly regarded as male by most other parts of Yorubaland, *Olodumare*, p. 25.

⁹⁰ Johnson, *The history*, p. 7

⁹¹ Johnson, *The history*, pp. 13-14; Laitin, *Hegemony*, p. 115.

⁹² Johnson, *The history*, p. 206 Oyo, one of the "tribes" that emerged from Ile-Ife later rose to prominence in the 15th century. It spanned a kingdom that included some of the other Yoruba "tribes" and the then Dahomey. According to Falola, "Oyo empire at its peak included a large area of Yorubaland, part of Nupeland, and parts of Borgu and what is now the Republic of Benin" see *The history of Nigeria*, p. 20.

⁹³See Fadipe, *The sociology*, pp. 198-199 where he distinguishes between Oyo-Yoruba and non-Oyo political units. The latter only had "a loose allegiance" to Alaafin which made them pay annual tribute to him. Apart from this they had a greater unrestricted control of their own affairs. The Oyo-Yoruba also exercised control over their internal and external affairs with the added responsibility of appearing at the court of Alaafin once every three years and providing resources for Alaafin's army from time to time.

⁹⁴ Robin Law, *The Oyo empire c. 1600-c. 1836: A West African imperialism in the era of the Atlantic slave trade*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 56.

⁹⁵ Johnson describes the series of war in which the "tribes" engaged in from pp.188 of his work, *The history*

those people who claimed descent from Oduduwa had no name for their collective identity...it wasn't until the anticolonial movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth century...that the activities of the descendants of Oduduwa was compiled into a unified history.⁹⁶

It was indeed common to make mention of the Ijebu 'tribe', Egba 'tribe' etc just as Johnson has done⁹⁷. Each 'tribe', which I shall refer to as a sub-group, has its own dialect with varying degrees of mutual intelligibility and there was no common form of the Yoruba language in use then⁹⁸. In spite of this non-articulation of their unity, the sub-groups had a lot in common. Common to each sub-group was a monarchical system of government, where the head of government⁹⁹ was the king assisted by chiefs¹⁰⁰. Kings were prominently involved in offering sacrifices¹⁰¹ on behalf of their towns usually on the advice of the priests or on the basis of divination from Ifa.¹⁰² In most Yoruba sub-groups there are certain royal lineages that must produce the king.¹⁰³ Another commonality is the traditional mode of worship at which we shall soon take a cursory look, but before then, a look at how the Yoruba became a part of the country Nigeria.

⁹⁶ Laitin, *Hegemony*, p. 112, also see Peel, *Aladura. A religious movement among the Yoruba* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 19 and Robin Law, *The Oyo empire*, p. 5.

⁹⁷ Laitin, *Hegemony*, refers to them as 'city-kingdoms' p. 113; Robert S. Smith calls them "kingdoms" see his *Kingdoms of the Yoruba, 3rd edition*, (London: James Currey Ltd, 1988).

⁹⁸ According to Ayandele, by the efforts of the missionaries "the main languages of Nigeria have been preserved as a lasting legacy to the Ibo, Yoruba, Efik, Nupe and Hausa. For the reduction of these languages into writing has resulted in a linguistic homogeneity that never existed in these tribes", *The missionary impact on modern Nigeria 1842-1914. A political and social Analysis*, (London: Longman Group Ltd, 1966), p. 283. Also see Law, *The Oyo empire* p. 5.

⁹⁹ This, of course is an artificial categorization, mainly for heuristic purposes, for government was not separate from religion.

¹⁰⁰ The system of government does not make the kings absolute rulers as it obtains also among the Emirs in Northern Nigeria. According to Adebayo Oyebade "His (king's) power was limited by a complex system of checks and balances, which ensured that authority was divided among chiefs who, though subordinate to the king, were by no means under his control", 'Colonial Political Systems' in Toyin Falola (ed.), *Africa, vol. 3. Colonial Africa, 1885-1939*, (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2002), p. 79.

¹⁰¹ Omosade Awolalu, *Yoruba beliefs and sacrificial rites*, (Essex: Longman Group Limited, 1979), p. 110.

¹⁰² Ifa is the Yoruba divination system whose god is Orunmila.

¹⁰³ There are few exceptions like Ibadan where there are no ruling houses. Men who are interested in being the king start from the leadership of their families (*Mogaji*) and by reason of the death of senior title holders move through the ranks to become the Olubadan of Ibadanland. See P.C. Lloyd 'Introduction' in Lloyd, Mabogunje and Awe (eds) *The city of Ibadan*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 5.

3.1.1. The Integration of the Yoruba in present day Nigeria

After the fall of the Oyo kingdom in the 19th century, the people that came to be referred to as the Yoruba lived, to a greater degree, independently and were often in competition and at war with one another.¹⁰⁴ Alliances and counter alliances were formed in the bid to win war. The fact that these wars proved to be detrimental for legitimate trade and the activities of missionaries, among other things, brought about the need to unify all the sub-groups. Lagos was made a British colony in 1861 while the rest of Yorubaland became a British protectorate in 1893. The year 1914 witnessed the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates and the Lagos Colony to create present day Nigeria. Since then, the Yoruba have created a niche for themselves in the new country. Quite a number of the patriots who were involved in the discussion for the independence of Nigeria from colonial rule were Yoruba.¹⁰⁵ This is quite understandable, for the Yoruba profited more than any other ethnic group in Nigeria from the education brought by Missions.¹⁰⁶ Despite having benefited so much from the missionary effort, the Yoruba presented the greater opposition to the continued leadership of missionaries and insisted on wresting authority from the missionaries.¹⁰⁷ This

¹⁰⁴ Law, *The Oyo empire*, p. 7

¹⁰⁵ According to Ayandele, "radical nationalism was ...confined to very few professionals who, though important Church office-bearers, had more time for purely political matters. Among these were Herbert Macaulay, a professional surveyor, Dr. O. Johnson, brother to the Reverend Samuel Johnson, the historian and Sapara Williams, the most popular lawyer in Nigeria before 1914", *The missionary impact*, p. 295. Herbert Macaulay is clearly important in the history of Nigeria for he founded the "first major political party to contest elections" Falola, *The history*, p. 241. In acknowledgement of his role, his portrait used to adorn one of the Nigerian currency notes.

¹⁰⁶ See E.A. Ayandele, *The missionary impact*, p. 291

¹⁰⁷ Ajayi clearly makes a distinction between the old and the new missionaries. The Older missionaries, who came to the mission field before the colonization of Nigeria, relied heavily on the African agents for mission work and therefore maintained a cordial and respectful relationship with them. Reverend Venn, the honorary secretary of the Parent Committee of the CMS from 1841-72, was notable for his promotion of a native episcopate within the CMS, see Ajayi, *Christian mission in Nigeria 1841-1891. The making of a new elite*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), pp. 174-179. Even then, not all missionaries subscribed to his (Venn's) ideas, for Rev. Henry Townsend opposed the headship of mission work by African clergy and was particularly in opposition to Bishop Ajayi Crowther. See Ajayi, *Christian mission*, p. 180-83.

stance of opposition is mainly fuelled by the perceived arrogance and disdain of some missionaries for the Yoruba people and their culture.¹⁰⁸ Herein lies the paradox: the Yoruba who embraced the benefits of Western civilization, earlier than any other group in Nigeria at the beginning of the missionary enterprise, proved to be the champion of the culture and traditions of its forbearers. It was not an 'either' / 'or' situation to embrace the culture or to embrace Christianity. Rather the benefits of Western civilization are held together in tension with the traditions and culture of the Yoruba. The symbiosis between Yoruba culture and Christianity, Peel would argue, is in agreement with the accommodating nature of traditional Yoruba religion and society and its penchant for *alafia*, and *olaju*¹⁰⁹. It is obvious then that culture and traditions are quite important to the Yoruba and it is to this that we now turn as we look at the Yoruba traditional religious system.

3.2. The Yoruba Traditional Religious System

Peel, in describing the features of the Yoruba traditional religion, observes:

This comprised a discreet and variegated system of beliefs, very different from the closely-integrated religious systems of which we have accounts for most African peoples. A rather remote supreme God; a vast range of subordinate gods or *orisa*, some widespread and some localized, mostly specialized in function, whose devotees formed cult-groups; lineage ancestors of relatively minor importance; an important system of divination called Ifa, whose priests (*babalawo*) were consulted on most issues of public and private significance – these were its main elements.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ The arrogance of some Western missionaries was not peculiarly against the Yoruba people and their culture. Indeed the first schism that occurred in Nigeria among Mission churches was that of the Presbyterian Mission in Calabar in 1882, see J. F. Ade Ajayi, *Christian mission*, p. 264ff.

¹⁰⁹ See Peel's *Religious encounter*, p. 317, where he describes *Olaju* as "sophistication", "civilization", most literally "enlightenment" and carries the connotation that progress depends on opening oneself to the wider world, forward movement on spatial enlargement. For a fuller discussion of *Olaju* see Peel's 'Olaju. A Yoruba concept of development,' *Journal of Development Studies* 14 (1978): 135-165.

¹¹⁰ Peel, 'Syncretism and Religious change' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 10:2 (January 1968), p. 122.

The Yoruba, arguably, have the largest range of objects of worship in Africa. Idowu, exploring the oral traditions concerning the number of the divinities among the Yoruba notes that the number is variously given as 201, 401, 1,060, and 1,440. He concludes that these numbers are “symbolic of the plurality of the *orisa* and the indefiniteness of their numbers”.¹¹¹ Olowola identifies four major categories of divinities that are worshipped or at least venerated.¹¹² These are major, minor, environmental and ancestral divinities. The major divinities like *Obatala*, *Esu* and *Orunmila* are so called because they are worshipped throughout Yorubaland and because they were not known to have previously existed as human beings. Minor divinities like *Ogun*¹¹³, *Sango*, *Orisaoko*, were human beings, such as kings, heroes, founders of cities, war champions who were deified after their death. The worship of these minor divinities is usually more localized¹¹⁴. Environmental divinities are those who were human beings who turned to elements of nature such as rivers (*Oya*, *Osun*, *Yemoja*), rocks (*oke*), land (*ile*) at their death. Sometimes these divinities are the deification of the elements of nature: the Yoruba believe that some spirits inhabit natural elements found in their community.

¹¹¹ Idowu, *Olodumare*, p. 68. G.J. Afolabi Ojo comes to the same conclusion stating that “it is a Yoruba figurative way of referring to a large number of things” in *Yoruba culture. A geographical analysis*, (London: University of London Press, 1966), p. 184

¹¹² Cornelius Abiodun Olowola ‘The Yoruba traditional religion. A critique’, unpublished Th. D dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, 1983. The main distinction between worship and veneration as it is being used in this work is basically in terms of the domain in which the act of worship or veneration takes place. Worship will refer to the public domain, where often in the company of other worshippers there is public celebration. While veneration is used to depict what obtains in the private, usually within the confines of one’s compound or privately organized sacrifices. This distinction is mainly heuristic, so veneration in this work is worship in agreement with Awolalu’s discussion, see his *Yoruba beliefs*, pp. 63ff.

¹¹³ Scholars are by no means unanimous in their categorization of the divinities on the basis of primordial existence. This may be due to the fact that there are several and sometimes conflicting myths surrounding the origin of the divinities. For example, Idowu considers *Ogun* as having primordial existence (p. 86) while Awolalu notes that there are traditions supporting his existence as a “primordial divinity” and as a “deified ancestor” (p. 31).

¹¹⁴ *Sango* and *Ogun* have assumed greater universality, for their adherents are found in Brazil and Cuba. Moreover, modern inventions such as the automobile has made *Ogun*, the god of iron to be worshipped by car drivers and this has popularized his worship to cut across all parts of Yorubaland. *Sango* and *Ogun* are only considered minor in this work, following after Olowola mainly because he regards them as deified divinities. For Bolaji Idowu, *Sango* and *Ogun* are “principal divinities” on the basis of the study of oral sources, Idowu, *Olodumare*, p. 70.

This is especially so if such physical features prove useful to the community. This is the case with mountains and rocks which provide natural defense for a community in times of war. The worship of environmental divinities is necessarily localized, for instance, the worship of Okebadan by the Ibadan. As Laitin says “each Yoruba city has shrines and a relationship with a set of deities which is unique to it”.¹¹⁵ Ancestral divinities like *Egungun* and *Oro* are cults for the veneration of ancestors.

3.2.1. Divinities as Specialists

It is worthy of note to observe that each divinity is seen more or less as a specialist in a particular field of human endeavor or experience¹¹⁶. *Obatala*, otherwise known as *Orisa nla*, according to Yoruba mythology, is the agent of *Olodumare* (God) in creation. He is reputed to be responsible for the creation of the physical part of humans. Sacred to *Obatala*, therefore, are people with physical deformities like dwarfs, people with hunchback and albino.¹¹⁷ *Orunmila* is the god of divination, he is reputed to know all things as he is said to be *Olodumare's* deputy in matters of “wisdom and omniscience”.¹¹⁸ He is totally acquainted with matters pertaining to humans and gods for he was present at the creation of humans and some of the gods. It is in this regard that he is thought to be privy to the destinies of humans. He can, therefore, give useful counsel with regard to the future, discern the cause of problems, prescribe solutions to them, and warn of impending dangers. For these reasons, he is consulted in all areas of life such as “before betrothal, during times of crisis, before a king is appointed, before marriage is contracted, at the birth of a child, before a journey is made”.¹¹⁹ *Ogun* is the god of iron and war and by virtue of this all warriors, hunters, goldsmiths, artisans, machine minders and any who deal in iron and steel must give him due reverence. In addition, “because iron tools were regarded as deadly, the deity has always

¹¹⁵ Laitin, *Hegemony*, p. 35.

¹¹⁶ For a fuller discussion of this, see chapter 4 of Afolabi Ojo's *Yoruba culture*.

¹¹⁷ Idowu, *Oldumare*, p. 71; Awolalu, *Yoruba beliefs*, p. 21

¹¹⁸ Idowu, *Olodumare*, p. 75

¹¹⁹ Idowu, *Olodumare*, p.77, 87

been called to witness when swearing oaths. Even today, non-Christians swear in court by an iron implement instead of on the Bible".¹²⁰ *Orisa oko* is the god of harvest, according to Ojo:

The farm-god was conceived as safeguarding the interests of Yoruba, which in traditional days were altogether connected with farming. This main activity was beset by a host of problems, namely soil infertility, drought, crop diseases and pests, all resulting in crop failure or a lean harvest which dealt a blow to the population. *Orisa oko's* function was to prevent these catastrophes and thereby reduce the years of famine and promote rich harvests.¹²¹

Sango is the god of thunder, he was one time a king of Oyo and was deified after death. *Esu*¹²² is a trickster, a god of confusion and quarrels. This is observable in that all inappropriate conduct is attributed to him. This, however, ensures that the divinities who must have been angered by such inappropriate conduct of the human is pacified by the imposition of acceptable sacrifices. To this end, it is a common saying that without *Esu*, the divinities would go hungry.¹²³ According to Awolalu, the chief duty of *Esu* is to "run errands for both men and divinities".¹²⁴ In this way he is indispensable as he ensures that sacrifices offered to divinities are delivered to them, of course, he must have been appeased so he could run the errand. *Sanponna* is the god of smallpox, he uses the disease to express his displeasure at the wickedness of humans.¹²⁵ These gods are worshipped for utilitarian purposes. *Sanponna*, for instance, is usually worshipped when there had been an outbreak of smallpox epidemic in a community.

¹²⁰ Ojo, *Yoruba culture*, p. 170. The non-Christians in focus here are not Muslims.

¹²¹ Ojo, *Yoruba culture*, p. 169

¹²² Esu has been variously depicted in literature as "a special relations officer between heaven and earth, inspector general who reports to Olodumare on the deeds of the divinities and men" see Idowu, *Olodumare*. p.80. In conclusion, Idowu notes that "Esu has two hundred names which makes him an elusive, slippery character" p. 85. This, I would think, perhaps attests to his intractable nature and that he should be seen more as a god of confusion.

¹²³ Awolalu, *Yoruba beliefs*, p. 29

¹²⁴ Awolalu, *Yoruba beliefs*, p. 29.

¹²⁵ Idowu, *Olodumare*, pp. 95-101.

Some families who had lost some of their members through thunderstorms may be advised to offer a sacrifice to *Sango* or become his adherents. Motorists, blacksmiths and all who deal in iron in the course of their vocation have annual festivals in worship of *Ogun* in order to ensure their protection from road accidents and to ensure the continued sustenance of their livelihood. River goddesses are worshipped by those who live near rivers and by fishermen for protection against accidents such as drowning and the capsizing of their boats. These river goddesses are also known as fertility goddesses and are therefore worshipped by barren women so that they could conceive. In addition to these various categories of people who worship these gods and goddesses on occasions are families that are dedicated to the worship of certain gods and goddesses. This is sometimes borne out in the names people bear like Sangowanwa (*Sango* comes looking for me), Oguntolu (*Ogun* is worthy to be lord), Osungbemi (*Osun* has benefitted me), Aboyade (One who comes with *Oya*) and so on. Part of the reasons for the worship of these gods and goddesses by certain families on a continual basis may be on account of the vocation of that family. For example, a hunter's family would worship *Ogun*, while a farmer's family may worship *Orisaoko*. A whole village or town may worship *Sango* because *Sango* died in their town or because he used to be their king before his death. Idowu notes that the worship of these divinities could occur daily as "a form of saying good morning", weekly as a sacred day and annually as annual festivals.¹²⁶

Another object of worship (public) or veneration (private) is the ancestors. Cultic worship of the ancestors is found in the form of *Egungun* and *Oro* festivals. The *Egungun* festival, for example, is an occasion where the ancestors are represented by masquerades called *ara orun* literally meaning people of heaven. The festival is an occasion when the ancestors have come to visit and bless the clan, "return to hear and put right the complaints of the people left behind, to bless them with human and crop fertility and also with

¹²⁶ Idowu, *Olodumare*, p. 109

general prosperity".¹²⁷ As they visit with each family they are well entertained. Apart from this cultic worship are occasions when the spirits of departed elderly members of the family are venerated. This veneration may take the form of pouring libations, leaving out portions of food for them at private meals and at family gatherings. Family members invoke the names of the ancestors in prayer and sometimes address them directly in prayers. The Yoruba believe that though physically absent, the ancestors are very much around their children wishing them well and looking out for their welfare. It is in this context that family members who want to engage in business partnership invoke the ancestors as witnesses. The ancestors are expected to punish anyone who would betray the other. A Yoruba adage says *oku olomo ki i sun*, that is, the corpse of someone who had children never sleeps. In times of trouble, the children of the departed visit the tombs of their parents, invoking their aid in such difficult times. In some cases, remembrance ceremonies are held long after the death of the loved one. A diviner might have prescribed such a ceremony to appease an angry ancestor or parent who is aggrieved.

Ori is another object of veneration. *Ori* literally means 'head' of which the physical head of the body is only a symbol. According to Yoruba tradition, the pre-existing self chooses *ori* out of the many moulded by Ajala. *Ori* is not destiny, but while *ori* is always depicted as that which a person chooses, destiny is sometimes depicted as that which was chosen or that which was received.¹²⁸ *Ori* should, perhaps, be seen as the encasement of destiny.¹²⁹ Once

¹²⁷ Ojo, *Yoruba culture*, p. 175, also see E.B. Idowu's 'Religion in Ibadan. Traditional Religion and Christianity' in P.C. Lloyd et al, *The city of Ibadan*, pp. 237.

¹²⁸ Yoruba myths seem to give equal weight to the idea of pre-birth choice and the idea of one's destiny being chosen for one by God or Ajala, Bolaji Idowu, (1962), p. 173, notes the three ways in which the Yoruba understand how humans obtain their destinies. There is *akunleyan* that which is chosen while kneeling down, there is also *akunlegba*, that which is received while kneeling down and there is *ayanmo*, that which is affixed to one. These three conceptualizations express the two basic ways destiny is believed to be obtained; by one's choice or given or bestowed on one. Also see Oladele A. Balogun's "The concepts of ori and human destiny in traditional Yoruba thought. A soft-deterministic interpretation" *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 16 (I): 116-130, 2007.

¹²⁹ Helen Adekunbi Labeodan, 'Ori and Iwa as Embodiment of Yoruba Moral Values', *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, xxxviii/ I&2, June and December 2006, p. 118. (pp. 117- 134)

the individual is born, he/ she is no longer aware of the destiny earlier received or chosen. For this reason, each person needs the cooperation of his/her *ori* in order to make choices in life that result in success. Success is achieved when a person conducts his/her life according to the life-plan or destiny already chosen or received by the pre-existing self. An indication that a person is, perhaps, walking contrary to his/her destiny is that failure attends the path of the individual in spite of his/her diligence. Such a person may then be advised through divination to worship *ori* so that it may direct the person to the pre-chosen destiny¹³⁰. In this regard *ori* is a guardian angel, which has the duty to guide one aright. Of course, one wants the *ori* to direct one to the pre-chosen destiny only if the destiny is a good one: one that brings prosperity and blessings. In cases where a person's misery and misfortune is traceable to a bad destiny, the diviner will still advise the client to worship *ori* so that it may change the bad destiny. *Ori* is also an avenger spirit. It can avenge any wrong done to a person as well as rescue from accidents and evil.¹³¹ The degree to which one's *ori* avenges for one is the degree of the strength of that *ori*. The Yoruba believe that a powerful *ori* will ward off all evil from a person. The power of *ori* is manifested in the decisions one makes in life such as where to go and at what time to go, so that one is spared from accidents. *Ori* can make one not to be susceptible to evil magic done against a person. It can also defend one against the wicked schemes of one's enemies. In most of these cases the person whose *ori* is fighting for or defending is not immediately aware of these deliverances, which the *ori* is executing on his/her behalf. It is for this reason that one needs to fortify one's *ori* so that it is strong to fight on one's behalf. *Ori* must not be confused with destiny, it is

¹³⁰ Balogun in raising the issue of whether the Yoruba are fatalistic in their conception of destiny posits that Idowu subscribes to the view that that the Yoruba consider destinies to be unalterable. I think that this is a misreading of Idowu, who acknowledges that the Yoruba seem to hold the two views of fatalism and the possibility of changing one's destiny without bothering to resolve them, see Idowu, *Olodumare*, pp.182-3. My understanding is that the Yoruba give room to the idea of the possibility of changing one's destiny. It is only after all efforts have been expended without a positive change that the Yoruba will ascribe the outcome to an unalterable destiny.

¹³¹ Omosade Awolalu, *Yoruba beliefs*, p. 9. Idowu, *Olodumare*, p. 172. Labeodan, '*Ori and Iwa*', p. 122.

far greater than destiny for it is responsible for the realization of one's destiny, for instance, bad destiny cannot be changed without recourse to *ori*.

3.3. Wellbeing/*Alafia* – the underlying worldview of the Yoruba

This synopsis of the Yoruba traditional religion provides us with a window to access the worldview of the Yoruba. Pervading the worldview of the Yoruba is the notion of 'wellbeing' or *alafia*. Wellbeing/ *alafia* is a state of peace, prosperity and progress; to the Yoruba this is the notion that should characterize life. Any deviation from this state of *alafia* is an anomaly that must be corrected. Farrow, a Western missionary among the Yoruba, has this to say about the purpose of worship by pagan Yoruba "It is entirely mundane and materialistic. He is seeking a physical salvation from present evil"¹³². Observing the sacrifices and prayers offered by the Yoruba, he concludes "we see that the whole aim and object of our Yoruba pagan appears to be temporal advantage, prosperity, comfort and peace".¹³³ Peel reaches the same conclusion as this work does on the centrality of the notion of *alafia* to the Yoruba worldview. He, however, reaches this conclusion by observing the prayers offered by the Yoruba. He defines *alafia* as "a term usually translated 'peace' but which has a much broader connotation, to embrace health, success, and prosperity"¹³⁴. He demonstrates convincingly that the search for *alafia* was behind the enquiries of Yoruba into Christianity at the initial stage.¹³⁵ *Alafia* is a "holistic state of well-being for it encompasses both the physical and the metaphysical elements"¹³⁶ of life such as having peace of mind. Idowu states that prayer of petition is central to Yoruba religion and consists of:

asking for protection from sicknesses and death, gifts of longevity, children, prosperity in enterprises, victory over enemies, protection from evil spirits and of relatives near and distant, rectification of

¹³² Stephen Farrow, *Faith, fancies and fetich or Yoruba paganism*, (New York: Negro Universities Press. 1926), p. 138

¹³³ Ibid, p.140.

¹³⁴ Peel, *Religious encounter*, p. 91

¹³⁵ Peel, *Religious encounter*, p. 227

¹³⁶ Peel, *Religious encounter*, p. 231.

unhappy destinies, and abundant provision of material things; blessings to all well-wishers and damnation of all ill-wishers¹³⁷

The quest for *alafia* is very real and relevant in a context where the people assume the existence of malevolent powers. Not only are the divinities capable of harming people, ancestors, witches, and wicked people known as *ika* are also capable of inflicting harm and hurt. For this reason and in order to ensure *alafia*, the Yoruba would make sacrifices to the divinities and ancestors as discerned and prescribed by *Ifa*.

3.3.1. The place of Sacrifice in Yoruba Traditional Religion

Sacrifices, according to Awolalu, are offerings of “animal or vegetable life, of food, drink or any object to a deity or spiritual being for definite purposes”.¹³⁸ The main purpose for making sacrifices among the Yoruba is to affirm life, or in other words to ensure the wellbeing/wellness, *alafia* of the offerer. There are different kinds of sacrifice¹³⁹:

- a) Thanksgiving sacrifice: This sacrifice is offered in acknowledgement of favor(s) received or answered prayer. As we shall find below, thanksgiving is an important habit of an *omoluabi*.¹⁴⁰ Votive sacrifice can be considered a sub-set of thanksgiving sacrifice, though strictly speaking, it is “paying” of the vows one made at the point of requesting the help of the divinity for one favor or the other. In another sense the difference is obvious in that while thanksgiving sacrifice though appreciated is not demanded; votive sacrifice is considered as indebtedness.

¹³⁷ Idowu, *Olodumare*, p. 116

¹³⁸ Awolalu, *Religious beliefs*, p. 136.

¹³⁹ Idowu has seven categories with votive sacrifice as a different category in addition to the list above. His meal and drink offerings category, I, following after Awolalu, have renamed communion sacrifice, see *Olodumare*, pp. 121-125. Awolalu has six categories, apparently relying on Idowu, he combines communion sacrifice with thanksgiving sacrifice and also has a separate category for votive sacrifice see *Religious beliefs*, pp. 143-160.

¹⁴⁰ *Omoluabi* is used to depict the gentleman or lady, it means someone with good conduct, a model of good behavior.

- b) Propitiatory sacrifice: This is a sacrifice that is offered to assuage the anger or wrath of a divinity. This wrath was manifest in an epidemic, drought or any other calamity that befell a community or a family. After enquiries from *Ifa* a propitiatory sacrifice is prescribed to put an end to the trouble.
- c) Preventive sacrifice: This is a sacrifice that is offered to avert evil. Through divination, the offerer might have been informed of an impending doom or calamity and for this reason is asked to make some sacrifice to avert the evil.
- d) Substitutionary sacrifice: This sacrifice is offered to avert evil as well as to assuage or appease an angry power. It is as if the evil planned for the offerer must come to pass, so what the offerer does is to have something else (usually an animal) in his/her place that would suffer on his/her behalf. In this way, the offerer is spared and the malignant power is appeased.
- e) Foundation sacrifice: This is the sacrifice offered at the inception of the founding of a house or a town. The intent is to avert any evil that might happen and to “appease the spirit of the earth in order that all may be well with that which is founded”.¹⁴¹
- f) Communion sacrifice: This is a daily sacrifice offered to an ancestor or divinity to ensure and maintain fellowship. In this way, the offerer is assured of being in the good book of the ancestors or divinity.

3.3.2. Implications

A number of implications can be drawn from the sketch we have mapped out of the Yoruba traditional religion. Notable is the manner in which erstwhile human beings became deified at death, this we have seen in the case of Ogun and Sango and of course, the ancestors. This portrays a worldview where the spirit realm/ spiritual is in constant conversation with the physical/ material realm? Peel suggests that forces of nature were humanized into divinities in

¹⁴¹ Idowu *Olodumare*, p. 125.

order to secure their affection and therefore ameliorate their propensity for destruction.¹⁴² Also notable is that the concerns that made the Yoruba have so many divinities have to do with (a) the need to explain or make sense of the strange and possibly control it, (b) the understanding that for every problem there must be a solution (c) The issues that engage the Yoruba are the practical everyday life issues of survival.

Of notable interest to this study is how some of the features that we have observed in the Yoruba traditional religious system and some socio-cultural practices, which we shall now explore, have made their way into contemporary Yoruba expression of Christianity, especially within the Neo-Pentecostal version.

3.4. Some Socio-cultural Practices of the Yoruba

3.4.1. Praise songs/ *Oriki*

Oriki is an orally delivered poetry usually chanted on behalf of an object, though there are times when a person chants *oriki* to him/herself, saying “ *bi enikeni, ko ki mi, emi na a ki ara mi*”, which translates into “if no one praises me, I will praise myself”. The object of the *oriki* could be “animate or inanimate; a god, illnesses, animals, food, towns, lineages, individual personalities and so on”.¹⁴³ An *oriki* could be as short as a few phrases or as long as many lines of poetry. It commemorates the community’s recollection of the deeds (good and bad), and attributes of the praised, with the aim of elucidating the outstanding qualities of the praised. In addition, it narrates the origin or ancestry and the circumstances of the praised, be it a town, or a person.¹⁴⁴ It is for this reason that some historians consider *oriki* to be a good source for

¹⁴² Peel, *Religious encounter*, pp. 91-92.

¹⁴³ Bolanle Awe, ‘Praise poems as historical data. The example of the Yoruba *Oriki*’, *Africa, Journal of the International African Institute*, 44 (October 1974), p. 332.

¹⁴⁴ Idowu, though makes no explicit mention of *oriki* does talk of “chanting the praise of the divinity... whereby stories are recited about his origin, greatness, past deeds, ability and capability”, this I think is referring to *oriki*. See his *Olodumare*, p. 113.

historical data.¹⁴⁵ The domains in which *oriki* is chanted varies; it could be public or private:

At home where mothers recite them to soothe their babies, grandmothers greeting the households with long recitations every morning, ... devotees invoke their *orisa* at the shrine every week with impassioned *oriki* chants, festivals where great set pieces of *oriki* chanting which townspeople will flock to hear..., at funerals, when girls are getting married...¹⁴⁶

Professional praise singers or the daughters and wives of the extended family/homestead can do the recitation or chanting of *oriki*. The praised is said or expected to be so enamored by the praise that in the case of an individual, he/she heaps money or any other appropriate gift on the 'chanter' of the *oriki*. A fall-out of the chanting is the challenge to live up to the good name, which one's forbearers have earned. A corollary of this is that *oriki* is also chanted to provoke the praised being into action, many a time to do what he/she would not normally want to do.¹⁴⁷ It is in light of this that one understands the sense of rootlessness experienced by some Yoruba who had

¹⁴⁵Law, *The Oyo empire*, pp.19-20; Awe, 'Praise poems', p. 331.

¹⁴⁶ Karin Barber, *I could speak until tomorrow. Oriki, women, and the past in a Yoruba town*, (London: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), p. 11. Though basically agreeing to the description of *oriki* as praise-poetry, Barber notes that *oriki* are not necessarily flattering, "their point is to go to the heart of a subject's identity by evoking whatever is distinctive in it. If what makes a big man formidable is his violence, greed or intemperance, these qualities will figure prominently in his personal *oriki* (p.13). This, therefore, proves their usefulness as sources of history. Some scholars like Bolanle Awe might disagree with Barber in classifying *Rara Iyawo* otherwise known as *Ekun Iyawo*, as *oriki*. My working definition of *oriki* in this study as praise song, which Barber also uses, does not accommodate *Ekun Iyawo* as *oriki* either. *Ekun iyawo*, just like the poetry of hunters, *Ijala* are specially sung by the subject, in this case, the bride or the hunter and are recited not in praise of the subject, but as a lament song. Barber's work is based on her observations of how *oriki* functions in Okuku, a town in present day Osun State and may, therefore, not be representative of what obtains in other parts of Yorubaland. More importantly, she seems to be using 'oriki' as a genre of Yoruba oral literature or what she calls "literary text" and this permits the understanding of *ekun iyawo* as a sub-genre of *oriki*.

¹⁴⁷ Awolalu, *Yoruba beliefs*, pp. 100-101 makes a brief allusion to *oriki* as the praise names of kings or divinities that is invoked so that "the divinities will be moved to pay attention to the worshippers and thus heed their requests and wishes". Asonzeh, in his study of RCCG, makes mention of the use of *oriki* in the course of worship chanted by the General Overseer of the church, Pastor Adeboye, who recounts his childhood experience in a polygamous family. The wives, in order to obtain special favors from the husband, would chant his *oriki* and this was always effective as they always got what they asked from their husband. See Asonzeh Ukah, *A new paradigm of Pentecostal power. A study of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria*, (Trenton: Africa World Press, Inc., 2008) pp. 323-325.

adopted European names when they were outside of the country as portrayed by Ayandele:

One other loss suffered by educated Africans bearing alien names was the knowledge of 'Oriki idile'-----a sort of blank verse----transmitted from generation to generation by rote, depicting the characteristics and events in the extended family's history, and always a source of inspiration to the members of the family whenever it is recited. The realization of such losses was sufficient to impel thoughtful Africans to renounce foreign names.¹⁴⁸

Public chanting of *oriki* usually takes place on occasions of joy and celebrations. If each of the many objects of worship must have days or periods in which they are worshipped publicly and have feasts observed in their honor, then celebration of these objects of worship must take a great chunk of the time of the people, we may surmise. However, in addition to the festivals held in honor of these gods and goddesses are the celebrations among the Yoruba for almost any form of transition or change of status or progress that an individual experiences¹⁴⁹. In the present time there are modifications of the occasions, which were traditionally celebrated among the Yoruba. On average, in the contemporary time there are more occasions for celebrations than before, for the modern concerns of life are held together with the traditionally understood concerns. The occasions listed below consist both of the modern and the traditionally acclaimed celebrations (naming ceremony, burial ceremony) but all are done with a modern flavor.

3.4.2. Festivals and celebrations of life 'ariya' among the Yoruba

- a. Naming ceremony¹⁵⁰: This is an occasion where a newly-born child is given its name usually a week after his/her birth. This is done in the presence of relations and friends. For Christians, this is usually done by

¹⁴⁸ Ayandele, *The missionary impact*, pp. 258-9.

¹⁴⁹ Fadipe describes the Yoruba as gregarious and sociable and this seems to be one reason for their penchant for celebrations and feasts, see Fadipe, *The sociology*, p. 301.

¹⁵⁰ J.B. Webster makes a passing remark about naming ceremony as "a dignified and beautiful Yoruba 'naming ceremony' for infants" being previously a pagan rite that had been brought in to Christianity, *The African Churches among the Yoruba 1888-1922*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 133.

a Pastor who prays for the child. Some families may have the mandatory naming ceremony with minimal food preparation to entertain guests and decide on having a more elaborate party later known as *iko omo jade*, "bringing out of the child".¹⁵¹ For some families, they entertain their guests fairly lavishly the same day that the child is named.

- b. Burial / funeral ceremony: This is an occasion that celebrates the life of a departed one. The deceased must be quite old, have children or grandchildren who desire to ensure a decent 'send off' for their parent. Unlike birth, death is usually unplanned or unexpected, except in some few cases where the deceased had been ill for some time before eventually dying. In most cases, with the exception of Muslims, the corpse is kept in a mortuary until the period of celebration. It is usually a big occasion attended by family and friends who are entertained to good music, food and drinks. In contradistinction to this is an occasion where a young¹⁵² person dies. There is grief and mourning in the home with people hardly cooking at all. Except, perhaps for some few friends who had come from afar. The parents of the deceased would not attend the funeral/burial ceremony which is just brief and quiet.
- c. *Aso Ebi*: This refers to the clothing worn by members of a family as uniform during an occasion of celebration.¹⁵³ This is one way by which the family members involved in an occasion are identified. Sometimes males wear different clothing from the females but sometimes not. Wearing of *aso ebi* is not confined to family members, staff members working in the same organization with any of the celebrants may wear a different uniform clothing also. It is seen as an honor to the celebrant

¹⁵¹ Fadipe, *The sociology*, p. 259.

¹⁵² A young person in this regard could be unmarried or married with young children. In most cases the deceased parents are still alive. A baby's death goes almost unannounced, no ceremony is observed, all that the parents want is to get the body buried out of sight and move on.

¹⁵³ Fadipe, *The sociology*, p. 259-260

to have different groups come in to grace an occasion in different uniform attires.

- d. House warming¹⁵⁴: This is an occasion where someone has built a house and is opening it for the viewing and prayers of his/her kith and kin as well as friends and well wishers. This is usually an occasion for eating, drinking and general merry making. The oldest member of the family or the church pastor is usually invited to pray and dedicate the new house.
- e. Car washing: This is an occasion where someone has just bought a car. This is more informal than the rest that we have mentioned. A group of friends may just stop by and demand that the new owner “wash the car” for them. This “washing” involves drinking to the health or the prosperity of the new owner. In such an occasion, prayers are usually offered for the continued prosperity of the owner.
- f. Weddings and Marriages: This is one of the traditionally celebrated occasions where both the bride’s and the groom’s families are involved in the celebrations. It is usually a costly affair not because of the bride wealth that may be paid, for among the Yoruba payment of bride wealth is usually seen as a symbolic token, the overwhelming concern is that the groom should take good care of his bride. Heavy expenses are incurred in the hosting of friends and relations that come from far and near to grace the occasion, the *aso-ebi* that must be worn and so on.
- g. Graduation: This is a modern day celebration that attracts friends and well wishers. The degree of celebration varies from family to family.

We may surmise then that the Yoruba almost always has something to celebrate. A pastor friend mentions how busy he gets: on Thursdays he attends Wake-Keeping ceremonies held on account of a departed one, on Friday he attends the funeral service, on the same Friday, there may be a traditional wedding known as an official engagement, on Saturday he attends

¹⁵⁴Awolalu, *Yoruba beliefs*, p.160; Sandra T. Barnes, *Patrons and power. Creating a political community in metropolitan Lagos*, (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 68

or officiates at weddings, on Sunday he preaches. The week is full of social activities which he must attend. Attendance at these social functions inevitably comes at a cost, usually none attends such occasions without giving gifts, there must be some gift in cash or in kind presented to the celebrant. Giving at social functions is reciprocal: one was not expected to give disinterestedly.¹⁵⁵ We can, therefore, understand the social and economic pressures on Yoruba Christians.¹⁵⁶ This leads to a discussion of how status is gained among the Yoruba.

3.5. Kinship, Hierarchy, Stratification, and Status among the Yoruba

3.5.1. Stratification: Bascom in a fieldwork conducted between 1937-38 in Ile-Ife, one of the Yoruba towns, observes that the Yoruba “have a complex and highly stratified social structure”. Stratification is being used in the sense of social inequalities among individuals and not in terms of the existence of social classes among the Yoruba in marxian terms.¹⁵⁷ The discussion of stratification in literature usually revolves round issues of wealth, power and prestige;¹⁵⁸ the Yoruba society has passed through different epochs in its history as to render these concepts subject to redefinition at different times.

Stratification among the Yoruba, one gathers from Bascom’s work, came about mainly as a result of differentiation in wealth. While this remains a

¹⁵⁵ Peel, *Religious encounter*, pp. 85-87. This, however, needs some bit of qualification. One might give in order to appreciate past favors shown or received; one can also give to initiate a relationship with the recipient. It is, however, not unheard of to give to children or helpless ones who have no capacity to reciprocate, other than, perhaps, to thank the giver and their thanks may not amount to much in a society where children are only seen and not heard.

¹⁵⁶ When the emphasis of the church was ‘holiness’ most Christians who were generally poor survived by withdrawing from social gatherings or functions.

¹⁵⁷ William R. Bascom, ‘Social Status, Wealth and Individual differences among the Yoruba’, *American Anthropologist, New Series*, Vol. 53, No. 4, Part 1, (Oct. - Dec.,1951) p 491. Bascom’s discussion is primarily on wealth differentiation, Lloyd’s discussion of inequality among the Yoruba asserts that while the Yoruba conceive their society to be unequal in terms of wealth and power but maintain that the society is open for upward mobility. For this reason, the concept of class consciousness is not well developed among urban workers. See P.C. Lloyd, *Power and independence: Urban Africans’ perception of social inequality*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974).

¹⁵⁸ Carol R. Ember and Melvin Ember, *Anthropology*, 5th edition, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1988), p. 277

valid point especially among the subjects, the Yoruba monarchical system of government already ensured a difference between the ruled and the ruler. The king, called an *oba* if the town is big but called a *baale*¹⁵⁹ in smaller towns, can only come from a certain lineage with different segments which we can call royal families. Each segment of the lineage would usually produce a king in turn. The king was assisted by a host of chiefs with different rankings. The most important ones, sometimes known as the kingmakers, were from lineages that usually filled certain positions: these are hereditary positions. There are lesser chiefs whose positions are non-hereditary.¹⁶⁰ Next in rank are free born of the community, then strangers from other communities and lastly slaves.

3.5.2. Kinship: The complexity of the Yoruba social structure is also informed by kinship structures and its link to wealth accumulation in an *honor-shame* culture. Honor-shame culture is a society that grants worth/honor or disgrace/shame to individuals /groups based on some norms and ideals of the society.¹⁶¹ These norms and ideals are well-known and acts of shame lays such an individual or group open to ridicule and loss of face in the society, while acts of honor brings praise, acclaim and fame. In this type of culture conformity to the norms is encouraged or else one faces ostracism in the community.

¹⁵⁹ The last letter 'e' is pronounced like e in English met and is usually written with a diacritic mark under the vowel, while the head of a family called baale has its 'e' pronounced as 'a' in hate with no diacritic mark.

¹⁶⁰ This basic structure may differ in detail from place to place but the examples of Okuku given by Karin Barber, 'How man makes god in West Africa. Yoruba attitudes towards the orisa', *Africa*, 51 (3), 1981, pp. 726-7, and the general picture given by Toyin Falola and Akanmu Adebayo, *Culture, politics & money among the Yoruba*, (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2000), p. 77 attest to this depiction. However, the description of the hierarchical structure in Ile-Ife as given by Bascom is more complicated, see William Bascom, 'Social Status, Wealth and Individual Differences among the Yoruba', *American Anthropologist*, 53, 1951, p. 498ff. P.C. Lloyd calls the group of chiefs that advise the king "council of chiefs" and notes that the chieftaincy title could either be hereditary or "a man rises through the grades of a title association to the highest offices" such is what operates in Ibadan. See Lloyd, *Power and independence*, p. 30.

¹⁶¹ A paraphrase of Bruce Malina's discussion, *The New Testament world. Insights from cultural anthropology*, (London: S.C.M. Press, 1983), p. 28.

Among the free-born, the head of a lineage known as *baale*¹⁶², who is usually the oldest male in the lineage, ruled over the lineage, *idile*, with other elders in the lineage. Lineage, referred to as clan by Bascom is a group whose:

[M]embers are descended from a remote common ancestor. Even when genealogical relations to the clan founder (orisun) or to other clan members have long been forgotten, they are presumed on the basis of membership in the clan, of the common clan names, taboos, and facial marks, of the rights to property and titles which clan members shares, and of the reciprocal privileges and obligations which unite them. An individual accepts all members of his own clan as blood relatives.¹⁶³

The lineage compound *agbo ile/ ile* is inhabited by *omo ile* free born and their wives *iyawo ile*, *alejo* strangers from the community that are embedded in the lineage¹⁶⁴ and *eru* slaves.

The Yoruba society of early times was mainly agrarian¹⁶⁵, meaning that the chief economic resource was land. Land was communally owned and distribution of farm lands was chaired by the *baale* in consultation with older members of the group. Family members (father and his wives, his younger brothers and their families, his married sons and their wives and children, unmarried daughters, nephews/nieces, grand mother) all live together in the same compound, *agbo ile*. However, where there is space limitation, some members of the lineage could set up homes in other locations. They, however, would still see themselves as belonging to the lineage. All the male members of the family work the land, married sons will be given their own portion of

¹⁶² *Baale* could also mean the head of a small family unit, women could call their husbands *baale*. It is the context of use that makes the difference. According to P.C. Lloyd, what the Oyo Yoruba call *idile* is what the Ekiti call *ebi*. So the Ekiti calls the head of *ebi*, *olori ebi* and not *baale*. See *Yoruba land law*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 32. However, *ebi* is used to translate the English 'family', so it could refer to a nuclear family or the extended family in contemporary Yoruba.

¹⁶³ William Bascom, *The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria*, (New York: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1969), p. 42.

¹⁶⁴ Any stranger that wanted to be a part of the community must align himself to a lineage. The lineage that adopted such a foreigner would then provide him with land.

¹⁶⁵ While the majority of the Yoruba were farmers, some were involved in trade, some in special crafts like blacksmith, weaving, drumming, pottery, wood-carving, calabash-carving. Some could engage in other economic activities like hunting and fishing sometimes in addition to farming.

land but they owe it a duty to equally work on the farm of the father. Unmarried sons work their fathers' land until they got married.¹⁶⁶ Doing menial jobs or working with one's hands was considered belittling and undignifying for a man of status or Big Man. Such men/women must have people work for him, this is what LeVine refers to as *conspicuous leisure*:

[T]he social pattern in which freedom from work is a prerogative of high status and is publicly displayed in order to reinforce one's position. Although conspicuous leisure is a feature of all societies, in Africa it is found at all levels of society in forms of status defined by sex, age, wealth, and political office, and is organized around the high evaluation put on commanding persons of a lower status to perform tasks that the superordinate person might perform himself.¹⁶⁷

From all the aforesaid, we garner that the Yoruba society is both gerontological and patriarchal, with authority vested in the most senior male member of the family, though he often exercises this authority usually in consultation with other senior male members of the lineage. Status accrues to the Yoruba generally on the basis of seniority into the group, which could be by birth or by marriage.¹⁶⁸

3.5.3. Hierarchy/Seniority: Ascription of honor to elders is demonstrated by the use of the honorific pronoun, which is the plural of the ordinary pronoun, when addressing or referring to an older person. In addition to this is the posture that one takes when greeting an older person: the females kneel down while males lie prostrate. Seniority, at least when the society was mainly agrarian, also served as a basis for wealth accumulation, for it was only then

¹⁶⁶ It was the father's duty to get a wife for the son as a reward for all his labor. The female members of the lineage could help occasionally especially during harvest and organize the sale of the farm products. Most of the time, the women were involved in petty trading.

¹⁶⁷ Robert A. LeVine, *Dreams and deeds. Achievement motivation in Nigeria*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 4; J.S. Eades says as much: "Many older Yoruba do not know when they were born, but they do know precisely who is senior or junior to themselves. But it is not just a question of respect and deference. The junior members of the compound are expected to take on the dirtier and more onerous tasks". *The Yoruba today*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 53. See also P.C. Lloyd, *Power and independence. Urban Africans' perception of social inequality*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 35.

¹⁶⁸ See J.S. Eades, *The Yoruba today*, p.35; William Bascom, 'The Principle of Seniority in the Social Structure of the Yoruba', *American Anthropologist*, 44:1, 1942, pp. 37-46.

that an individual had a say in the distribution of the lineage's farmland and other privileges. Such as the right to command unpaid labor from the younger members of the lineage to work one's land. Seniority by virtue of age, therefore, gave access both to wealth and prestige among the Yoruba.

LeVine elaborates on this:

[T]he three- or four-year-old is at the very bottom of the domestic status hierarchy; adults and older siblings may pass menial and boring tasks on to him, but he has no one below him to pass them on to. Consequently, he is at anyone's beck and call, and runs errands for his parents, elder siblings, and other adults. As he grows older, he acquires younger siblings or other relatives whom he can order about to some extent, thus relieving himself of some of the more onerous chores. He comes to view growing up as a process of progressive relief from menial tasks and of increasing authority to pass these tasks on to others...Furthermore, the procedure of ordering those lower in the family hierarchy to do a work a person does not relish himself becomes clear to the child at an early age as the proper way of using authority over others. Thus his own developmental experience in the family environment and his perception of it conspire jointly to teach the child that increasing status inevitably entails relative freedom from work at the expense of his subordinates.¹⁶⁹

I have quoted LeVine extensively to demonstrate the duties expected of younger folks to the older ones. In addition to this is Bascom's description of how people of high status, by virtue of their privileged position take advantage of or "mulct" those who rank junior to them. It was considered perfectly acceptable in the culture that those of higher rank could compel others to work for them without pay, appropriate the property of the lower rank without any compensation and take the best largest portion of food and drinks that are being passed around in social occasions.¹⁷⁰ On the part of the elders are obligations among others to offer protection, provide access to more land, and negotiate the marriage of the younger. Since land is the main economic resource and this is vested in a father-figure, it is possible to ensure control of behavior of the members of the family by means of reward and punishment. The ability to punish and reward implies that the *baale* who

¹⁶⁹ LeVine, *Dreams and deeds*, pp.5-6.

¹⁷⁰ Bascom, 'Social status', p. 502-3. Excesses are, however, also denounced in the society

holds the land in trust does not only possess an economic resource but an instrument of power to influence behavior. With time, the concept of seniority came to mean more than seniority by virtue of age, its implicit nuance of 'to surpass' *ajulo* broadened the concept to imply 'being greater than'. With the possibility of accumulating wealth by means other than farming such as: prowess in wars and trade, age was no longer synonymous with the opportunity to acquire wealth, prestige and hence status. Therefore, with time relatively younger persons arose in the society whose wealth rivaled the kings' in some instances and who as a result laid claims to seniority *ajulo*.¹⁷¹

3.5.4. Wealth: Bascom identifies various classes of people on the economic scale: the wealthy person, *oloro*; the rich person *olola*; the person of money *olowo*; the poor person *talaka*; and the destitute *otosi*.¹⁷² The main index for this classification is wealth accumulation, which, though highly desirable, is usually not desired for its own sake *per se*. It is important, because, like seniority based on age, it gives the ability to have "command over people" – power. This is because "wealth enables one to create relationships of obligation and indebtedness."¹⁷³ Having a large following is indispensable in an honor-shame culture to attest to someone's prestige in the community. A major constituent of one's followers comes from one's descent group (both patrilineal and matrilineal) and affinal relationships, this is one reason why wealthy men tended to marry many wives. Other followers are made up of one's friends, pawns, slaves and strangers that are embedded in one's lineage, and as many as one could offer protection and help. The more followers one has the more influential one is. Implicit in the description of having a following is a patron-client relationship. According to Boissevain a patron-client relationship:

¹⁷¹ Karin Barber, 'How man makes god in West Africa, p. 727. Kings were reputed to be quite rich especially in pre-colonial times, for they received tributes, market tolls, war booty, gifts from men seeking favors, free labor performed in their farms, entry fees paid by newly elected chiefs, fines/levies see Lloyd, *Power and Independence*, p.46.

¹⁷² Bascom, 'Social status', p. 491.

¹⁷³ Lloyd, *Power and independence*, p. 48.

is an asymmetrical, quasi-moral relation between a person (the patron) who directly provides protection and assistance (patronage), and / or who influences persons (clients) who depend on him for such assistance. Clients, in turn, provide loyalty and support when called on to do so.¹⁷⁴

Karin Barber, describing the symbiotic relationship between patrons and clients and the underlying rationale for patron-client relationship among the Yoruba, says:

[I]t is very clear that the *human* individual's power depends in the long run on the attention and the acknowledgement of his fellow-men. It is a hierarchical society, dominated by the institution of divine kingship and articulated by a series of chiefly titles of different grades and ranks. But the dynamic impulse in political life is the rise of self-made men. Individuals compete to make a position for themselves by recruiting supporters willing to acknowledge their greatness. ...but the self-made men, rather like the Big Man of New Guinea, is only 'big' if other people think so. He has to secure their attention by display and distribution of wealth and by using his influence as a Big Man to protect them and intervene on their behalf. If he is not able to do this, he will not attract a following.¹⁷⁵

And Peel describing a nineteenth century context among the Yoruba says:

Wealth was counted in cowries (the old medium of exchange), goods, slaves, wives and land...The main use of it was to acquire a following; conspicuous display, liberality and entertainments...The wealthy man (*olowo*) went about town with a posse of his supporters.¹⁷⁶

While these two quotations best describe the situation of the *nouveaux riches* or at best the co-opting of outsiders to one's following, a more basic and assured population of one's following comes from one's lineage, thus suggesting that patronage-clientelism is implicit in Yoruba kinship relations.

3.6. Patronage-Clientelism among the Yoruba

The traditional Yoruba lineage is the locus of identity, economic sustenance and political aspiration for the average Yoruba male. The lineage marks him

¹⁷⁴ Jeremy Boisevain, 'when the saints go marching out: reflections on the decline of patronage in Malta' in Gellner and Waterbury's *Patrons and clients in Mediterranean societies* (London: Duckworth) 1977, p. 81.

¹⁷⁵ Barber, 'How man makes god', p. 724

¹⁷⁶ Peel, *Aladura*, p. 27; See also Bascom, 'Social status', p. 497

out either as a commoner or royalty; it determines his access to land and labor: the two most important factors of production in a peasant agrarian society; and it gives him a sense of belonging and security. If he were born into the family of drummers or weavers or blacksmiths, his vocation in life was already determined to a large extent for he was expected to continue in the family's vocation. For this reason, he would depend on the family to teach him the ropes of the business in order to survive. Taking our cue from agriculture, which was the main stay of the economy, the average young Yoruba male depended on his lineage to give him his own portion of land, even while still working on his father's farm. His right to land is guaranteed by virtue of his birth into the lineage, however, the obligation of his father to marry a wife for him is predicated on the discharge of his obligations to the group, for marriage is a family affair.¹⁷⁷ Some of the other benefits that may accrue to the individual as member of a lineage are predicated on how well he relates to other members of the lineage.¹⁷⁸ The most important question in the community then was: whose child are you? Or from which compound do you hail? The main benefit one stands to gain in having the support of the lineage is the protection and prestige attached to large numbers in the society. This bears out a Yoruba wise saying: "*eniyan ni aso mi, ti mo ba b'aju wehin to mo r'eni mi, inu mi adun ara mi aya gaga, eniyan l'aso mi.*" Literally meaning "people are my clothes, when I look back and see my people, I am happy and excited, people are my clothes". The metaphor of clothing derives from the protection and the prestige offered by it to the wearer, if one notes the gorgeous and flamboyant dressing of the Yoruba man, one gets a good picture of what is hinted at in this wise saying. So the longer and more prestigious one's lineage the better. In addition to one's lineage, an aspiring Big Man needed to attract "a wider group of followers and hangers-on ...through the display and

¹⁷⁷ According to Johnson, "young men were not allowed to marry until they could give their father 10 heads of cowries", *The history*, p. 103

¹⁷⁸ Without the support of the lineage, no individual could aspire to non-hereditary chieftaincy title.

distribution of wealth".¹⁷⁹ The Big Man must indulge in conspicuous consumption, which according to Bascom could entail a host of things such as :

entertaining at the time of his annual religious ceremony, contribute generously to the ceremonies and funerals of close relatives by birth and marriage and entertain his guests and the members of his club in a manner befitting his means. A principal rule of Yoruba hospitality is that a man must offer food and drink to anyone who comes to visit him, according to his own means and his opinion of his guests.¹⁸⁰

In addition, the Big Man could loan out money and in this way make others indebted to him. Some of the debts may not need to be repaid, but are quite useful in creating a pool of grateful people who would seek to repay in kind.¹⁸¹

However, one's effectiveness as a patron to disburse largess depends largely not only on what he has but also on the powerful friends or relations that he has. This enables him not only to act as a patron but also as a broker if need be. A broker, as defined by Boissevain,¹⁸² dispenses "second order resources" for he/she is in "strategic contact with other people who control such resources directly or have access to such persons". Ultimate patrons on the other hand have direct control, over the resources. A broker is effective to broker goods and services to his clients based on the degree of his intimate relations with the ultimate patron.

In contemporary times, kinship still functions as patronage-clientelism among the Yoruba, for distribution of the few resources in circulation often follows

¹⁷⁹ Karin Barber, 'How man makes god', p. 727-8

¹⁸⁰ Bascom, 'Social status', p. 496.

¹⁸¹ See Toyin Falola and Akanmu Adebayo, *Culture, politics and money among the Yoruba*, p. 81. Such a creditor could be rewarded by being conferred with chieftaincy title by the nobility and royalty who are indebted to him.

¹⁸² Boissevain, *Friends of friends. Networks, manipulators and coalitions*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974). p. 147ff; Barnes, *Patrons and power*, pp. 77, 94.

kinship lines.¹⁸³ The limited Yoruba kin terms makes it possible to use the same kin term for variously different relationships. Terms for parents are *baba* for father and *mama/iya* for mother, these terms are also used to refer or address people that are considered to be of same age as one's parents. Yoruba does not have terms to depict cousin, niece, nephew etc; since what mattered was whether someone was older or younger in relation to the speaker, so terms in use are *egbon* 'senior' or *aburo* 'junior'. Some English kin terms like brother and aunt have been adapted to the Yoruba morphology to sound *broda* and *anti*.¹⁸⁴ These kin terms are extended and applied to people who are not necessarily related to one by blood. The farther one was away from one's home place, the more extended use one seems to make of kin terms to include people from far flung places in Yoruba land. Migrants in big cities will search for Big Men¹⁸⁵ who originated from their hometowns and use appropriate terms (*egbon/ baba*), in order to 'merit' the obligations (protection and provision) which kinship relationship imply. Since kinship relationship already entails patronage-clientism, the use of kin terms by people who are unrelated by birth is an implicit request for the enjoyment of the duties and privileges of kinship relationship.

Lloyd, based on a pilot study conducted in 1968 and a questionnaire survey in 1971, found out that most Yoruba believed that having a 'helper' was more important than being hardworking in order for one to attain success in life.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Daniel Jordan Smith, 'Kinship and corruption in Contemporary Nigeria', *Ethnos*, 66:3, 2001, pp. 344-364, reaches the same conclusion by looking at the Igbo society; Caroline Bledsoe, *Women and Marriage in Kpelle Society*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), p. 58 says of an ethnic group in Liberia "in Kpelle society kinspeople do enter into relations that are best described as patron-client relations."

¹⁸⁴ I thank Prof. Agwuele who sent me a copy of his article before it was published. Augustine Agwuele, 'Popular culture of Yoruba kinship practices' in Toyin Falola and Augustine Agwuele (eds.), *Africans and the politics of popular culture*, (Rochester N.Y: University of Rochester, 2009), pp. 41.

¹⁸⁵ Adrian Peace, 'Prestige, power and legitimacy in a modern Nigerian town', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 14, 1979, pp. 26-51, describes the scenario involving migrants from Ijebu-Ode but working in Agege, Lagos.

¹⁸⁶ Lloyd, *Power and independence*, p. 161; Also see Barnes, *Patrons and power*, pp. 10-11

The perception that patrons/helpers were crucial to one's success is heightened, Agwuele argues, because of the failure of the state to provide for its citizens. Western education, which the Yoruba embraced heartily, was expected among other things to give a level playing field to all participants, so that no one needed to make recourse to primordial sentiments to gain access to resources. The failure of the state to expand the economic base of the nation has resulted in the scarcity of resources. The Yoruba, like other Nigerians, have therefore experienced a resurgence or rebirth of the use of kin relationships for the distribution of scarce resources. Services as mundane as obtaining an academic transcript, or obtaining admission to schools need "long legs", that is, the intervention of a patron. The need for a patron, otherwise known as a godfather, is inevitably quite pervasive in all aspects of life among the Yoruba. The assumption of political offices in the country is predicated on one's ability to acquire a creditable patron. The popular godfather of politics in Ibadan, Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu, is a well-known case in point.¹⁸⁷ The prayers in Pentecostal circles for favor (divine and human) can really be interpreted as a petition for acquisition of a patron. It is also instructive that pastors are called 'daddy' by their members in most Pentecostal congregations among the Yoruba and the members are addressed and referred to as 'brother and sister'. Drawing on the implications of the use of kin terms by Pentecostals as means of accessing resources, Agwuele asserts that it is grounded on:

[T]he desire to maintain the traditionally instituted reciprocal obligations between senior and junior that provide the access to social and economic resources that is afforded by kinship thinking.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ Ayokunle O. Omobowale and Olutayo O. Akinpelu, 'Chief Lamidi Adedibu and patronage politics in Nigeria', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 45:3, 2007, pp. 425-446. His success as a political patron rests on his ability to garner grassroot support for politicians seeking to run for offices. His popularity with the masses lies on his ability to provide basic needs such as food for the numerous hangers-on that call at his home. *Amala-Gbegiri*, a favorite relish of Ibadan people is the staple that he served his numerous callers.

¹⁸⁸ Agwuele, 'Popular culture', p. 58

3.6.1. Patron-Client Relationships Versus Patronage as a System of Relationships

Social scientific analysis of patronage-clientelism has often proceeded on the description of the features of the relationship often with an eye on Roman patron-client relationship. In this way, the Roman patron-client relationship is often portrayed as the paradigm against which other patron-client relationships must be evaluated. Some scholars¹⁸⁹ in disagreement with this approach have insisted that patron-client relationship in Rome developed within a particular context within which it had a certain significance that is not replicated in other contexts, it was, therefore, peculiar to Rome should not be applied to other societies. This clarification has provided the necessary liberty to explore the social scientific concept of patronage-clientelism without seeking its identification with the Roman model.

Johnson and Dandeker have attempted to move the discussion beyond viewing patronage as relationship to patronage as a system of relationships.¹⁹⁰ The social scientific discussion of patronage as a relationship often revolves round its features (description as a personal, dyadic – between two parties, voluntary, and asymmetrical relationship –the unequal status of the parties as well as the gifts they exchange); its function in the society and sometimes a comparison of the relationship in different societies.¹⁹¹ In viewing patronage as a relationship scholarship gets into difficulties where features found in one society differ from those found in another society. This leads to disagreement on what counts for patronage and what should be considered as benefaction or simply reciprocity. It is on account of an analysis of patronage as

¹⁸⁹ See Claude Eilers, *Roman patrons of Greek cities*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 1-17; Jonathan Marshall, *Jesus, patrons, and benefactors*, (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), pp. 4-7.

¹⁹⁰ Terry Johnson and Christopher Dandeker, 'Patronage. Relation and system' in Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (ed) *Patronage in ancient society*, (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 219-241.

¹⁹¹ See Richard P. Saller, *Personal patronage under the early empire*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); S.N. Eisenstadt and L. Roniger, *Patrons, clients and friends. Interpersonal relations and the structure of trust in society*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

relationship that true kinship relationship is unaccounted for as a form of patronage, rather patron-client relationship is often depicted as fictive kinship relationship. The main distinction in the analysis of patronage/clientelism as relationship and as a system of relationships, as suggested by Johnson and Dandeker, is that the latter goes beyond a one on one analysis of individual relationships with the tendency to emphasize points of correspondence and points of departure, for such analysis is unhelpful in explaining data outside such configuration. Data, therefore, become unwieldy, as one needs to make provision for every instance where there are variations in the conception and practice of patronage/clientelism. On the other hand, viewing patronage/clientelism as a system of relationships means looking at a network of relationships and how they function in the allocation of resources in the society. It is on account of investigating the broad question of the “dominant (not the exclusive) role played by patron-client relationships in the organization of the economy, polity and society”¹⁹² that one may note the patterns that emerge from different contexts. Yet it is not these patterns that suggest or hint at a patronage system, it is the existence of patronage system that suggests the patterns. However, Johnson and Dandeker departed from their own advice by insisting that patronage-clientelism excludes kinship relations because the latter is not voluntary.¹⁹³ However, as we have seen in the case of the Yoruba, patronage-clientelism exists among Yoruba kins especially because the fact of being a kin does not automatically translate into allocation of resources without commensurate observation of one’s obligations and responsibilities. Secondly, the concept of kinship among the Yoruba is fluid enough to accommodate those who are not biological kins.

3.6.2. Generosity and Gratitude: Chief virtues among the Yoruba

One of the notable features of patron-client relationship is the exchange of goods that reflects the unequal status of the parties. One Prince Ladejola was

¹⁹² Johnson and Dandeker, ‘Patronage. Relation and system’, p. 223.

¹⁹³ *ibid*, p. 222.

extolled in the notice placed in a newspaper at his death for his generosity to people of his town in Lagos. He provided the young Ijesha immigrants with a footing in a strange land, Lagos, by getting employment for them, standing as a guarantor for them and helped them generally in cash and kind.¹⁹⁴ Entertainment of protégés is also a valued practice expected of patrons today as exemplified by Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu.

If generosity is expected of the rich, what is expected of the recipient of favors from the rich person is gratitude. Gratitude can be expressed in different forms. Among the Yoruba, foremost is the verbal expression of thanks. The recipient of favor is expected to thank the giver on the receipt of the favor/gift. The next time of meeting, probably the next day or so, the recipient is expected to say thank you to the giver for yesterday. If the next time of meeting is more than three or four days after the act of gift-giving, the recipient, having lost count of days, will say “thanks for the other day”. The giver is not only thanked privately, the more the people who get to know of this favor bestowed on the recipient the better, for the more this shores up the reputation of the giver in the community. The recipient of the gift also gains honor as a “grateful person”, one of the worst descriptions one can get is to be called *alaimore* “an ungrateful person”. As Idowu says “ the Yoruba abhor ingratitude which with them is a grievous sin”.¹⁹⁵ There are many proverbs in Yoruba that show the importance of the act of giving thanks:

Eni ti a se lore ti ko dupe, bi olosa ko ni leru lo ni – The one to whom good has been done and does not give thanks, it is as if one had been robbed of one’s possessions.

Bi omode ba dupe ore ana, a ri omiran gba – If a child gives thanks for yesterday’s gifts, it will receive another one.

Apart from the verbal expression of thanks, the recipient would be expected to make him/herself available at the behest of the giver especially at social

¹⁹⁴ P.C. Lloyd, *Power and independence*, p. 164-5; See Omobowale and Akinpelu, ‘Chief Lamidi Adedibu’, pp. 431ff.

¹⁹⁵ Idowu, *Olodumare*, p. 122.

functions organized by the giver.¹⁹⁶ In light of our discussion on conspicuous leisure, the client is expected to make him /herself available to the patron in running errands or perform other tasks.

3.7. The Yoruba view of the Poor and the Rich

Bascom's work that is cited above is quite instructive in the manner in which the poor and the rich are regarded among Yoruba. Bascom's mention that the host entertains his guests not only according to his means but also according to his opinion of the importance of his guests is quite significant. It is quite common today to observe differences in the food items or type of drinks offered different categories of people present at the same social occasion. Guests are served based on the opinion of the host on their importance to him/her; sometimes this opinion is based on how wealthy the guest is or how useful the guest would be in procuring some favors in future. The poor or destitute that stumble in on such a social occasion (they are often uninvited) will not be expected to mingle with the rich, though both attend the same social occasion. As Bascom rightly observes:

A poor man may have handsome features and a fine body, but he counts for nothing. He knows how to behave in the retiring manner befitting his position, and he generally associates with others of his own level.¹⁹⁷

On a general note, the Yoruba society is one that celebrates success, flaunts achievements, encourages and promotes progress. In such a society there is hardly any place for the poor and the failed person. To an extent, the poor is out of place with the rich, for the rich is permitted to be arrogant to a certain extent and the poor is expected to understand this. The poor that is hard-working may have some modicum of respect¹⁹⁸ within the society but his/her opinion is neither sought nor taken seriously when matters are being

¹⁹⁶ In view here is a relationship that spans more than a one-time gift relationship.

¹⁹⁷ Bascom, 'Social Status', p. 491

¹⁹⁸ Though in one sense, the rich need the poor, for it is only in comparison to another that one is either rich or poor. In a related sense, the rich need the poor to run errands for him/her especially in a patron-client system as the Yoruba. He/She may be called upon to help out in situations as the need arise and may often be rewarded for working well.

discussed. Lack of means, it appears, is almost synonymous in Yoruba understanding with lack of wisdom. The failed person may be seen as one whose *ori* is 'bad', he is an unlucky person and people may not like to associate with him/her, it is as if his bad luck could be contagious¹⁹⁹. As Bascom says, the lazy is the most despised in the society as well as the rich but stingy person.²⁰⁰

From the aforesaid, we can garner that being rich, that is having enough to meet one's own needs as well as those of others (that enables one to be generous) is the ideal among the Yoruba. It is to this ideal that many aspire. In a honor-shame culture as the Yoruba, it is not only important to aspire to be rich but to maintain the status, otherwise, the person gets referred to as *olowo ana* - the rich of yesterday, and everyone knows that it is not the status one had yesterday that matters but the status at the present.

3.8. The Political cum Economic Context of the Yoruba in Nigeria

The political and economic context of the Yoruba is not particularly different from that of other Nigerians. For this reason, we shall just briefly chart the political and economic terrain of the country within the period under consideration. Barely six years into Nigerian independence from the British, the young Nigerian state found itself embroiled in a coup and counter coup. The scenario generated by the coups later culminated in a declaration of secession on 30 May 1967 by the Igbo-speaking people who mainly inhabit the South Eastern²⁰¹ part of Nigeria. The Nigerian Civil War was to last for the

¹⁹⁹ Bascom, 'Social status', p. 492, people may not want to enter such a person's house for fear that the same 'bad luck' will befall them.

²⁰⁰ Bascom, 'Social status', p.492, 496

²⁰¹ The first coup in Nigeria was staged in January 1966 by some young Nigerian soldiers. A counter coup was staged in July of the same year as a redress, it was on the occasion of this coup that the first Nigerian military Head of State, General Aguiyi Ironsi, an Igbo, was killed. This later led to a spiral of violence against the Igbo living in the Northern part (mainly dominated by the Hausa/Fulani) of Nigeria. The Igbo in South-East retaliated against the Northerners living in their midst. For more detailed account of these coups see John de St. Jorre, *The Nigerian civil war*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1972; Adewale Ademoyega *Why we struck. The story of the first Nigerian coup*, (Ibadan: Evans Brothers Nigeria Publishers

next three and a half years, ending on the 12 January 1970. The process of rebuilding the nation from the ravages of the war both psychologically and in terms of infrastructure then began. One of the plans put in place to ensure the continued unity and the integration of the Nigerian polity was the establishment of the National Youth Service Corps (N.Y.S.C.) in 1973. The intent was that Nigerian graduates from the Universities and later the Polytechnics needed to serve the nation for one year. To this end, graduates would normally be posted to other parts of Nigeria other than their places of origin. Knowing other peoples' customs was, among many other things, meant to forge understanding among the different groups that make up the nation²⁰². In one sense, this policy suggests that the youth was seen as a herald of hope for the nation: a forger of unity, a bearer of the ideals of the nation, the hope of the nation.

The intervention of the army in the governance of the nation that began in January 1966, ostensibly on account of the ineptitude of the then civilian government, was to continue for the next thirty years.²⁰³ The (mis)rule of the military is often viewed as a colossal disaster to the country on many fronts. It stifled the development and the entrenchment of democracy in the psyche of the people. It sanitized force as the means to getting things done, it baptized impatience and haste as the only means of achieving one's goal. It created apathy in the people as to the manner in which they are governed, for no one dared argue with gun-totting soldiers. This in turn raised and encouraged a set of leaders who governed with a sense of impunity, lack of transparency and accountability.

Limited, 1981). While the Igbo is the main ethnic group living in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria, some minority groups such as the present day Ogoni people (Ijaw, Efik, Ibibio) also inhabit the sub-region.

²⁰² Nigeria is made up of about two hundred ethnic groups who speak about two hundred and fifty languages, see Falola, *The history*, p. 5.

²⁰³ The military rule, which began with General Aguiyi Ironsi in 1966, continued uninterrupted till 1979 when a democratically elected government was sworn in on 1 October 1979. The democratic government was sacked in 1983 by a military coup. Military rule resumed from 1983 till 1999 when the democratically elected government of Olusegun Obasanjo assumed power.

The fallout of this scenario was a sense in almost every Nigerian that one's salvation must come from one's own hand, that one could not depend on the government for anything, not even the most basic of amenities. Unfortunately, Nigerians learnt to live without expecting much from the system, salaries were hardly paid, agreements with workers' unions were never honored. Many who had the opportunity left the country for greener pastures.²⁰⁴

At the turn of the 60s, the Nigerian economy was highly dependent on cash crops, accounting for 75% of export earnings.²⁰⁵ The dependence on cash crops gradually dwindled and was replaced with oil so that by 1965 it had become a major source of revenue. In 1971 Nigeria joined the rank of wealthy OPEC countries.²⁰⁶ There was great optimism that the nation was destined for greatness as oil revenue would enable it to accomplish all the good plans it had cherished for its people. But this was not to be, reports abound on how millions and sometimes billions of Naira were siphoned from the economy. These were resources that could have been ploughed back into the economy to create jobs, build infrastructures, revitalize or develop the nation's technology among other things. The cumulative effect is that Nigeria and the lot of Nigerians did not fare well under the (mis)rule of the Nigerian leaders. While the military had a lot to be blamed for because of the state of the nation, the civilian governments that took over continued the legacy of wasting the nation's resources much like the military did. Nigeria's economic and political landscape is still in the doldrums up till the present.

²⁰⁴ See *West Africa*, 27 Nov – 3 Dec. 1989, p. 1964-5 for a chronicle of the different sectors of the service economy that was affected. The Federal Government in an attempt to stem the tide set up a Presidential Task on Brain Drain in October 1988, but this was hardly successful.

²⁰⁵ Eghosa Osaghae, *Nigeria since independence. A crippled giant* (London: Hurst & Company, 1998), p. 50.

²⁰⁶ Nigeria began exporting oil in 1958 but joined OPEC in 1971. At the time of General Abacha's rule, oil accounted for 90% of Nigeria's export earning, see Falola, *The history*, p. 196.

3.8.1. A breakdown of the economic situation of Nigeria between 1970 and 2010

The 1970s: Falola describes the 1970s as the “peak of Nigeria’s growth and pride” so much so that the then Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon was reported to have said that “money was not Nigeria’s problem”.²⁰⁷ Nigeria’s ‘pride’ in the 70s is attributable to the huge revenue that it earned from oil. Having joined OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) in 1971, Nigeria benefited from the boom experienced in 1973-4. Following the Arab-Israeli war of October 1973, OPEC exerted pressure that caused the price of oil to rise from \$3.8 in October 1973 to \$14.7 in January 1974.²⁰⁸ The Federal revenue increased from N785 million in 70/71 to N6.1 billion in 76/77. The increased funds in government pocket led to increased spending: creation of more states, construction of schools, airports, hospitals, free education at primary school level was initiated, massive salary increases with arrears were paid to workers, food importation and importation of ostentatious goods.²⁰⁹ In 1977, Nigeria hosted the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture known as FESTAC. Nigeria at this time ranked as the thirtieth wealthiest country in the world.²¹⁰ The prosperity of the nation trickled down to the people, there was plenty of time for leisure and partying. Falola describing the scenario among the Yoruba says:

Weekends in Yorubaland in the late 1970s and early 1980s were especially interesting. Whole cities would go agog for wedding, funeral, and other ceremonies. Parties were huge as people came from far and near. Celebrants received gifts, and were ‘sprayed’ with mint-condition Naira notes when they danced. Guests were served good

²⁰⁷ Toyin Falola, *The history*, p. 12

²⁰⁸ Osaghae, *Nigeria since independence*, p. 96.

²⁰⁹ The University of Ilorin (part of Yorubaland) was founded in 1976, Falola, *The history*, p.14; Salary award increases, popularly known as Udoji award was a 100% increment for “most upper- and middle-level civil servants”. It was also seen as a ploy by the Gowon regime to shore up his popularity. See Sara Berry, *Fathers work for their sons. Accumulation, mobility and class formation in an extended Yoruba community*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 39. Imported were basic goods like rice, meat and sugar – commodities in which the country had been self-sufficient before. For more see Toyin Falola and Julius Ihonvbere, *The rise and fall of Nigeria’s Second Republic 1979-84*, (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1985), p. 88ff.

²¹⁰ Falola, *The history*, p. 138.

food and plenty of drinks, and sometimes were allowed some 'take-homes' such as plastic containers, yard-length clothes, or live goats.²¹¹

However, in 1975 the price of oil slumped as there was a decline in demand by 1976, though the boom had ended the impression of prosperity was yet kept up. The Murtala military administration that came to power in 1975 after ousting Gowon embarked on instilling some prudence and sense of discipline in the national psyche by insisting on a "low profile orientation to counteract the profligate ostentation which the oil boom era" had brought.²¹² However, a critical reading of the budget proposals of these years evinces an ambivalent posture of the government. The government found itself in a precarious position; the previous regime had just doled out massive salary increases (Udoji award) in 1974, but by 1975 it was clear that the economy was not buoyant enough to sustain such expenditure. The Murtala government was, however, bound by the commitment of the Gowon regime and went ahead to host FESTAC in 1977 and honor the agreements made by the previous regime to various contractors. It was in a difficult position to halt what was seen as development projects, for then it risked being unpopular with the masses. Yet by virtue of keeping up with these projects, it inadvertently gave the impression that all was well. The truth of the matter was that there was really no boom, for it later became clear that a one-year increase in revenue in just one sector of the economy could not be made to bear the weight of all development efforts. Moreover, the so-called boom was dependent on a volatile issue such as the Arab-Israeli war: an accidental factor. The government soon needed to borrow from international creditors to keep the country going.²¹³ The seed of the economic crises that characterized 80s and 90s was already sown.

²¹¹ Falola, *Culture, politics and money*, p. 304.

²¹² Osaghae, *Nigeria since independence*, p.83

²¹³ Osaghae, *Nigeria since independence*, p.99. For a country that had just come out of a devastating Civil War, the much the government could have done was to concentrate on rebuilding infrastructures.

The 1980s: The 1980s was a period characterized by a massive devaluation of the Naira, inflation, removal of subsidies on oil products, retrenchment of workers, and high cost of living. The crowning of this was the introduction of Structural Adjustment Program in 1986 by the Babangida military administration. The beginning of the decade (1979-83) found a civilian government in place, headed by President Shehu Shagari. He, however, did not continue with some of the prudent spending initiated by the past Murtala/Obasanjo military administration, rather more offices were created to reward political protégés that had ensured the victory of the party at the polls. The resulting scenario was calamitous, for:

The domestic economy was ... in deep recession. Workers, especially primary school teachers in the states, were owed huge arrears of salaries, in some cases for upwards of ten months. With unofficial large inflation rates of between 30 and 50 per cent, purchasing power declined massively. As the costs of consumer goods and services, including food, housing, transportation, education and health care, went beyond the reach of most ordinary people. The situation was most devastating for the urban poor who lost their jobs as various enterprises retrenched workers in order to keep afloat, but those in rural areas also suffered greatly.²¹⁴

It was no surprise, then, that the civilian government did not survive its second term mandate before the military ousted it out of office on 31 December 1983. The military tenure virtually ran from 1983 until 1999 successively under Generals Buhari (83-85), Babangida (85-93), a three-month civilian interim government of Ernest Shonekan (27 August-10 November 1993), Abacha (1993-1998), and Abdulsalami (1998-1999). Under all these regimes, the lot of Nigerians did not fare any better, in fact, it only got worse. The military regimes got increasingly irresponsible, perhaps, with the exception of the regime of Abdulsalami. It all came to a head under the rule of Abacha, whom Falola describes as “the country’s worst dictator...brazenly corrupt and cruel”:²¹⁵

²¹⁴ *ibid*, p. 156

²¹⁵ Falola, *The history*, p. 196.

Nigerians entered their worst period of despair. The people lost confidence in their leaders, in politics, in the military, and in virtually all public institutions. The media and the public began to talk of a nation in ruin, one that would require decades to rebuild. Education at all levels virtually collapsed and those who could afford it moved their children to foreign lands. The majority of the population could not afford to eat three daily meals, buy medicine, build or repair their houses, send their children to fee-paying schools or meet expected cultural obligations. The country was isolated, its infrastructure deteriorated, and the government was unable to check corruption, inequality and lawlessness. Productivity fell to its lowest level as many workers showed little or no commitment and inflation denied the majority of the population a decent living standard.²¹⁶

However, the year 1993 deserves special mention for its import for the Yoruba's continued existence within the Nigerian polity. The Presidential election held on 12 June that year was annulled by Babangida's regime after initial results had shown Chief M.K.O. Abiola (a Yoruba) in the lead. The backdrop of this election was that no Yoruba has ever assumed the highest office in the country through an electoral process.²¹⁷ The success of Abiola at the polls was astounding, for no Yoruba had cut across the ethnic divide in the country as to be found acceptable by all. *West Africa*, in light of this aptly describes the mood of the Yoruba:

Many Southerners had rejoiced over Chief Abiola's early lead, hoping that the leadership of Nigeria would fall to one of their own after 13 years of domination by the Northern half of the country. Since General Obasanjo handed over in 1979, subsequent leaders have all been Northerners. For once in Nigeria's history, a Southerner, in the person of Chief Abiola, gained votes almost evenly across the country. From the pattern of voting, and for the first time, ethnic and religious factors seemed to have been forgotten. Many say the singular feat of his being accepted even in the deep North may for a long time be unparalleled in Nigeria's political history.²¹⁸

The joy was, however, short lived as the election was cancelled spiraling an orgy of violence, riots, arson, and civil disobedience in mostly Yoruba cities

²¹⁶ *ibid*, p. 200.

²¹⁷ General Obasanjo, a Yoruba, became a military Head of State at the death of General Murtala Mohammed under whom he had served as Chief of Staff of Supreme Headquarters. His ascension to the position of the Head of State was because he was next in rank to the late Murtala.

²¹⁸ *West Africa*, 5-11 July 1993, p. 1138.

and towns. An interim government headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan (also a Yoruba) that was put in place was highly unpopular among the Yoruba. It lasted only three months before the military resumed powers under General Sanni Abacha.

2000s: The Third democracy commenced on 29 May 1999 when former military General Olusegun Obasanjo was sworn in as a civilian president. He ruled for two terms and handed power over to the present President Alhaji Umar Yar'Adua on 29 May 2007. Given the decadence of the past years, it is simply unrealistic to think that there would be a reversal in the fortunes of Nigerians within these few years. In addition, civilian governments have the penchant for being slack in financial probity and discipline given the patron-client network in Nigerian political system. Therefore, concerning the lot of Nigerians, we can say that 'nothing has actually really changed'. It is almost against hope to think that things might change, for the failure of the state to provide the needs of the people, as mentioned above, has resulted in allegiance being given to descent /ethnic groups through which access to resources can be gained. Allegiance to descent groups undermine the integrity of the state, so that one who 'steals' from the state but gives to his/her descent group is not considered a thief but "a true son of the soil".²¹⁹ Herein lies the paradox of the Nigerian State: it is composed of units that command greater allegiance of the people and inherent in this description is the seed of its weakness and decline.

3.8.2. Post independent Nigeria – an imitation of Colonial Nigeria?

According to Osaghae,²²⁰ the present lamentable state of Nigeria is not a surprise at all. This is because Nigeria has been crippled right from conception in the womb of the colonial mother that gave birth to it. In terms of economy, Nigeria was meant to serve the interests of the British economy:

²¹⁹ See Daniel Smith, 'Kinship and corruption', pp. 354-5.

²²⁰ Osaghae describes the entrenchment of Nigeria's present sorry state by its colonial history in the first chapter of his book, *Nigeria since Independence*.

producers of cash products for its industries. Nigeria's internal politics was arranged to preserve the status quo especially as found in the Northern part of Nigeria. The goal was that law and order be maintained in a way that would not impinge on the free flow of trade and commerce. The most minimal of infrastructure was provided in form of transport. To this end, rail lines and roads were constructed to link the produce places to ports and harbors for shipment to Britain. Education and medical care were left in the docket of Christian missionaries with few additions that were meant to cater ostensibly for European interests. The art of the use of force by the British colonial administration was amply demonstrated in the subjugation of the Ijebu and other peoples. There is, therefore, a striking resemblance between the British colonial authorities and the post-independent Nigerian leaders. The parallel, however, breaks down for the British colonial authorities sought through its policies to advance the cause of the home government and its people. The post-independent Nigerian leaders were only serving their own interest.

3.9. Conclusion

In this chapter we have explored the context of the Yoruba and all the possible elements that could exert influence upon his/her understanding of scripture especially John 10:10. We have seen the primacy of the concept of *alafia* in his/her assumption of how the world should run derivable from the Yoruba traditional religion and culture. We have also seen the significance of power in personal relations and how this has fuelled patron-client relationships as a means of accessing resources on the part of clients and as a symbol of power on the part of the patrons. In addition, we may infer that the Yoruba, as we gleaned from the traditional religious system, is hardly fatalistic: they believe that every problem has a solution. In a hierarchical, honor-shame culture such as the Yoruba, the phrase *iku ya ju esin lo*, "death is better than disgrace" is uttered when all else has failed. But before then, all must be done to avert shame, that is all must be done to live up to the

expectations of the society. In the next chapter, still building the context of the Yoruba Christian, we shall look at the rise and growth of the church among the Yoruba. We shall note that there is a parallel between the development of the church and the socio-political cum economic context of the country.

CHAPTER 4 CHRISTIANITY AMONG THE YORUBA

4.0. Introduction

The story of Christianity among the Yoruba is *de facto* the story of Christianity in Nigeria. It was the effort of Protestant missionaries in the 19th century that began in the South Western coastal town of Badagry that eventually spread to other parts of the country. The earlier attempts by Portuguese missionaries in the 16th century and later in the middle of the 17th century by Spanish and Italian Capuchin missionaries to bring Christianity to Benin (mid-Western part of Nigeria) were largely unsuccessful. In addition, the Portuguese missionaries that went to Warri in the 16th century were a little more successful initially, for they got the support of the traditional king, *Olu*. However, the religion, which lasted some one hundred and fifty years, did not get beyond the court. So, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the period for the missionary effort among the Yoruba, “there was little to show for the early missionary endeavours”.²²¹

While information used in this chapter principally derive from library research, this has been supplemented in some sections by the field research carried out in January 2010 by the researcher.²²²

4.1. The Advent of Christianity in Yorubaland²²³

4.1.1. Mainline/Mission Churches

The advent of Christianity in Yorubaland is linked to the story of the return of Liberated Slaves from Sierra Leone to Yorubaland. Recaptured slaves, a great

²²¹ Ade Ajayi, *Christian missions in Nigeria*, pp. 3-5. See also, Lamin Sanneh, *West African Christianity. The Religious Impact*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1983), pp. 39-44.

²²² The researcher interviewed leaders of some churches, Christian organizations as well as the administration of a Muslim outfit known as NASFAT in the month of January, 2010.

²²³ Discussion of this topic relies heavily on the work of Deji Ayegboyin and Asonzeh F.K.U. ‘Taxonomy of Churches in Nigeria. A historical perspective’, *Orita. Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies* XXXIV/ 1&2 (June and December 2002), pp. 68-86. Further details are filled in from the account of some other scholars. At the initial period, there was nothing called ‘Yorubaland’, the different groups were known as independent ‘tribes’ such as Oyo, Ijebu, Egba, Ijesha and so on.

number of whom were Yoruba or Aku, as they were better known then, had been settled in the British colony of Sierra Leone, for that was the safe haven provided for this cause since 1786.²²⁴ Quite a number of the Liberated Slaves had become Christians under the influence of missionaries in Sierra Leone, though some became Muslims. Some of the Liberated Slaves were Egba from Abeokuta (and a few Lagos), on learning that they were not too far from home they began to stage a return home as from 1838.²²⁵ Badagry, being the safer port through which they could get to Abeokuta, became the entry point to Yorubaland. Some stayed in Badagry, while others moved inland later to Abeokuta. It was these Liberated Slaves who had returned to their home-country that sought that missionaries be sent to support them in their new-found faith and commence mission work among their people. Since the converts' first port of call was Badagry, this was where Christian mission among the Yoruba people began.

Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman, of the Wesleyan Methodist, was the first Christian missionary to arrive in Badagry on 23 September 1842. Henry Townsend of the Christian Missionary Society (CMS), on an exploratory trip, also registered his mission's presence in Badagry on 24 December of the same year. Both Freeman and Townsend at different times also visited Abeokuta with the aim of starting work there. However, the death of Sodeke, the Egba king who had received them warmly, made them wait in Badagry until they would be allowed in to Abeokuta.²²⁶ Rev. Thomas Jefferson Bowen of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1850 began mission work in Badagry and later moved on to Ijaye and Ogbomoso. Fathers Francesco Xavier Borghero and Fernandez of the Société des Mission Africaines (SMA), a French Roman Catholic mission body, arrived Lagos in September 1863.

²²⁴ Modupe Oduyoye, 'The planting of Christianity in Yorubaland 1842-1888' in Ogbu Kalu (ed), *Christianity in West Africa. The Nigerian story*, (Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1978), p. 248.

²²⁵ J.F.A. Ajayi, 'The aftermath of the fall of Old Oyo' in J.F. Ade Ajayi & Michael Crowder (eds.), *History of West Africa Vol 2*, 2nd ed., (England: Longman Group Ltd, 1974), p. 204.

²²⁶ The Egba chiefs had asked them to wait till a new Alake would be installed before they could enter. They were eventually asked to enter Abeokuta in July 1846.

These four mainline mission churches began mission work among the people later known as the Yoruba by the middle of the nineteenth century. These churches soon spread out to other parts of Yorubaland. The CMS opened a station in Abeokuta in 1844 and another in Ibadan under the Reverend David Hinderer in 1851. Following on the heels of the missionaries were a British consul and warships, which were precursors of British intervention in the affairs of the people.

The activities of the churches, especially the CMS the biggest of them all, devolved around providing literacy and education, bible translation, providing medical facilities, encouragement of legitimate trade and instruction in the new faith/evangelism.²²⁷ Having come at a time when Yorubaland was in the throes of war, the missionaries in collaboration with the colonial administration played no mean role in bringing peace to Yorubaland. The mission work of the missionaries was greatly enhanced by the contribution of Liberated Slaves who were mother-tongue speakers of the local language. Prominent among them was the Reverend, later Bishop, Samuel Ajayi Crowther who translated the Bible into Yoruba in 1884. Some others served as catechists, itinerant evangelists and pastors.

4.1.2. African/Ethiopian Churches

As the church grew, with some becoming self-supporting, there was an increasing desire by the 'natives' to have control over the affairs of the church. Though this was the plan of Reverend Henry Venn, the secretary of the CMS (1841-1872) his successors and some other Europeans who worked under him

²²⁷ It was in the course of studying the language that missionaries found that the people who had erstwhile seen themselves as different groups actually shared basically the same language and this later became a ground for their common sense of belonging.

did not share this view.²²⁸ The arrogance and high handedness of Western missionaries' treatment of the 'native' clergy and their contempt for the culture of the people ignited the desire for greater control of the running of the church by Africans. The humiliation that Bishop Ajayi Crowther suffered at the hands of young European missionaries was a case in point.²²⁹ There was the desire to have churches that would allow the African clergy to exercise their gifts and that would be sympathetic to some aspects of African culture such as tolerating and/or accepting polygamous men as worshippers.²³⁰

The occasion of the dismissal of Rev. Moses Ladejo Stone, the pastor of the First Baptist Church in Lagos, by Rev. W.B. David, a European missionary, was reason for the first schism to occur in the church among the Yoruba. The congregation left the church to form a new congregation called Ebenezer Baptist Church in March 1888 under the leadership of Rev. Stone.²³¹ On 14 August 1891, some CMS and Methodist members in Lagos came together and formed the United Native African Church (UNA).²³² On 13 October 1901, The African Church Bethel was formed - a breakaway from St Paul's Breadfruit (Anglican Communion). In 1917, the Wesleyan Methodist experienced schism as the polygamists that were expelled from the church formed the United African Methodist Church. Of note is the fact that all these breakaway

²²⁸ Prominent antagonists to the idea that Africans were capable to run the affairs of the church were Henry Townsend and Gollmer and perhaps to a lesser degree David Hinderer. Hutchinson, the successor to Henry Venn soon imbibed this posture also. See Ajayi, *Christian missions*, pp. 180ff, 241.

²²⁹ For an account of this see Ajayi, *Christian mission*, pp. 241ff. Also see C.S. Ola 'Foundations of the African Church in Nigeria' in Ogbu kalu (ed.), *Christianity in West Africa*, p. 337

²³⁰ J.B. Webster, *The African Churches* is a sympathetic discussion of the rise and growth of churches that broke away from Mission churches. See E.A. Ayandele *The missionary impact* where he discusses 'Ethiopianism' in chapters six and seven, (Longman: London, 1966).

²³¹ Ade Ajayi, *Christian missions*, p. 268

²³² Webster, *The African Churches*, p. 62. Webster notes that "The U.N.A. was not created as a result of conflict in a particular church" p. 68

African/Ethiopian Churches took place in Lagos. These churches, however, soon spread beyond Yorubaland to other parts of Nigeria and beyond.²³³

Out of the four mission churches established in mid-nineteenth century, three of them had experienced breakaways within a period of fifty years. However, as Ajayi points out, this was rather a compliment to the work of the missionaries for it demonstrated that Christianity was taking root in Yorubaland and was being made to reflect the peculiarities of the people in which it had found home.²³⁴ One sharp discontinuity that mission churches had brought was that those who were regarded as big men in the Yoruba society were not considered as full members in the church because they were polygamists. African Churches bridged this gap: big men in the society became big men in the church also. Also notable about the African Churches is that they remained as close as possible in terms of liturgy and doctrine to their parent churches. The innovation they brought was mainly in terms of church government but not with regard to mode of worship, this was left for the African Indigenous Churches to work out.

4.1.3. African Indigenous Churches²³⁵

While the African churches broke away from mainline churches as a protest against Western domination in the church, the African Indigenous Churches arose as an indirect protest against Western theology in the church.²³⁶ The churches that arose as result mainly broke away from the CMS in the 1920s. The quest was for a more fulfilling and authentic worship, for according to Idowu, worship in mainline churches was deeply unsatisfying for unlike traditional religion it did not embrace all of life, being virtually confined to

²³³ E.B. Idowu, 'Religion in Ibadan', p. 240. For a breakdown of the branches of the UNA see Ogbu Kalu (ed.) *Christianity in West Africa*, pp. 335-6.

²³⁴ Ade Ajayi, *Christian missions*, p. 273.

²³⁵ This description is mainly based on the work of J.D.Y. Peel, *Aladura, A religious movement among the Yoruba*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1968).

²³⁶ Allan Anderson, *African reformation. African Initiated Christianity in the 20th century*, (Trenton, N.J: Africa World Press, Inc., 2001), p. 33

the walls of church building.²³⁷ This critique, however, cannot be accepted uncritically, for whatever little mainline churches were able to offer was sufficient enough to provoke in the parishioners a hunger for more. Important also is the fact that those who hungered for more did not initially go outside of the church to satisfy this hunger, rather they stayed within the church, and opened up more channels within it to satisfy the hunger.

Instances abound of ordinary members, who without any foreign impulse saw visions, dreamt dreams and in response served the church as unpaid itinerant preachers.²³⁸ Some of these volunteers went from town to town preaching: asking people to desist from the use of charms, and trust in the Lord alone through prayers. Many of them got quite skilful in contending with sceptics and honed their spiritual gifts by praying for sick people. This was the beginning of indigenous prophetic-healing churches among the Yoruba, otherwise known as African Indigenous churches, which Peel refers to as *Aladura*, praying churches.²³⁹

A precedent to the South-Western *Aladura* form was the prophetic-healing ministry of Garrick Braide of the Niger-Delta Pastorate church of the CMS in 1909. The revival was characterized by renunciation of charms and idols, abstention from the consumption of alcohol and greater piety among the people in terms of regular church attendance and healings. The ministry operated for a time under the auspices of the CMS as a revival movement until it fell into disrepute with CMS when Braide was said to be viewed as an object of veneration by his followers.²⁴⁰ Braide was on collision course with

²³⁷ Idowu, 'Religion in Ibadan', p. 241

²³⁸ Peel, *Aladura*, pp. 57ff.

²³⁹ Peel describes two churches Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) and Cherubim and Seraphim Church (C&S). However in popular parlance, *Aladura* refers to churches that wear white praying gowns and in this sense CAC is not usually referred to as *Aladura* church. In fact Peel mentions that the C.A.C. church prefers to call itself a Pentecostal church, see *Aladura*, p. 148.

²⁴⁰ See H.W. Turner, *History of an African Independent Church. The Church of the Lord (Aladura)* vol 1, (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 5-6; Deji Ayegboyin and S. Ademola Ishola, *African Indigenous Churches. An historical perspective*, (Lagos: Greater Heights, 1997), pp. 61ff

the CMS administration and as a result with the colonial authorities. He was arrested in 1916 on charges of “causing civil unrest and the unauthorised raising of funds”, jailed, he died shortly after his release from prison in 1918.²⁴¹

The starting point for the emergence of the *Aladura* church in South-Western Nigeria is St Saviour’s (CMS) Church in Ijebu-Ode in 1918. The Sexton of the church, (Daddy Ali), in response to some visions he had seen formed a prayer band, which initially consisted of some five members in the church.²⁴² With the outbreak of influenza in 1918 and the resulting closure of churches, the prayer band continued to meet in the house one of the members who was also a member of synod, J.B. Sadare. A nineteen year old lady by name Sophia Odunlami from Isonyin (quite close to Ijebu-Ode) also came into prominence on account of the vision she had received that those afflicted by the epidemic would be healed by the use of rain water and prayer alone. She went about preaching this message and denounced the use of herbs and /or magically-concocted medicines for healing.²⁴³ She later teamed up with the prayer band of St. Savior’s.

The prayer band, called *Egbe Okuta Iyebiye*, Precious Stone/ Diamond Society, however, soon incurred the displeasure of the authorities of the CMS on account of its “opposition to infant baptism, reliance on dreams and visions for guidance and the exclusive use of faith healing”.²⁴⁴ The society was proscribed and its members required to withdraw from it if they wanted to remain in the church. In 1923, the Precious Stone Society broke away from the CMS and affiliated itself with Faith Tabernacle, an American non-Pentecostal group from Philadelphia. Of important note is the fact that before this

²⁴¹ Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, p.183.

²⁴² Samson A. Fatokun, ‘The Apostolic Church Nigeria. The metamorphosis of an African Indigenous prophetic-healing movement into a Classical Pentecostal denomination’, *Orita*, xxxviii/1 &2, (June and December 2006), p. 50

²⁴³ Fatokun, ‘The Apostolic Church’, p. 51

²⁴⁴ Peel, *Aladura*. p. 63

affiliation, the doctrinal position of this group and as well as its practices had had no external input, rather they owed whatever innovation they brought to the 'faith' as received from mainline missionaries, to visions and dreams and of course their rich Yoruba traditional religion.²⁴⁵ Faith Tabernacle soon spread to other parts of the country as its members who were government employees and traders founded new branches anywhere they went. It is noteworthy that neither gender nor age was a handicap to rising to prominence in these groups, at least at the initial stages of these churches, for what mattered was spiritual power as the cases of Sophia Odunlami and Abiodun Akinsowon of Cherubim and Seraphim demonstrate.²⁴⁶

A revival broke out in 1930 at Oke Oye in Ilesa through the ministry of Apostle Ayo Babalola of the Faith Tabernacle, outstanding miracles were claimed that won the attention of all so much so that hordes of people trooped to Ilesa to witness the wonders. The revival went on for about two months. Daniel Orekoya, another member of the Faith Tabernacle also caused a stir at Oke Bola in Ibadan as miracles were performed through him also. The burning of idols and fetishes and the consecration of streams as water of life, *omi iye* characterized the Babalola revival in addition to notable miracles. The success of the revival brought the church to the attention of the authorities and set it on collision course with it. There were allegations of literal witch-hunting and forcing people not to take medicine and vaccination among other things. This eventually led to the arrest and imprisonment of Apostle Babalola for six months and the confiscation of the properties of the church.²⁴⁷ The appeal of the church to its American partners at this time of need did not meet with favourable response. This led the church to seek affiliation with the Pentecostal British Apostolic Church.

²⁴⁵ Peel, *Aladura*, pp. 62-65

²⁴⁶ Peel, *Aladura*, pp. 62, 71ff. These two ladies were quite young but assumed leadership positions in these churches. Unfortunately, these churches did not keep up with this momentum. CAC the off shoot of Precious Stone Society, relied less on visions and dreams for guidance and soon crystallized into an all-men organization in terms of its leadership personnel – an attribute of what Peel calls “a thoroughgoing Biblicism”, Peel, *Aladura*, p. 214

²⁴⁷ Fatokun, 'The Apostolic Church, p. 59.

The pattern of the formation of African Indigenous Churches seems to be that people of like-mind formed small prayer bands within the CMS mainline church, and these prayer bands later culminated in what is now known as African Indigenous/Initiated Churches usually after some disagreements with the mother church.²⁴⁸ Faith Tabernacle was so formed in 1922, its most popular preacher being Apostle Ayo Babalola, though not a founding member. In 1925, Moses Orimolade and Christianah A. Akinsowon formed the Cherubim and Seraphim Movement. Archdeacon T.A.J. Ogunbiyi, the pastor of St Paul's Breadfruit, had confirmed Christianah at the church. Her parents belonged to the African Church in Porto Novo. Moses Orimolade, was quite free of any church affiliation and operated as an itinerant preacher, though, he did keep company with both African Church and CMS members and the leadership as well as the Methodist Church.²⁴⁹ Both Orimolade and Christianah banded together to form a society that met in private houses, with Orimolade's house being a central meeting place.

The society held Bible classes, annual processions (which led to its visibility and hence popularity). The society met mainly for Bible studies and prayers, in the course of which prophecies would normally occur. The loose association of the society and its inter-denominational scope makes it difficult to assert that the church, which later emerged was a breakaway faction of a particular church. However, the society did seem to draw quite a number of its members from CMS churches and with time made use of the premises of the church as meeting place.²⁵⁰ The CMS authorities at a point did complain

²⁴⁸ See Peel, *Aladura*, p.205 shows that a greater percentage of the membership of C&S and CAC came from the CMS. The Celestial Church of Christ is a little different from the rest for it did not exist previously as a group under the rubric of any particular church. Oschoffa, its founder, was formerly a member of the Methodist church, but left the church once he received his call, see Afe Adogame and Lizo Jafta, 'Zionists, Aladura and Roho. African instituted Churches' in Ogbu U. Kalu (ed.) *African Christianity. An African story*, (Pretoria: Department of Church History, University of Pretoria, 2005), p. 317;

²⁴⁹ Peel, *Aladura*, pp. 60,71, 73.

²⁵⁰ Peel notes that "the members were drawn without discrimination from any church" *Aladura*, p. 149. Christianah Olatunrinle was the *Iyalode* of St Stephen's Anglican Church in

about some of what it considered some aberrant practices of the society, but did not maintain a belligerent position as they had done against Precious Stone Society.

However, a serious dispute occurred in 1929 between Orimolade and Christianah to the extent that the administrator of Lagos had to intervene and asked them to go their separate ways.²⁵¹ The Society later broke into three factions headed by Christianah, Orimolade and Davies, the head of the Praying Band, as in the case with Ethiopian Churches; the schism all took place in Lagos.²⁵² Of significant note is the role of visions in these schisms. Davies' group later split with the Spiritual Director, A.B. Lawrence, forming another group called the Holy Flock of Christ in response to a vision in 1932.²⁵³ All efforts at reconciling the groups after the death of Orimolade in 1933 under one headship failed. The Western Conference, consisting of the interior societies who were non-aligned to any particular group, renamed itself The Sacred Cherubim and Seraphim Society of Nigeria in 1952. The loose association with the churches soon ended, as Cherubim and Seraphim became a church in its own right.

Josiah O. Oshitelu was a young teacher with the CMS but left after perceiving a call to ministry mediated through visions. He briefly associated with the dominant figures in Faith Tabernacle and participated in some of their programmes. This relationship, however, did not last long and he went on to form the Church of the Lord in 1930 after disagreement over his use of the

Ondo, she later became *Iya Egbe* of Cherubim and Seraphim Society. The courtyard of the same church was used as the site to burn off all idols and charms, See Peel, *Aladura*, p. 80.

²⁵¹ Peel, *Aladura*, pp. 73, 76

²⁵² Orimolade's group was called the Eternal Sacred Order, while Davies' group was known as the Sacred Society of Cherubim and Seraphim. Also see these accounts in Ayegboyin and Ishola, *African Indigenous Churches*, pp. 84-87.

²⁵³ Peel, *Aladura*, p. 82. According to Ayegboyin and Ishola there are hundreds of the different groups of the C&S in the country, see Ayegboyin, *African Indigenous Churches*, p. 84.

names of angels in prayer, his tolerance of polygamy and his penchant for the detection of witches.²⁵⁴

These churches are characterized by fervent and prolonged prayers; lively worship with much dancing and beating of drums; and the manifestation of spiritual gifts. In varying degrees these churches subscribe to practices such as vision-seeing, falling into trances, prophetic predictions, observation of taboos and engagement in rituals that have been thought by others to be quite close to that which obtains in Yoruba traditional religion.²⁵⁵ With the exception of CAC, these other two churches and others that came up later like the Celestial Church of Christ have been viewed with suspicion by other Christians: first the mainline churches and later the Charismatic/Pentecostal churches. They are viewed as being syncretistic because of practices such as: going to the riverside to pray, bathing with special soap, using different colours of candles for special prayers. In addition to blessed water, other items used in prayer are: oil, perfumes, incense, hand bells, staffs, palm fronds, handkerchiefs and the cross.²⁵⁶ The members usually wear white long robes, the ladies are absent from church during their monthly menstrual period, and the most favourite portion of scriptures in these churches is the book of Psalms. A particular Psalm may be read several times over the water, which could then be drunk or used to bathe.

²⁵⁴ Peel, *Aladura*, p. 93; also see Alan Anderson, *An introduction to Pentecostalism*, p. 121; H.W. Turner, *History of an African Independent Church*, vols 1& 2, are about this church.

²⁵⁵ See Idowu, 'Religion in Ibadan', p. 242. As Marshall notes, the CAC does not regard itself any longer as an *Aladura* in the same sense as others and it has found general acceptance among the 'born-again' while the other *Aladura* churches are on the receiving end of born-again churches' polemics, see Ruth Marshall, *Political Spiritualities. The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 77-78.

²⁵⁶ See Afe Adogame and Lizo Jafta, 'Zionists, Aladura and Roho', pp. 309-329, 323-325; Ayegboyan & Isola, *African Indigenous Churches*, p. 28. However, note Hollenweger's assertion that Christianity is essentially syncretistic, 'Crucial issues for Pentecostals', pp. 185ff. To a greater degree the C.A.C is different from the others for it does not prescribe prayer gowns for its members nor prohibit menstruating women from church attendance. See also John B. Grimley and Gordon E. Robinson, *Church growth in Central and Southern Nigeria*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966), pp. 299-317.

These churches also introduced the idea of sacred place or occasions where and when prayers are specially answered.²⁵⁷ CAC Churches are usually prefixed with the title 'mountain' *Oke* for example Oke Alafia (Mountain of Peace), Oke Agbara (Mountain of Power), Oke Oluwatedo (Mountain where the Lord resides), in obvious reference to mountains as the place where God met with Moses and the Israelites. The Church of the Lord in 1930 instituted mercy ground, a sacred open space for prayers. The first mercy ground was established at Ogere, but most churches have such spaces adjoining their church buildings now.²⁵⁸ In addition, the Church of the Lord also annually hosts Mount Tabor festival that lasts for thirteen days. It is usually held in a sacred place specially dedicated for it. The event, which is usually well attended by members and non-members, is characterized by fasting and prayers, making of vows for new requests and fulfilling vows for answered prayers. At the death of Oschoffa, the founder of the Celestial Church of Christ (C.C.C.), his mausoleum became a holy ground - a site of pilgrimage. In terms of growth, all these churches have grown and have all spread to the different parts of Nigeria and overseas.

While the Ethiopian Church was a response to the political realities of the times with implications for social relations, African Indigenous Churches responded to the spiritual realities and peculiarities of Yoruba (African) culture. Issues like the fear of witchcraft, and *abiku*²⁵⁹ that were dismissed by Western Missionaries as figments of the peoples' imagination, were some of

²⁵⁷ Turner makes the point that the idea of sacred space where God answers prayers specially is rooted in readings of the Old Testament and fused with the Yoruba traditional understanding of the sacredness of mountains and hills as elaborated in the previous chapter of this work.

²⁵⁸ See H.W. Turner, *History of an African Independent Church*, pp. 221ff. For the general use of the Aladura is a hill called *Olorunkole* in Ibadan. It became common place to name places after some Old Testament places such as Zion, Jerusalem, Bethlehem etc. Oschoffa's hometown, Imeko, became known as New Jerusalem see Adogame and Jafta, 'Zionists, Aladura and Roho', p. 325.

²⁵⁹ See Olufunke A. Adebeye, 'Diaries as cultural and intellectual histories' in Toyin Falola and Ann Genova (eds.) *Yoruba identity and power politics*, (Rochester, N.Y: University of Rochester, 2006), describes *abiku* as "children who died at infancy. Some of them are believed to be capable of reincarnating repeatedly, torturing their parents unless some supernatural intervention was initiated ...to arrest them", see end note 43, p. 93.

the live issues that were addressed in these churches. They, therefore, made Christianity relevant to the needs of the people for the worldview of the people became as important as the text of scripture.

It is quite instructive that the founders of these churches that have brought such a re-ordering of the Christian landscape in terms of doctrine and spirituality were relatively young people when they started out. Sophia Odunlami was 19 years old, Christianah Akinsowon was 15 years when she had an experience, Joseph Babalola was around 24 years when he was called in 1928, Orimolade was in his 20s when he became a convert, Oshitelu was 28 years old when he founded the Church of the Lord in 1930. Oba I.B. Akinyele seemed to be oldest at 43 years when he joined Faith Tabernacle, though he came from a Christian family, so he was young when he started out as a Christian.²⁶⁰

One notable contextualization of Christian doctrine made popular by the group was in their understanding of the blood of Jesus Christ. It was not just the means by which their sins were atoned for, but it also served as protection against the evil works of the enemy. They came to this understanding by noting that in Yoruba traditional religion sacrifice was used “to prevent any evil that may befall the giver of the sacrifice”.²⁶¹ However, this idea is not directly attributable to these new churches for this understanding is traced to T.A.J. Ogunbiyi, Archdeacon of Lagos and Pastor of St Paul’s Breadfruit, but it was perhaps popularised by the Aladura like Sosan of C&S and Akinyele of CAC.

One other feature of the leaders of these churches is that they draw to themselves a large clientele of people seeking divine guidance and needing special prayers. This gave rise to a clientele that may not be members of the

²⁶⁰ H.W. Turner, *History of an African Independent Church*, vol 1, p. 35.

²⁶¹ Peel, *Aladura*, p.117

church but who patronize the church leaders as they have need. We would recall that divination through *Orunmila/Ifa* was very crucial in Yoruba traditional religion, it is noteworthy that the prophet/ess are seen and expected to perform a similar function in the church. "Their ability to prognosticate future events and provide panacea for existential problems bears resonance to the functions of ...babalawo (diviners and healers) in...Yoruba cosmology".²⁶²

4.1.4. Classical Pentecostal Churches

In spite of the predilection of African Indigenous Churches for visions and trances, they do not consider themselves as Pentecostals. The Faith Tabernacle in its early years had asked for counsel with regards to Pentecostalism from its American partner. In its response, the American Faith Tabernacle had denounced "tongue speaking as satanic" and had counselled the Nigerian Church against it.²⁶³ That is why scholars like Peel prefer to say that these African Indigenous Churches have Pentecostal pulse while Anderson says of C.A.C. that it "sits somewhat half way between Aladura and classical Pentecostal churches".²⁶⁴

The first group of churches that described themselves and that came to be known as Pentecostals were formed before 1960 and are now referred to as Classical Pentecostals. Common to them is that they were all formed by Western Pentecostal denominations usually in response to an appeal for affiliation by an indigenous group. In this category is The Apostolic Church, which is the new name acquired by the Nigerian Faith Tabernacle after it got affiliated in 1931 to the Apostolic Church from Bradford in Britain following

²⁶² See Adogame and Jafta, 'Zionists, Aladura and Roho', p. 327

²⁶³ Peel, *Aladura*, p. 65

²⁶⁴ See Peel, *Religious encounter*, p. 314 and Anderson, *An Introduction*, p. 5.

its problem with the government.²⁶⁵ Some others are Assemblies of God that came from the Missouri U.S. in 1939,²⁶⁶ The Apostolic Faith from Portland in Oregon, U.S. in 1942, African-American Gospel Church in 1949 in affiliation with Grace and Glory Pentecostal Mission from Kansas, U.S. The International Church of the Foursquare Gospel is one of the two churches that arose as a result of the evangelistic effort of a U.S.-based mother-church. Missionaries, Rev. and Mrs Harold Curtis were sent to commence work in 1954. Another church that was founded by missionaries from the U.S. was Pentecostal Holiness in 1955 by Rev. J.W. Brooks.

All the mother churches trace their Pentecostal experience to the Azusa revival of 1906 under the leadership of William Seymour, an African American preacher. The revival was, at its initial phase, a multi-racial, gender inclusive, non-clerical phenomenon among the poor, though all these changed within ten years of the inception of the revival.²⁶⁷ For about three years while it lasted, the revival generated a lot of interest with visitors trooping in from different parts of the country and beyond to obtain the experience of baptism in the Spirit. Prayer meetings were held daily from morning till night where people were 'slain in the Spirit', spoke in tongues and received healings. The defining characteristic of the revival was 'speaking in tongues' as evidence of Holy Spirit baptism. This doctrine is traceable to Charles Parham, an erstwhile teacher of William Seymour. Many new churches sprang up as a result of the revival, while some older ones added to their teaching an emphasis on Spirit baptism and some churches were break-away factions of existing ones.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁵ Due to differences with regard to the use of water for healing and strict abstention from medicine both traditional and 'English', Odubango, Babalola and Akinyele left The Apostolic Church (TAC) to form Christ Apostolic Church C.A.C. in 1941. See Peel, *Aladura*, p. 113.

²⁶⁶ This did not begin in Yorubaland, it started in Umuahia in Eastern part of Nigeria, but has branches all over the nation now.

²⁶⁷ By 1915, Seymour's church had ruled that 'a man of color' should always lead the church. See Anderson, *An Introduction*, p. 42.

²⁶⁸ The Apostolic Faith of Portland Oregon was started by Clara Lum and Florence Crawford who had worked together with Seymour at the revival. They went with the mailing list of his

Common to these churches are teaching and preaching emphases on salvation otherwise called conversion as a definite experience, baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues coupled with the operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Some like Pentecostal Holiness consider sanctification as an experience sequel to and separate from salvation: a three-point experience, while some like William Durham, an influential preacher,²⁶⁹ view sanctification as part of the atonement and therefore sees a two-point experience: conversion and baptism of the Spirit. However, for all these churches the focus of ministry was evangelism and missions for they emphasized the soon return of Jesus. Jesus is portrayed, in light of this, as Saviour from sin and eternal damnation, Sanctifier, for those who subscribe to the three-point experience, Healer of diseases and illnesses, Baptizer with the Holy Spirit and his return as Coming King.

4.1.5. Indigenous Pentecostal Groups from 1950s-1960s

From the 50s to the 60s there arose indigenous Pentecostal groups that had no affiliation to any foreign organization or denomination. Ogo Oluwa Society, that used to be a prayer and Bible Study sub-group in Cherubim and Seraphim Church broke away in 1952 and renamed itself The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG). The founder of the church was Rev. Josiah Olufemi Akindayomi, at whose death the church's leadership fell on Pastor. E.A. Adeboye, its current General Overseer, popularly called Daddy G.O. Other churches in this category are: Victory Gospel Church, founded in 1958 by Pastor. J.O. Olatunji in Lagos; in the same year, Pastor Badejo founded The Gospel Pentecostal Assembly also in Lagos; The Evangel Faith Mission was founded in 1962; Apostolic Faith Mission merged with Gospel Mission to form Gospel Faith Mission also in 1962. These churches basically have a

magazine *The Apostolic Faith* and started a ministry bearing a similar name. See Anderson, *An Introduction*, p. 41

²⁶⁹ The Assemblies of God and The International Church of the Foursquare Gospel were among those influenced by Durham's view, see Anderson, *An Introduction*, p. 46.

similar doctrinal position as the Classical Pentecostals including an understanding of holiness as – “strict moral codes...prohibition of alcohol, tobacco, movies, gambling...use of cosmetics and jewelry”.²⁷⁰

4.1.6. Charismatic Pentecostal Churches

These are churches whose leaders emerged from the Campus Christianity described by Matthews Ojo.²⁷¹ Starting from the premier university of the country, the University of Ibadan (established in 1948), and later the University of Ife (established in 1962) and other tertiary institutions, a flowering of the spirituality inculcated among secondary school students by the Scripture Union (SU) reached a climax. C.M.S. missionaries had introduced the SU in Nigeria as a support ministry to its mission work in 1884. At this time the work was not confined to children for some of its members were adults.²⁷²

The SU later grew to be a household name noted for its work among secondary school students. It holds bible studies for students, organises camps (during holidays), and generally encourages a culture of daily bible reading among the students through its literature. As these students proceeded to tertiary institutions, Christian Unions and related groups were on hand to continue where SU had left off. Activities mainly consisted of weekly bible studies, prayer meetings and, on some campuses, Sunday worship.

Through the influence of literature from North America and the visits of influential American Evangelists,²⁷³ as well as the preaching activity of some

²⁷⁰ Ayegboyin and Ukah, 'Taxonomy of Churches', p. 81

²⁷¹ Matthews Ojo, 'The growth of Campus Christianity and Charismatic movements in Western Nigeria', Ph.D dissertation, King's College, University of London, 1986.

²⁷² See Matthews Ojo, 'The Growth of Campus Christianity', pp. 37ff.

²⁷³ Billy Graham visited in 1960; T.L. Osborn visited in 1964; Oral Roberts and Morris Cerrulo visited early in the 70s, see Matthews Ojo, 'The Growth of Campus Christianity', p. 194. Rev. S.G. Elton, formerly of the Apostolic Church, Pastor Kashibu of Assemblies of God Mokola, p. 196

preachers from Classical Pentecostal churches, Pentecostal ideas gradually made inroads into the Christian Unions. The concept of baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues was gradually disseminated among the students. The resultant effect was an unprecedented explosion in evangelism and missions and openness to the operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in terms of healings and miracles.

Leaders of the various Christian Unions and some members launched out into different areas of evangelistic ministry such as village/rural evangelism, street evangelism, house-to-house evangelism, children evangelism, mission to other parts of the country and outside the country.²⁷⁴ Quite a number of these students upon graduation went into full time ministry rejecting profitable ventures to engage in the work of the ministry. The courage and the commitment of these young people that made many of them defy parents' pleas to take up regular well-paying jobs befitting their new statuses as graduates and hence elites won the admiration as well as drew the consternation of many.²⁷⁵

Some of these ministries were initially inter-denominational but later became churches. As inter-denominational ministries, members participated only in the weekly programs of the ministries but went to their different churches for Sunday Worship. It was in this light that they were initially seen as a means of renewal in the older churches. However, when opposition from these older

²⁷⁴ Notable among these ministries are CAPRO (Calvary Productions) founded in 1975 by a team of Youth Corpers prominent among whom were Bayo Famonure, Gbola Durojaye, Emeka Onukaogu, Niyi Beecroft and Peter Ozodo. Children Evangelism Ministry by Tony Chukwudile in 1979, C.M.F. (Christian Missionary Foundation) by Reuben Ezemadu in 1982. See Richard Burgess, *Nigeria's Christian revolution. The civil war revival and its Pentecostal progeny (1967-2006)*, (Cumbria: Paternoster, 2008), p. 155

²⁷⁵ A similar instance is recounted by Pastor E.A. Adeboye of RCCG of how he became an object of ridicule to his family and friends when he left the service of the University to engage in full time ministry when he was just about to be made a college professor, see E.A. Adeboye, *You can possess your possession*, (Lagos: CRM, 2006), p. 30. Some others abandoned their studies to attend bible schools, see Dachi Maduako, Irowa Edomwonyi, Goddy Egu and Dike Mba Onu, *Flame of fire. The story of the Scripture Union (Nigeria)*, (Ibadan: Scripture Union (Nigeria) Press and Books Ltd, 2005), p. 79.

churches began to mount against these ministries, and with the passage of time, many of them acquired denominational status and began Sunday Worship.²⁷⁶ In this process, some churches were depleted as their youth left to join these new churches and this caused no small stir among the older churches. The mass exodus of youth from the mission churches would later provoke a rethink in these churches as they later developed strategies on retaining and attracting their youth. The ripples caused by Campus Christianity were felt in homes and churches, so that one can say that the face of Christianity among the Yoruba was changed forever.²⁷⁷

Notable among the ministries that emerged at this period are Deeper Christian Life Bible Ministries 1973 by William F. Kumuyi , formerly of the Apostolic Faith, it became a denomination (Deeper Life Bible Church) in 1982; Faith Liberation Hour ministries of David Oyedepo began on 22nd May 1981 as a non-denominational group, Sunday service began on 11th December, 1983 as Living Faith Church Worldwide; Sword of the Spirit Ministries by Wale Oke began in 1983, it became a denomination known as Christ Life Church in February 1989; Voice of Faith Ministries (Christ Chapel) was founded by Tunde Joda in 1982. Some other ministries and churches that came up later are: Latter Rain Assembly in 1989 by Pastor Tunde Bakare, who broke away from the Redeemed Christian Church of God, an indigenous Pentecostal Church mentioned above; New Covenant Church by Paul Jinadu from the Foursquare Gospel Church; Rhema Chapel International Ministries by George Adegboye in 1988; Mountain of Fire and Miracle Ministries by Rev. Kayode Olukoya in 1989; Livingspring Chapel by Revd. Femi Emmanuel in Ibadan in 1993.

One commonality of all these churches is that young professionals/graduates head each one of them. In terms of content, the messages in these churches

²⁷⁶ See Marshall, *Political spiritualities*, p. 72

²⁷⁷ A notable work chronicling a similar development among the Ibo who mainly inhabit the South-Eastern part of Nigeria is Richard Burgess's, *Nigeria's Christian revolution*.

revolved around themes such as holiness, salvation, baptism in the Holy Spirit, prayers for deliverance, healing, evangelism and the second coming of Jesus much like the Classical Pentecostals.²⁷⁸ Ojo's main grouse with these churches is that the target of ministry is the individual and not the society:

The moral scrupulousness of the charismatic was individualistic and lacked any social dimension. It reforms the person but not the whole church and society.²⁷⁹

This posture of these churches, one may argue, is due to their understanding of ecclesiology that only born-again believers constitute the church and in this manner they cut off a large section of people who are termed "church goers" or "law keepers".²⁸⁰ In addition, they see the church as understood by them to be the primary locus of God's activity in the society and its members as God's primary agents of change.²⁸¹ Furthermore, the enthusiasm about the imminent return of Jesus made some of the 'born-again' quite 'heavenly minded' that they could not be bothered so much by what was happening in the society. The best they could do for the society was to preach the Gospel to it.²⁸²

However, Ojo's critique of these churches should not be construed as a case of all Christians' apathy to the society. To the contrary, there arose para-church organizations that showed interest in the well being of the nation. Groups like Nigeria Christian Graduate Fellowship (GF) and CSSM, Christian Students' Social Movement of Nigeria, demonstrated two views about how to go about their concerns for the nation. While GF would "organise symposia on political and socio-economic issues", the CSSM would mostly organise prayer

²⁷⁸ See Ojo, chapter 6 of 'The Growth of Campus Christianity'; See also Marshall, *Political Spiritualities*, p. 68

²⁷⁹ Ojo, 'The Growth of Campus Christianity', p. 386

²⁸⁰ Ojo, 'The Growth of Campus Christianity', p. 341.

²⁸¹ See Adeboye's comments in Marshall, *Political spiritualities*, p. 201-2.

²⁸² This was particularly true of the Deeper Christian Life Church members.

meetings for the nation, castigating the devil for the economic and political woes of the nation.²⁸³

4.1.7. Neo-Pentecostal Churches²⁸⁴

From the mid 1980s, according to Marshall, great changes are observable among the Yoruba churches involved in the revival of the 1970s and through them the changes have spread to other churches. The main distinguishing element is an emphasis on “miracles, particularly of prosperity, salvation in the here and now, and ‘global spiritual warfare’”.²⁸⁵ Marshall calls it a “new wave” while others like Ayegboyin and Ukah and some others call it Neo-Pentecostalism:

Neo-Pentecostalism ... is a new form of Pentecostal religion in which spiritual warfare, exorcisms, immediate healings and personal prosperity in this world has replaced traditional Pentecostalism’s emphasis on speaking in tongues; on strict pietistic morals; and on Jesus’ second coming and eternal salvation.²⁸⁶

According to Ayegboyin and Ukah, the depressing socio-political-economic situation of the country gave rise to churches, groups, and ministries that needed to define themselves more sharply in order to survive in a highly competitive context. Involved in this change, as mentioned above, are some of the churches involved in the 1970 revival, a few older churches like RCCG and numerous new groups.²⁸⁷ Some of the changes observed can be catalogued thus:

²⁸³ See Ojo, *The end-time army. Charismatic movements in Modern Nigeria*, (New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2006), pp. 99, 105ff. GF activities seem to be more intellectual: raising awareness, teaching about the different aspects of the polity while the main contribution of CSSM seems to be in the area of spiritual warfare.

²⁸⁴ Neo-Pentecostal churches grew out of the Charismatic Pentecostal movement, but there is need to distinguish between the two for they signal different eras in the growth of the church in Nigeria. So categorizing some churches as Neo-Pentecostal churches is mainly for heuristic purposes.

²⁸⁵ Marshall, *Political spiritualities*, p. 79.

²⁸⁶ Sturla Stalsett, ‘Introduction. Pentecostal growth and global transformations’, in *Spirits of globalization. The growth of Pentecostalism and experiential spiritualities in a global age*, Sturla J. Stalsett (ed.), (London: S.C.M. Press, 2006), p. 4

²⁸⁷ See Asonzeh Ukah, *A new paradigm of Pentecostal power*, pp. 183-196. Rosalind Hackett finds that William Kumuyi of Deeper Life Bible Church, a church renowned for its strict holiness

4.1.7.1. *Specialization*: From the mid 80s observers discerned a certain degree of specialization in some of these churches: Deeper Life is distinctively holiness in its focus of preaching, Winners' Chapel is distinctively prosperity in emphasis while Mountain of Fire and Miracles is distinctively deliverance in focus.²⁸⁸ The holiness strand has often been pitted against the prosperity strand, standing at two different ends of the spectrum. Marshall, however, notes that the erstwhile sharp distinction between the holiness and prosperity ends of the spectrum is increasingly getting blurred. She avers that this is due to the prominence of 'miracles' in the message of all the preachers, so that most churches now converge in the middle of the spectrum preaching miracles.²⁸⁹ In a sense, 'miracles' is a much bigger package than prosperity for it includes healings, financial miracles and much more, but preaching miracles in no way excludes prosperity preaching. Secondly, preaching and performing miracles evoke greater respect from the people, for it is a sure sign that the agent of the miracle has divine approval. This becomes increasingly crucial in light of the disgrace that has fallen on some American prosperity preachers, which makes some preachers consider the term 'prosperity preacher' derogatory.

4.1.7.2. *Less distinctive doctrines/practices*: While the written doctrinal statements of these churches may remain the same as at the time they started out, in the present, changes and modifications to these practices is the norm. There is, therefore, a great discrepancy between stated doctrines and actual practice.

teaching, is not exempt from the prosperity bug, see 'The Gospel of Prosperity in West Africa' in Richard Roberts (ed.), *Religion and the transformations of capitalism. Comparative approaches*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 205.

²⁸⁸ Also see Asonzeh Ukah, 'African Christianities. Features, Promises and Problems', *Working Papers # 79*, 2007, pp. 14-15. Also see Marshall, 'Pentecostalism in Southern Nigeria. An overview', pp. 7-32.

²⁸⁹ Marshall, *Political spiritualities*, p. 85

Most of these churches have grown so large that adequate oversight of church members is quite problematic. There is less emphasis of preaching on speaking in tongues, so in quite a number of these churches there are members who are not baptised in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. In addition, quite a number of churches do not insist on restitution as they used to do. Furthermore, evangelism is no more the house-to-house or street/ bus evangelism of previous times. The best that members do is to invite friends to their churches hoping that they may thereby get 'saved' in the process of visiting. Essentially, then, these churches lack any distinctive doctrine that sets them apart from the other Pentecostals, in Nigerian parlance they are called "New Generation churches" because they are less prescriptive in terms of dress codes among other things and are generally amenable to changes in their context. This discussion on less distinctive practices among the members should not be construed as lack of creativity or imagination on the part of the church leaders, rather quite plentiful are newly introduced practices that tend to emphasize the uniqueness of the leader as one chosen by God.

4.1.7.3. *The rise of Prophets:* Neo-Pentecostalism tends to concentrate authority in a leader who is usually seen in the figure of a prophet.²⁹⁰ Marshall's observation about increased emphasis on 'miracles' attests to this. Pentecostalism under the rubric of Classical Pentecostalism and what was observable in the 1970 revival generally emphasizes the priesthood of all believers. It, more or less, operates as an egalitarian movement, allowing for the manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit through "anyone led of God/Spirit", this is what Asamoah-Gyadu calls the "democratisation of spiritual gifts" and explains thus:²⁹¹

As far as spiritual gifts are concerned, ...the leaders cannot present himself or herself as the expert. Anybody at all could stand up at a

²⁹⁰ Paul Gifford, 'Expecting miracles. The prosperity gospel in Africa', *The Christian Century Magazine*, (July 2007), <http://christiancentury/article.lasso?id=3494>

²⁹¹ Asamoah-Gyadu, *African charismatics*, p. 128ff

Charismatic meeting to prophesy, relate a vision or invoke the name of Jesus to heal the sick...the understanding is that ministers may be expected to lead in the body of Christ by virtue of their special calling, but most importantly they are only expected to inspire others in the employment of their gifts.²⁹²

Neo-Pentecostalism in most of its presentations is a reverse of Pentecostalism in this regard. The significance of this change is that the leader's words and experiences are *almost* placed at par with the Bible as source of inspiration and guidance for the church at large.²⁹³ This shift to the charisma/dynamism of the leader paved the way for new teachings or new emphasis on some aspects of Christianity to emerge, such that they (the teachings) attain an emphasis hitherto not enjoyed. Oyedepo makes this clear:

The apostles and prophets are the custodians of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven in every generation. Certain things were not known before, but through apostles and prophets they are made known. The nearer we are to the end, the more of those mysteries will be unfolded and the purpose is to disarm opposition and establish your position in the kingdom.²⁹⁴

It is in light of the statement above that the introduction of some new elements in this brand of Christianity can best be understood. Notable in this regard is the use of "symbolic objects like olive or anointing oil, mantles/white handkerchiefs".²⁹⁵ Ukah notes that at RCCG, under the leadership of Pastor Enoch Adeboye, prayers are offered over bottles of olive oil and handkerchiefs. These blessed items almost have limitless use; the oil could be rubbed on any part of the body for the sick or to procure favour to relieve pain and drive out evil spirits, drunk, applied on possessions to prevent theft or damage. The blessed handkerchief could in addition to all the

²⁹² Asamoah-Gyadu, *African charismatics*, pp. 128-9.

²⁹³ According to Kuponu "members of LFCW are instructed to value some of these books more than the bible since they are written by a man sent by God ...", see Selome Igbekele Kuponu, 'The Living Faith Church (Winners Chapel), Nigeria. Pentecostalism, Prosperity Gospel and Social Change in Nigeria', unpublished PhD dissertation submitted to the University of Bayreuth, Germany, 2007, p. 76.

²⁹⁴ David O. Oyedepo, *The Miracle meal*, (Lagos: Dominion Publishing House, 2002), p. 7

²⁹⁵ Ayegboyin and Asonzeh, 'Taxonomy', p. 84ff.

above be sent to friends and relations outside of the country to effect the same blessings.²⁹⁶

Also noteworthy is the concept of sacred space and assembly that is now prominent among some of the churches. The Living Faith Church Worldwide of Bishop Oyedepo holds an annual *Shiloh on Canaan Land*, The Redeemed Christian Church of God has *Holy Ghost Service/Night/ Congress* on Redemption Camp grounds situated on the Lagos-Ibadan expressway; The Mountain of Fire and Miracles Centre holds its convention at *Prayer City* along the Lagos-Ibadan Express Way.

In light of the above Neo-Pentecostalism seems to have revived and modernized some of the practices erstwhile associated with African Indigenous Churches.²⁹⁷ Anderson notes the resonance and says:

I would argue that this newer Pentecostal and Charismatic movement is not fundamentally different from the Holy Spirit movements and so-called “prophet-healing” and “spiritual churches” that preceded it in the AICs, but it is a continuation of them in a very different context.²⁹⁸

Neo-Pentecostalism in addition to showing resonance with the *Aladura* or the African Indigenous churches also does reflect some Yoruba practices and ideas and it is to this that we now turn.

4.2. Inculturation of some Yoruba practices and ideas within Neo-Pentecostal Christianity

Neo-Pentecostalism, though a global phenomenon, exhibits local tendencies that evince the creativity and independence of the local preachers resulting in

²⁹⁶ Asonzeh, *A new paradigm*, p. 229ff; A brother Akpiye Stanley testifies how he was cured of HIV/AIDS after he had placed on his head the chair on which Pastor Adeboye had sat during a program in Port-Harcourt, see *Redemption News*, January 2010.

²⁹⁷ See Deji Ayegboyin, “Dressed in borrowed robes”. The experience of the new Pentecostal movements in Nigeria’, *Ghana Bulletin of Theology* vol 1 no 1 (July 2006), p. 52ff ; Peel, *Religious encounter*, pp.314-315.

²⁹⁸ Anderson, *African reformation*, pp.167-8. The lamentable element is the ferocious attacks of the NPCs on the AICs, a case of the kettle calling the pot black.

a meshing of the local and the global.²⁹⁹ The preachers make use of local religious ideas to convey their message to an audience with whom they share similar cultural contexts. Some of the key words that have local colour and that issue from their cultural background are as follows:

4.2.1. Destiny

'Destiny' is a fairly common word among Neo-Pentecostals in Nigeria. Oyedepo has at least two books bearing such related titles: *Pillars of Destiny* and *Maximize Destiny*; Wale Oke has a mini book titled *Connecting your Destiny Helpers*; Adeboye has a book titled *Child of Destiny*; The publisher's blurb at the back of Femi Emmanuel's books reads: "Of humble parentage, his salvation experience in 1972 when he was still in his teens, changed his destiny".

Oyedepo in *Pillars of Destiny* mentions how reading Jeremiah 29:11 (RSV) "For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope", had influenced his life and destiny.³⁰⁰ Making recourse to Chambers dictionary that defines destiny as the purpose or end to which any person or thing is appointed, Oyedepo concludes that God had a good plan and hence great destiny for him. God's plan for his life is, therefore, synonymous with his destiny. One question that may arise is when was this destiny formed or constructed. Was it before his salvation experience or after? His opening remarks that his reading of the verse in Jeremiah influenced his destiny suggest that destiny is not seen as irrevocable, it is subject to change, much like the Yoruba conception. A further reading of Oyedepo's book shows that destiny does not work out automatically without

²⁹⁹ See Ogbu Kalu, 'Historical perspectives. The third response. Pentecostalism and the reconstruction of Christian experience in Africa, 1970-1995', *Journal of African Christian Thought* 1:2 (1998), p. 8; Simon Coleman, *The globalisation of charismatic Christianity. Spreading the gospel of prosperity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 31ff.

³⁰⁰ David O. Oyedepo, *Pillars of destiny. Exploring the secrets of an ever-winning life*, (Lagos: Dominion Publishing House, 2008), p. 5

the person's effort. All these ideas are also well grounded in Yoruba traditional thought.

Adeboye in a sermon titled 'The five mysteries of God' defines destiny as the "expected end" according to Jeremiah 29:11.³⁰¹ Like Oyedepo, he views 'destiny' as God's plan, he, however, believes that destiny can be changed by one's own wilful disobedience to God.

The blurb on Femi Emmanuel's book that his destiny was changed by virtue of his salvation experience suggests in addition to the above that destiny is understood as the course of one's life. The discourse of destiny is one of the modifications that Neo-Pentecostals in Nigeria Africa have brought to bear on an otherwise global discourse. Sharing similar cultural milieu with their readers or hearers there is continuity and departure from the traditional understanding of 'destiny'.

One basic departure is a corrective on the traditional understanding that one was born with bad destiny. In a sense this understanding of being born with bad destiny is affirmed but the fact of a salvation experience is portrayed as changing that fact forever this is the gist of Femi Emmanuel's story. Therefore anyone who is born-again has a great destiny as understood by Oyedepo. It is noteworthy that Oyedepo, with other preachers, chooses to make recourse to 'destiny' and not to predestination - a concept more familiar to Protestant theology and usually based on the supposed theology of Paul. The book of Jeremiah on which he bases his discussion is especially poignant for in the first chapter of the book, God tells Jeremiah that He had chosen him before he was conceived and before he was born. Oyedepo chooses not to make mention of this passage, perhaps because it would not permit him to talk about a changed destiny. For the main thrust of salvation experience is that it

³⁰¹ *Redemption Light*, January 2010, pp. 6-7.

brings about a changed destiny, by implication anyone that is not born-again has a bad destiny.

It is worth noting that while divinities and ancestors do not form part of the repertoire of the rhetoric of the Neo-Pentecostals, destiny does. It is also significant that of all the objects of worship among the Yoruba, *ori*, the 'god' of destiny is the most individualized and personalized. *Ori's* close association with 'destiny' and the popularity of 'destiny' in Neo-Pentecostal parlance may suggest that the concept of *ori* is still alive in the mindset of the Yoruba Neo-Pentecostals and might be intended to serve as background understanding for further discussion on the concept of destiny.

In addition, the evangelical flavour of Neo-Pentecostalism with its emphasis on the individual (personal salvation, personal walk with God) would make destiny and '*ori*' an attractive and commendable pair. The individualistic flavour of Neo-Pentecostalism in Africa has been contrasted with the popular liberation theology of Latin America. While the former emphasizes on the benefits that accrue to the individual without demanding a reciprocal obligation to changing the society, the latter sees the need to address the systemic ills of the society.³⁰² The concept of personal destiny undermines a conceptualisation of a collective national destiny or of the church as plurality of a community. Believers are often exhorted to see their financial prosperity as not contingent on the nation's economic fortunes or misfortune.

4.2.2. Sacrifice

'Sacrifice' is an important concept in Yoruba traditional religion and according to Peel:

A sacrifice may be viewed as a kind of gift, through which the giver intends to lay an obligation on the recipient which will later be returned in a desired form, so the direction in which it is made is crucially indicative of its social character. Yoruba sacrifices were made

³⁰² See Paul Gifford's observation, 'Prosperity a new element in Africa Christianity', pp. 380-1.

by human beings to the *orisa* in anticipation of benefits, typically on the advice of a *babalawo* as to what should be offered and to whom. Through sacrifice, people sought to draw the *orisa* into a closer relationship with them, just as they might do with chiefs, another kind of superior being, through attributes or presents.³⁰³

Among the *Aladura* churches, prayer assumed a great importance in their practice and belief system as to be seen as equivalent to sacrifice.³⁰⁴ In Neo-Pentecostalism, especially the prosperity variant, in addition to prayer, emphasis is on 'giving' as a form of sacrifice. This is because emphasis is laid on giving as an act of commending oneself to God to win his favour as Adeboye writes:

Those who will get blessing from God will have to go beyond ordinary giving of offering, or paying of tithes. Daily, they look for an opportunity to do something special to God that will compel him to do more than what he wanted to do for them.³⁰⁵

In a broader sense, this discussion devolves round the function of gifts within the Yoruba society. As Peel found out from the diaries of missionaries who served among the Yoruba, some of who were Yoruba themselves, 'giving' was never a disinterested act:

Presents signified and established moral relationships. They served to define community and, as in the gifts made to "appease anger" ..., to reassert the donor's membership of it.³⁰⁶

4.2.3. Favour³⁰⁷

Prayer for favour is common among Neo-Pentecostals. The prayer is directed to God and he is seen as the ultimate one who favors. The understanding is also common that God uses human beings as agents to fulfil his purpose and to this end favor can be received from humans also. Pastor E.A. Adeboye in

³⁰³ Peel, *Religious encounter*, p.185;

³⁰⁴ Peel, *Religious encounter*, p. 256. A popular song is *adura ni ebo mi* – prayer is my sacrifice

³⁰⁵ Enoch Adeboye, *How to turn your austerity to prosperity*, (Lagos: The CRM Books, 1989), p. 24.

³⁰⁶ Peel, *Religious encounter*, p. 86

³⁰⁷ Among Paul Gifford's enumeration of the key words that characterize the vocabulary of Neo-Pentecostals are 'destiny' and 'favour'. See Paul Gifford, *Ghana's new Christianity. Pentecostalism in a globalising economy*, (London: Hurst & Company, 2004), p. 46.

his book *Time of favor* mentions that at the time of God's favor, "God orders the steps of your helpers to meet you". This then becomes a prayer point: "Oh Lord, order my steps in your favour that I may meet my helpers, in the name of Jesus".³⁰⁸ Wale Oke's mini book *Connecting your Destiny Helpers* is also instructive in this regard. His opening remarks say it all:

No matter how intelligent, gifted or anointed you may be, you cannot fulfil your destiny by yourself alone. You need destiny helpers – people that are strategically positioned by God to assist you realise your life's calling and dream....May the hand of God begin to connect you with your strategic destiny helpers. In Jesus' mighty name".³⁰⁹

Oke notes that the relationship thus formed with a destiny helper may be temporary or permanent. A permanent or life long destiny helper may likely correspond to a patron-client relationship. The peculiar context of the Nigerian society with regard to scarce opportunities for upward mobility coupled with the gerontocratic Yoruba society makes access to resources difficult without a 'helper' as P.C. Lloyd found out. Lloyd, in a pilot study of 1968 and questionnaire survey of 1971 among the Yoruba, found out that most respondents asserted that hard-work was a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for upward mobility but having a helper was both sufficient and necessary.³¹⁰ This leads us to a discussion of patron-client relationship in the church.

4.3. Patronage-Clientelism in the Church

In different forms and contexts patronage tendencies are demonstrated in the various church denominations as a reflection of what obtains in the larger society. The church as part of the society reflects the need for patrons in order to forge ahead in life. This was brought to the fore when in the announcement section of a church bulletin of the Methodist Church of Nigeria, Diocese of Agodi Ibadan, (see plate 4.1 below), the academic qualifications of some

³⁰⁸ E.A. Adeboye, *Time of favor*, (Lagos: ERA Communications, 2008), pp. 29, 30, 39, 102.

³⁰⁹ Francis Wale Oke, *Connecting your destiny helpers*, p.5.

³¹⁰ P.C. Lloyd, *Power and independence*, p. 161.

members of the church seeking employment were listed. The church was soliciting help in securing jobs for them among the members.³¹¹

Plate 1. Church bulletin of the Methodist Church of Nigeria, Diocese of Agodi, Ibadan

<p>ORDER OF ENGLISH SERVICE - 8.00A. M.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Processional Hymn - 675 2. Call to Worship 3. Praise & Worship 4. Extempore Prayer & the Lord's Prayer 5. Hymn - 305 (Development Fund) 6. Lessons: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Psalm 36:5-10 (ii) John 2:1-11 7. Creed & Prayers 8. Hymn - 504 9. Sermon 10. Sunday Offering, Tithes, WUSTO & Project 11. Notices <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Concluding Hymn - 99 13. Prayer & Benediction 14. Recessional Hymn - 402 <p>Preacher: THE REV. TAIWO OLANIRAN</p> <hr/> <p>ETO ISIN YORUBA 10.00A.M</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Orin Akowole - 295 2. Ipe si Isin 3. Orin - 490 4. Adura 5. Eko Kika: Isaiah 62:1 - 5 Johannu 2:1-11 6. Orin - 200 (Idagbasoke) 7. Ijewo Igbagbo ati Adura 8. Orin - 580 Eso Igbagbo 9. Iwaasu 10. Ore Ojo Isinmi, Idamewa, WUSTO, Project 11. Ifilo / Idupe 12. Orin - 67 13. Adura ati Ore - Ofe 14. Orin Akojade - 838 <p>Oniwasu: VERY REV. J. A. GBADEOLA</p>	<p>ANNOUNCEMENTS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. REQUEST FOR JOB OPPORTUNITY - Our children with the following Qualifications are Requesting for Job <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. B.ED (Econs) Dip (Bus Admin) 2. HND (Accountancy) 3. ND (Accountancy) 4. HND (Agric Extension & Mgt.) ND. (Agric Tech). 5. HND (Animal Production Tech) ND (Agric Tech) ND (Agric Tech) NT1 (Cert). 6. Chemical & Tech Chemical Engineer 7. B.S.C. (Accounting) 8. B.SE. Education 9. Bio-Chemistry 10. B.-Tch Mechanical Engineering Parents who wish to assist should see the Presbyter. 2. Children: All parents are encouraged to bring their children to the Church whenever they are coming because they are the future of this Cathedral. 3. Tithes & Offering: Do you know that tithe opens the windows of heaven and your offerings bring down the showers of blessing? If you have not been paying, kindly ask Senior Steward for your card today & start paying. 4. Counselling Day: Counselling on our spiritual needs hold every Friday from 10a.m - 3p.m. The Presbyter is always in the office to attend to you. 5. Bible Study: We appeal to members to attend weekly Bible Studies on Mondays & Fridays by 5pm & on Wednesdays by 4pm, with prayer meeting by 5pm regularly. 6. WUSTO: Have you redeemed your Wesley University of Science & Technology levy? If not, today is another day. <table style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr> <td>Officers are to be</td> <td>- N5,000</td> <td rowspan="3">} Minimum</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Male members</td> <td>- N2,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Female members</td> <td>- N1,000</td> </tr> </table> We implore you to pay this levy through your card. The Lord bless you as you do so. 7. Seed of Faith: Be reminded that Seed of Faith payment is minimum of N50 per Sunday. God bless you. 8. Bishop's House Project: Donation to the Bishop House is still in progress, please make your donation to the Diocesan Building Fund Account. Methodist Church Nigeria Diocese of Agodi First Bank Plc. Bola Ige International Market branch Account No: 2422030000857 9. Diocesan T.V. Programme is transmitted on NTA every Tuesday between 5:00 & 5.30p.m. All members are enjoined to tune to it. It's also opened for sponsorship, no amount is small. 10. Special 15 minutes prayer for all categories of workers on 20th and 27th by 12:00 - 12:15p.m. in this Cathedral. 	Officers are to be	- N5,000	} Minimum	Male members	- N2,000	Female members	- N1,000
Officers are to be	- N5,000	} Minimum						
Male members	- N2,000							
Female members	- N1,000							

³¹¹ See the church bulletin of 17th January, 2010 overleaf.

4.3.1. African Churches

Webster, in his discussion of the governing authority of an African Church, asserts the pre-eminent position held by elders. They functioned as “lay preachers, class leaders, parish committee and school board members, treasurers, chief contributor of funds, with the title deeds to the land and buildings under their personal control”.³¹² Church policies required their full support in order to be accepted by the congregation, for they wield an enormous amount of influence over all. Without the elders who purchased or donated land, and built the church edifice, African Churches might never have arisen in the first place. Therefore, being an elder was *sine qua non* for being rich as Webster says:

Eldership required wealth, a personal following, and a respected position of leadership within the community. It required a reputation for personal generosity, participation in philanthropic enterprise, and unstinted patronage of the church.³¹³

Patron-client relationship was inevitable in such contexts as Webster further observed:

The elder formed the apex of a pyramid of followers, the size dependent upon his wealth, influence, and family. His position rested upon his leadership of an extensive family or as leader of the people from the area in which he had been born. He loaned capital to merchants and traders. He stood surety for small traders for credit with the large firms or for young men seeking employment. He was responsible for the education of youths within his following. He was expected to use his influence to procure employment or favours. His followers turned to him in all cases of emergency. A wedding or funeral celebrated in a manner below the standards expected of the participants was as much a disgrace to the elder as to the immediate family. Normally the elder did not expect or demand repayment of the loans which he gave out.³¹⁴

³¹² Webster, *The African churches*, p. 139

³¹³ Webster, *The African churches*, p. 136

³¹⁴ Webster, *The African churches*, p. 138.

With his considerable influence, an elder can virtually enforce his will on the congregation, for he is guaranteed the obedience of his followers.

4.3.2. African Indigenous Churches

The overseers of African Indigenous Churches have often been cast in the role of and functioned in the role of Old Testament seers in the likes of Samuel who must be consulted for guidance such as the whereabouts of lost donkeys.³¹⁵ In most of these churches, the prophet would be consulted for interpretation of dreams, for guidance over travel plans or business plans or any major life decision. They pray and fast on behalf of their clients over issues brought to their attention. To this end a host of seekers are always at hand to consult the prophet/prophetess. Asamoah-Gyadu notes:

This style of ministry compares closely with traditional African priesthood where the priest or priestess acts as mediator and medium...these leaders often come across as special religious practitioners on whom the followers rely to bring them a 'supernatural' understanding of events and guidance for action in life.³¹⁶

It is in this light that the prophet(ess) acts as patron to inquirers. The relationship, being largely fostered by the spiritual gifts of the prophet(ess), abides only as long as the patron meets the needs of the clients. If a client should find a 'more powerful' prophet(ess), he /she may ditch the first prophet(ess). The disengagement, however, is done gradually lest the client incur the wrath or curse of the first patron by being labelled 'ungrateful'. In most of the cases, as Asamoah-Gyadu observes, the death of such a leader usually brings an end to such ministries unless another charismatic leader arises.³¹⁷

³¹⁵ I Samuel 9:6ff

³¹⁶ Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *African charismatics. Current developments within Independent Indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana*, (Leiden: Brill, 2000), p. 76.

³¹⁷ Asamoah-Gyadu, *African charismatics*, p.72

4.3.3. Neo-Pentecostal Churches

Contrary to Asamoah-Gyadu's observation of "democratisation of spiritual gifts" among the Charismatics, that is, all believers have access to God and his Spirit and therefore need not rely on the mediation of any other person. Gifford notes the changes that are now taking place among the Neo-Pentecostals in this regard:

...Charismatic Christianity has undergone a shift enhancing the personal status of the pastor - a trend that is most marked in these prophetic churches. These great 'men of God' and their personal gifts or 'anointing' achieve all that is required. They have become famous figures, who draw crowds to consult them. It is obvious that people flock to them for their gifts, not to form communities with other believers; of the crowds who flock to a prophetic ministry most will not know others there---the links are all vertically towards the prophet, rather than horizontally between followers.³¹⁸

This easily leads to a patron-client relationship; for the 'man of God' brokers God's blessings and gifts to the people, therefore, the more visible one becomes to the man of God the better. Two examples will illustrate this. Pastors of churches among the Yoruba are now called 'daddy' and their wives 'mummy' unlike previous times when they were simply known as 'brother' and their wives 'sister'. In the previous chapter, we discussed the use of kin terms among people who are not related by blood in order to enact the sense of obligation that kin members have for one another with special regard to access to resources. Drawing on the implications of the use of kin terms by Pentecostals as a means of accessing resources, Agwuele asserts that it is grounded on:

[T]he desire to maintain the traditionally instituted reciprocal obligations between senior and junior that provide the access to social and economic resources that is afforded by kinship thinking.³¹⁹

Agwuele's assertion is well-underscored in light of our discussion of patron-client relationship by Pastor Adeboye:

³¹⁸ Paul Gifford, *Ghana's new Christianity*, p. 108

³¹⁹ Agwuele, 'Popular culture', p. 58

Somebody asked me why I allow members of my congregation to call me “daddy.” I said I did not like it because it makes me feel old. However, when they call me “Daddy”, they are putting into operation a certain law that they have learnt. When your father blesses you, believe me honestly, you are blessed. Why? This is because a daddy’s blessing is fully recognized by God and He gives it His total backing.³²⁰

It is in light of patron-client relationship that the emphasis on giving testimony in Neo-Pentecostal churches by people whom the “the Lord has blessed” should be seen. ‘Giving testimony’ becomes a means to attest to the patronage of God and the effective brokerage of the Pastor. The Pastors also give testimonies of what the Lord has used them to do and thereby demonstrate their effectiveness as brokers of God’s grace and gifts and in this way encourage the members to repose confidence in them. Pastor Femi Emmanuel in his teaching on *impartation* testifies:

During one of our bonfire miracle services recently, I bent down as I lit a match to set ablaze the heap of listed problems on pieces of paper, amulets and other exhibits which people brought for burning. Most times, because of the huge crowd, our “crowd control” unit often, has a hectic time trying to prevent the surging crowd from touching me. In such a situation of near commotion, one of them accidentally knocked his head against mine. He testified later: “At that instance a strange power entered into me. I felt a surge of strength through my body. My fashion design business that was almost dead revived. Money suddenly started flowing in once again. All customers that deserted me before started coming back to place orders. My financial life changed.” Impartation is divine and it is real.³²¹

Such testimonies boost the image of the ‘man of God’ and encourage the members of the congregation to strive to win the favour of these ministers. Occasions when specific amount of money is called out for people to give towards some particular needs then become an opportunity to be visible to the ministers as people jostle for their attention and blessing. As Gifford

³²⁰ E.A. Adeboye, *How to turn your austerity*, p. 23. The blurb at the end of this book refers to Pastor Adeboye’s wife as “Sister Foluke Adeboye”, more recent works refer to her in the blurb as “Pastor (Mrs.) Folu Adeboye” reflecting the changing times and designations. Also see Ruth Marshall, “it is the title ‘Brother’ or ‘Sister’ that members address one another, regardless of age and status,” ‘Pentecostalism in Southern Nigerian. An overview’, p. 11.

³²¹ Femi Emmanuel, *Insights for prayer results. Impartation release*, ((Ibadan: Fem-Man Publishing House, 1999), pp. 20-21; See also pp. 32-33

notes, “many of these churches are not really communities or fellowships at all. Some began that way but have become associations of clients of a particular ‘Man of God’”.³²²

In light of our discussion so far about the advent and growth of Christianity among the Yoruba, we may posit tentatively that the form that Christianity has assumed among the Yoruba reflects the cultural underpinnings of the Yoruba and it is to this that we now turn.

4.4. Quest for Alafia - An Underlying Reason behind the Growth of the Church in Yorubaland

While the efforts of missionaries in the emergence of Christianity in Yorubaland cannot be underestimated, Peel notes that before the advent of colonialism, Christianity was largely a peripheral religion among the Yoruba in terms of the number and the calibre of people that were attracted to it.³²³ Though the missionaries preceded the colonial authorities in entering Yorubaland, the kinship between the two was not lost on the populace. The influence of colonialism on the spread of Christianity is both direct and indirect. However, even before the annexation of Yorubaland, there was ample evidence that the missionaries were supported by powers superior to the African chiefs. The ejection of Kosoko from Lagos by the use of British gunboat in 1851 was not without the overt support of the missionaries. The Dahomean attack of Abeokuta in 1851 was easily repelled by the overt support of the missionaries. Rev. Townsend had provided bullets to the chiefs and Rev. Bowen’s military expertise became useful at such a difficult time. Soon other towns competed among themselves to have the missionaries reside in their towns for “their armament and prayers were useful in time of

³²² Paul Gifford, ‘Expecting miracles. The prosperity gospel in Africa’, p. 4

³²³ Peel, *Religious encounter*, p. 217 “converts were still so few after fifty years of strenuous evangelism and disproportionately drawn from the more marginal groups in society.” On page 242 Peel notes that after nearly half a century only about 1% of Yoruba had become Christians. Ade Ajayi affirms the same in his *Christian missions*, p. xiii.

war".³²⁴ An instance of the cooperation between the missionaries and the colonial authorities is the conquest of Ijebu in 1892 after the missionaries had called on the colonial power to militarily subdue Ijebu for allegedly breaking a treaty.³²⁵ Johnson notes the impact of the expedition on the rest of Yorubaland:

The taking of Ijebu Ode sent a shock of surprise and alarm throughout the whole land. The people felt instinctively that a new era was about to dawn on them. A new and foreign power had entered into the arena of active politics in the country, and everyone was exercised in mind as to how the country would be affected by it.³²⁶

The speed and skill at which Ijebu's intransigence was brought to its knees served as a major boost for the general acceptance of Christianity by many people, especially the Ijebu. For the conquest among other things was not only an indication of shift of power from the locals to the new masters, it served as an indication of greater things that lie ahead with the change of centre of power. Colonialism indirectly influenced the spread of Christianity by creating an enabling environment that gave room for young men, especially, to make money by themselves without depending on their elders. This in effect made them more independent in making the decision to be Christians.³²⁷ Yet all these are in agreement with natural Yoruba quest for *alafia*. The attraction that Christianity had for Yoruba was that it satisfied their natural zest for *alafia*, which encompasses progress and well being in all ramifications of life.

This understanding that the well being, *alafia*, of the community or the individual is the most crucial element in worship pervades the Yoruba traditional religion. The concept of the peculiarity of the demands of one's *ori* enables *Ifa* to prescribe the worship of a particular divinity to an individual, different from what his clan worships. Instances abound where the

³²⁴ Modupe Oduyoye, 'The planting of Christianity in Yorubaland 1842-1888', p. 266

³²⁵ E.A. Ayandele, *The missionary impact*, pp. 54-69. He dubs the Ijebu expedition "the missionary war"

³²⁶ Johnson, *The history*, p. 623.

³²⁷ Peel *Religious encounter*, p. 245

acceptance of Christianity and Islam in some communities were at the recommendation of *Ifa*.³²⁸ It is in light of this that scholars have noted the accommodating nature of Yoruba traditional religion.³²⁹ In such contexts, however, the new religion would not really displace the old, for the worldview underlying the old serves as the prerequisite for the new.

Peel puts it aptly:

A further source of tolerance lies in the character of the religion for the individual – it tends to be concerned predominantly with easing the conditions of living in this world,...The more religion is regarded as a technique, whose effectiveness the individual may estimate for himself, the readier will the individual be to try out other techniques which seem promising. He will not be inclined to rely exclusively on one technique just for the sake of simplicity, nor will he be intolerant towards other individuals who prefer other techniques.³³⁰

In recapitulation of our study on the rise of different churches among the Yoruba, we may pose the question: what question(s) were these churches answering? The *African Churches* were an answer to the question of power in the church: who wields power? The *African Indigenous Churches* emerged to fill the gap of perceived lack of spiritual power in the Church. Campus Christianity emerged as a revivalist movement carrying forward, with renewed vigour, the *Aladura* ethos with added moral implications. Neo-Pentecostalism arose to fill the void of lack of economic power in the Church.³³¹ The driving force behind all these emphases is the quest for *alafia*, where *alafia* is understood as a state of well being. To test out this hypothesis, we shall turn to examine the emergence of Islam among the Yoruba, could the quest for *alafia* also be responsible for its rise and growth among the Yoruba?

³²⁸ The reception of Christianity by the Egba was predicated on the recommendation of *Ifa*, see Ajayi, *Christian missions*, p. 20. See also T.G.O. Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba 1841-1908*, (London: Longman, 1978), p. 127. He recounts a similar experience in the acceptance of Christianity in Ibadan.

³²⁹ See Peel, 'Syncretism and religious change', pp. 124-125; also see Karin Barber, 'How man makes God in West Africa', p. 741

³³⁰ Peel, 'Syncretism and religious change', pp. 124-125.

³³¹ The Classical Pentecostals and the Indigenous Pentecostals have been left out because they are basically off-shoots of the *Aladura* in terms of focus and emphasis. Their grounding the *Aladura* experience more firmly on the Bible is their main contribution.

4.5. Islam among the Yoruba

4.5.1. The advent of Islam among the Yoruba

The date of the entry of Islam into Yorubaland is largely unknown, but evidence abounds that Islam was already at home in the capital of the Oyo empire by the 17th century.³³² Many factors account for the introduction of Islam into Yorubaland. Geographically, the Old Oyo empire at the height of its fame is bordered in the north by Borgu and Nupe, which are themselves neighbors to Hausaland. Islam made its way to Hausaland, basically the Northern part of the country, through the *Jihad* led by Uthman dan Fodio, a Fulani in 1804.³³³ In the course of wars between neighbouring kingdoms, slaves who were Muslims found themselves in Yorubaland. Apart from war and slave trading, regular trading was another means by which people from Yorubaland came in contact with Islam. Either Muslim traders coming over to Yorubaland to trade or as Yoruba traders made their way to the north in the course of business.³³⁴ The growth of Islam in Yorubaland was in no small measure aided by the Afonja Muslim-backed rebellion that took place around 1817³³⁵. Afonja, the Alaafin's ruling officer in Ilorin, in his bid for autonomy from the Alaafin gathered to himself a renowned Fulani Muslim cleric popularly known as Alimi. Not, probably, unconnected with this alliance was the latter's reputation as a potent charm maker.³³⁶ With the help of other Muslims³³⁷ who joined the rank and file of the insurrection, a *Jihad* was

³³² Law, *The Oyo empire*, p. 256, see also Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam*, p. 4.

³³³ Law, *The Oyo empire*, p. 255ff.

³³⁴ Peel is of the view that Islam first came to Yorubaland "down the Niger from the Northwest rather than from Hausaland", based on Stefa Reichmuth's study of Songhai loan words that are found in Yoruba language. He (Peel) posits that this, perhaps, took place in the 16th century. By the 18th century, Muslim influence was from the Hausa, Oyo slaves and Oyo traders. By 1810, some substantial numbers of Yoruba were already Muslims. Oyo refugees fleeing the war went with their religion; thereby changing the religious landscape of places. See his *Religious encounter*, pp. 190-2. It is interesting to note that most of the places where Islam was well established like Iseyin, Saki, Iwo, proved to be a hard nut for Christian missionaries to penetrate up till present time.

³³⁵ Law, *The Oyo empire*, p. 248.

³³⁶ Law, *The Oyo empire*, p. 257. Alimi is also known as al-Salih

³³⁷ A formidable and heterogenous group consisting of Hausa, Fulani and Yoruba peoples was formed. Common to them was promoting the cause of Islam. The Alaafin had incurred the anger of many Muslims by the killing of as many Muslims as he could lay his hands on. This inevitably increased the disenchantment of Muslims against the Alaafin and swelled the

proclaimed against Oyo and its subjects. With the support of the Sokoto Caliphate, Ilorin finally broke free of Oyo. This success increased the profile of Muslims among non-Muslims³³⁸ and they continued their incursions to other parts of Yorubaland until they were halted by the Ibadan in 1840 in Osogbo.³³⁹ Afonja, in a turn of events, was killed by his allies around 1823.³⁴⁰ Returnees from Sierra-Leone, who had converted to Islam, also raised the profile of Islam as they returned home.³⁴¹ Parrinder, obviously impressed by the inroads made by Islam notes:

Yet the Muslims have not sent out armies of full-time missionaries, nor been controlled by some sending body imposing particular teachings. There have been occasional teachers, and paid scholars, but mostly the religion has spread by the ordinary believers in the course of their business.³⁴²

It must of course be noted that Islam did not get to the whole Yorubaland at the same time. Before 1840, (the advent of Christianity), Islam was already established in Badagry, Ijana, Igboho, Ikoyi, Ijana, Iseyin, Ketu, Lagos and Oyo.³⁴³ Other places such as the eastern part of Yorubaland including: Ife, Ilesha, Ondo, Ekiti encountered Islam after the arrival of Christianity.³⁴⁴

4.5.2. The Attraction of Islam for the Yoruba

G.J.A. Ojo observes that Islam was “more appealing and acceptable to the traditional Yoruba” for it supports the traditional mode of living such as polygamy.³⁴⁵ Part of the traditional mode of living, which Islam, at least as practiced among the Yoruba, supports, is the ability to harness spiritual resources to address problems of life. It was common to have many itinerant Muslim teachers who also served as diviners and medicine men. Parrinder elaborates:

support of Afonja. See Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam*, p. 8. He is, however, unsure whether the Alaafin was Abiodun or Aole.

³³⁸ Peel, *Religious encounter*, p. 191.

³³⁹ Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam*, p. 10, 22

³⁴⁰ Law, *The Oyo empire*, p. 259.

³⁴¹ Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam*, pp. 26-7; Peel, *Religious encounter*, p. 191.

³⁴² Geoffrey Parrinder, *Religion in an African city*, p. 64.

³⁴³ Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam*, p. 5.

³⁴⁴ Peel, *Religious encounter*, p. 196

³⁴⁵ G.J.A. Ojo, *Yoruba culture*, p. 187

It is admitted by Muslims that one reason for the rapid spread of their faith here was the magic practiced by the Hausa teachers. Quranic texts are still widely used, by all manner of people, either on pieces of paper or wrapped up in amulets as charms for self-protection. Diviners reveal the past or claim to predict the future, as do the pagan diviners of Ifa, but by using mystic figures and texts from the Quran.³⁴⁶

In a traditional Yoruba setting where much score is laid on harnessing spiritual powers to address temporal problems, the respect and honor accorded such teachers can best be imagined. Gbadamosi says as much when on noting that the status of free-born Hausa Muslims was not much different from that of their fellow counterparts who were slaves, notes as an exception “those who were knowledgeable in Islam and Arabic were, however, held in high esteem in the society for their learning, piety and ability to make powerful charms”.³⁴⁷

In addition to the potency of the charms made by Muslim clerics, Islam’s appeal to the Yoruba hinges on their (Yoruba) love for colourful, joyful, and exuberant celebrations. According to Parrinder “other practices too were attractive, in particular the drumming and dancing on festival days are of great appeal to the Yoruba”.³⁴⁸ Peel, elaborating on this, calls it the “social affability”³⁴⁹ of Islam. By this Peel refers to the involvement of the community in the public celebration of feasts, for example, Ramadan feasts, which obliged the people to dress like Muslims and which permits Muslims to participate with their friends in their celebration of the feasts of the divinities. This communal get-together party aligns well with the Yoruba love for celebration as well as gives the participants a sense of prestige at being a part of such grand occasions.³⁵⁰ Parrinder notes that efforts were made to accommodate

³⁴⁶ Parrinder, *Religion in an African city*, pp. 64-65, see also, Peel, *Religious encounter*, p. 202

³⁴⁷ Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam*, p. 6

³⁴⁸ Parrinder, *Religion in an African city*, p. 65

³⁴⁹ Peel, *Religious encounter*, p. 214

³⁵⁰ Peel had earlier cited an instance in Osiele in 1851 where two *alufa* (Muslim clerics) had dressed up gorgeously in flowing robes riding on horses accompanied by drummers and ten other non-muslim riders. These were of course all followed by a huge jubilant crowd of

Islam to the Yoruba manner of living, for instance, “Purdah was not insisted upon for women”³⁵¹ and other taboos such as prohibition of alcoholic drinks was not strictly enforced.

In summary, we may note that our short excursus to Islam has confirmed that the Yoruba’s attraction to Islam, just like their attraction to Christianity was at their own terms and in light of their own felt needs. The ability of the religion to deliver what the traditional religion has always done for them: their need for *alafia*, for power by means of divination, prayer, charm-making to ward off evil or to procure favors.

The two world religions having taken root in the same context have exerted influence on each other. In this regard we shall turn to the influence, which Neo-Pentecostalism has exerted in the context it found itself among the Yoruba.

4.6. Neo-Pentecostalism – A Pervading Phenomenon

The greatest single force on the Yoruba religious scene today, and movement, whose members are colloquially called born- indeed throughout most of southern and central Nigeria, is the charismatic or neo-Pentecostal agains.³⁵²

As we have observed, the clear dichotomy that existed in the early 1990s among Pentecostal churches on the holiness and prosperity divide is no longer as sharp as before, rather, as Marshall notes, emphasis on ‘miracles’ is now more pervasive and unifying.³⁵³ A reason for the blurring of the divide between the holiness and the prosperity ends of the continuum may be the

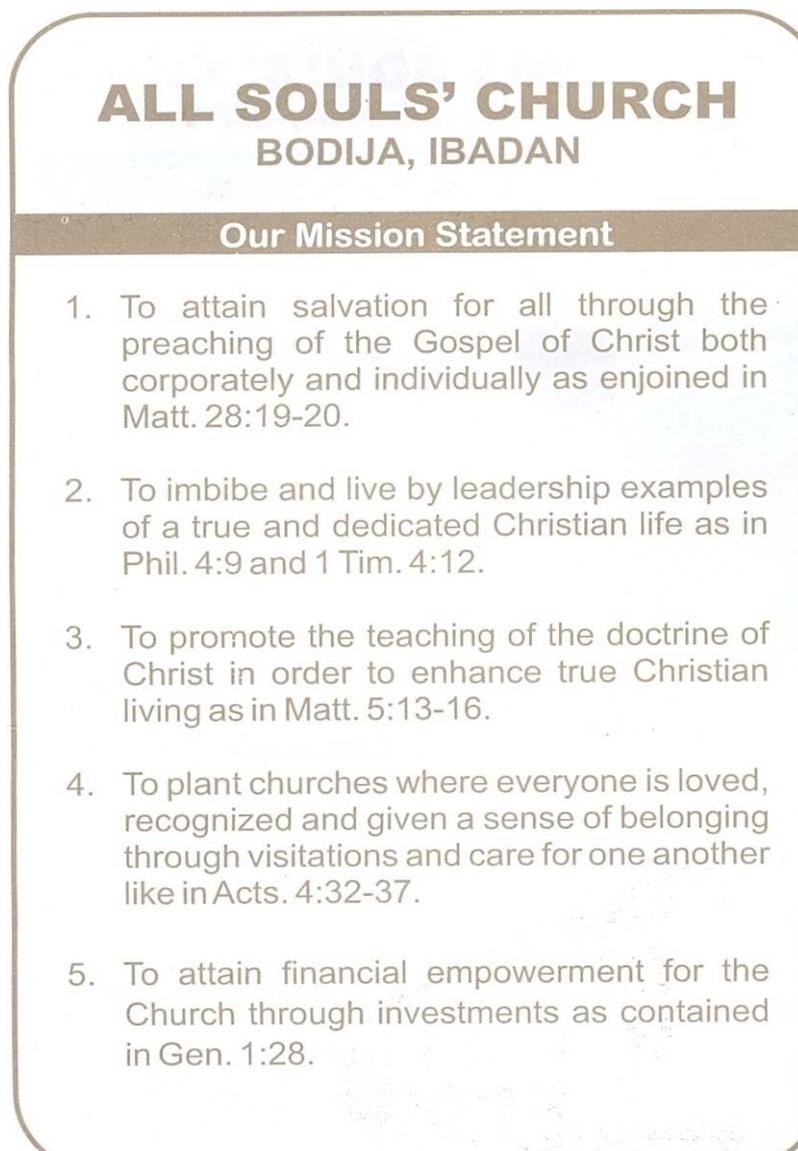
people. This “evocation of military prowess” is often followed by feasting, and herein lies Islam’s appeal to some Yoruba. Peel *Religious encounter*, p. 203.

³⁵¹ Parrinder, *Religion in an African city*, p. 65.

³⁵² Peel, *Religious encounter*, p. 314. Peel here is referring properly to the Charismatic Pentecostals but his observation is equally applicable to the neo-Pentecostals. Moreover, as we have seen most of the churches erstwhile regarded as Charismatic Pentecostals are now Neo-Pentecostals.

³⁵³ Compare Ruth Marshall, ‘Pentecostalism in Southern Nigeria’, pp. 9ff with Ruth Marshall, *Political spiritualities*, p. 85

fact that all the churches, and in varying degrees, subscribe to the teaching on prosperity. Even as Ojo notes that even the Deeper Life Bible Church, the holiness champion, organizes Prosperity workshops and seminars seeking to disseminate ideas on entrepreneurship. This was a no-go-area many years ago.³⁵⁴ As my field research shows, to an increasing level, churches, para-church organizations, and a Muslim non-denominational outfit have all needed to diversify and expand their economic base by engaging in business activities, see plate 4.2 below:

A church bulletin for All Souls' Church, Bodija, Ibadan. The title is "ALL SOULS' CHURCH BODIJA, IBADAN" in bold, uppercase letters. Below the title is a dark brown horizontal bar with the text "Our Mission Statement" in white. The main content is a list of five numbered points, each describing a mission goal with a corresponding Bible verse. The text is in a light brown color on a white background.

ALL SOULS' CHURCH
BODIJA, IBADAN

Our Mission Statement

1. To attain salvation for all through the preaching of the Gospel of Christ both corporately and individually as enjoined in Matt. 28:19-20.
2. To imbibe and live by leadership examples of a true and dedicated Christian life as in Phil. 4:9 and 1 Tim. 4:12.
3. To promote the teaching of the doctrine of Christ in order to enhance true Christian living as in Matt. 5:13-16.
4. To plant churches where everyone is loved, recognized and given a sense of belonging through visitations and care for one another like in Acts. 4:32-37.
5. To attain financial empowerment for the Church through investments as contained in Gen. 1:28.

Plate 2. Church bulletin of All Souls' Church, Bodija, Ibadan

³⁵⁴ Matthews Ojo, *End Time Army. Charismatic Movements in Modern Nigeria*, (New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2006), p. 207ff. Also see Rosalind Hackett, 'The gospel of prosperity in West Africa', p. 205; Robert Mbe Akoko, "Ask and you shall be given". *Pentecostalism and the economic crisis in Cameroon*, (Leiden: African Studies Centre, 2007), pp.17-18.

As Marshall observed:

Church activities proper were joined by subsidiary revenue-generating activities: the sale of media productions for the most part, but in the largest ministries, Bible colleges, private universities, banks, medical clinic, and on-line subscriptions.³⁵⁵

The need for this is prompted by the unending economic problems of the country; this was inconceivable in the 70s. As noted above also, emphasis of preaching on miracles in no way militates against prosperity preaching, for though 'miracles' is more encompassing, yet prosperity is often depicted as one of its manifestations as Adeboye suggests:

You cannot be rich without divine assistance. If God does not back you up no matter what you venture into, you will fail. Of course, I am aware of the fact that it is possible to receive prosperity from the devil's camp. For this reason, you must pray until you move the hand of God.³⁵⁶

4.6.1. The 'Pentecostalization' of Mainline Churches

Another area of change depicting the pervasiveness of Neo-Pentecostal ideals is what some have seen as revival in mainline churches but which some have dubbed the *pentecostalization* of mainline churches.³⁵⁷ While mainline churches retain their liturgies, change is observable in their mode of worship in terms of incorporating praise/worship sessions, prayer sessions where congregants

³⁵⁵ NASFAT, the muslim outfit in focus here, produces Nasmalt, a non-alcoholic drink, runs Tafsan Travel-Tours Agency, runs a university called Fountain University and others; The Scripture Union has complimentary business outfits like its Publishing Press which was registered as a company in 1987 to take on publishing work in service of the general public, it has a water-bottling company in Okigwe, and some other income generating projects. See Marshall, *Political spiritualities*, p. 182. All Souls' church, Bodija, Ibadan lists as part of its mission statement "to attain financial empowerment for the church through investments as contained in Gen 1:28" see church bulletin of January 10, 2010.

³⁵⁶ E.A. Adeboye, *Divine encounter. Where poverty is abolished by the abundance of Jehovah El-Shaddai*, (Lagos: Integrity Press, 2003), p. 73

³⁵⁷ See R.P. Spittler, 'Implicit values in Pentecostal missions', *American Society of Missiology* 16 (1988), pp. 421; Anderson, *African reformation*, p. 181-2; Anderson, *An introduction to Pentecostalism*, p. 122. Matthews Ojo, however rejects the term for changes in the mode of worship does not suggest a change in doctrine in a personal discussion with the researcher on 27th January, 2010 in his office at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.

pray out loud with some speaking in tongues openly.³⁵⁸ The first three days of the month in most mainline churches among the Yoruba are usually prayer meetings with some having night vigils on the first or last Friday of the month. The Methodist Church of the Diocese of Agodi in Ibadan holds a three-day anointing service on the first three days of the month. The anointing service is not just for the sick, but as the Presbyterian said, it was for security.³⁵⁹

As Kalu notes, the hostility with which the mainline churches 'greeted' the Charismatic renewal has now changed to adaptation.³⁶⁰ Some of the adaptation is observable in the use of slogans hitherto peculiar to the Pentecostals. As some of the pamphlets below demonstrate, see plates 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5. Note the use of captivating slogans such as "everyone is a V.I.P.": Very Important Personality in plate 4.3. The Molete Baptist Church Ibadan has also adopted the style of christening each year in fascinating terms, in this case, "a year of consolidated laughter." Plate 4.4 demonstrates the use of a Pentecostal term "Seed of faith" by the Anglican Church Odo-Ona, Ibadan, in their collection envelope. While plate 4.5 shows that funds for a Diocesan effort for evangelism is aptly designated as "covenant seed", a distinctly Pentecostal phrase.

While many have seen the changes introduced by mainline churches as a response to the loss of their members to Pentecostal groups, perhaps more fundamental is the fact that leadership in most of the mainline churches and Dioceses are now in the hands of born-again vicars and bishops.³⁶¹ Another emerging development is the return of some Pentecostal pastors to mainline

³⁵⁸ Prayer sessions observed in Baptist churches and a Methodist church visited by the researcher are quite akin to prayer sessions in C.A.C. churches in terms of the vigor expended and in terms of the content of the prayers.

³⁵⁹ Interview with Very. Revd. Gbadeola, Presbyterian, Methodist Cathedral of Light, Agodi on 14 January, 2010.

³⁶⁰ Kalu, 'Historical perspectives', p. 3

³⁶¹ The erstwhile Bishop of Ibadan (Anglican) Bishop Gideon Olajide was one time a council chairman of Scripture Union, Mike Oye a former Traveling Secretary of Scripture Union is a Presbyterian with the Methodist Church.

churches as vicars.³⁶² These have aided the prevalence of Neo-Pentecostal ideas among other denominations.

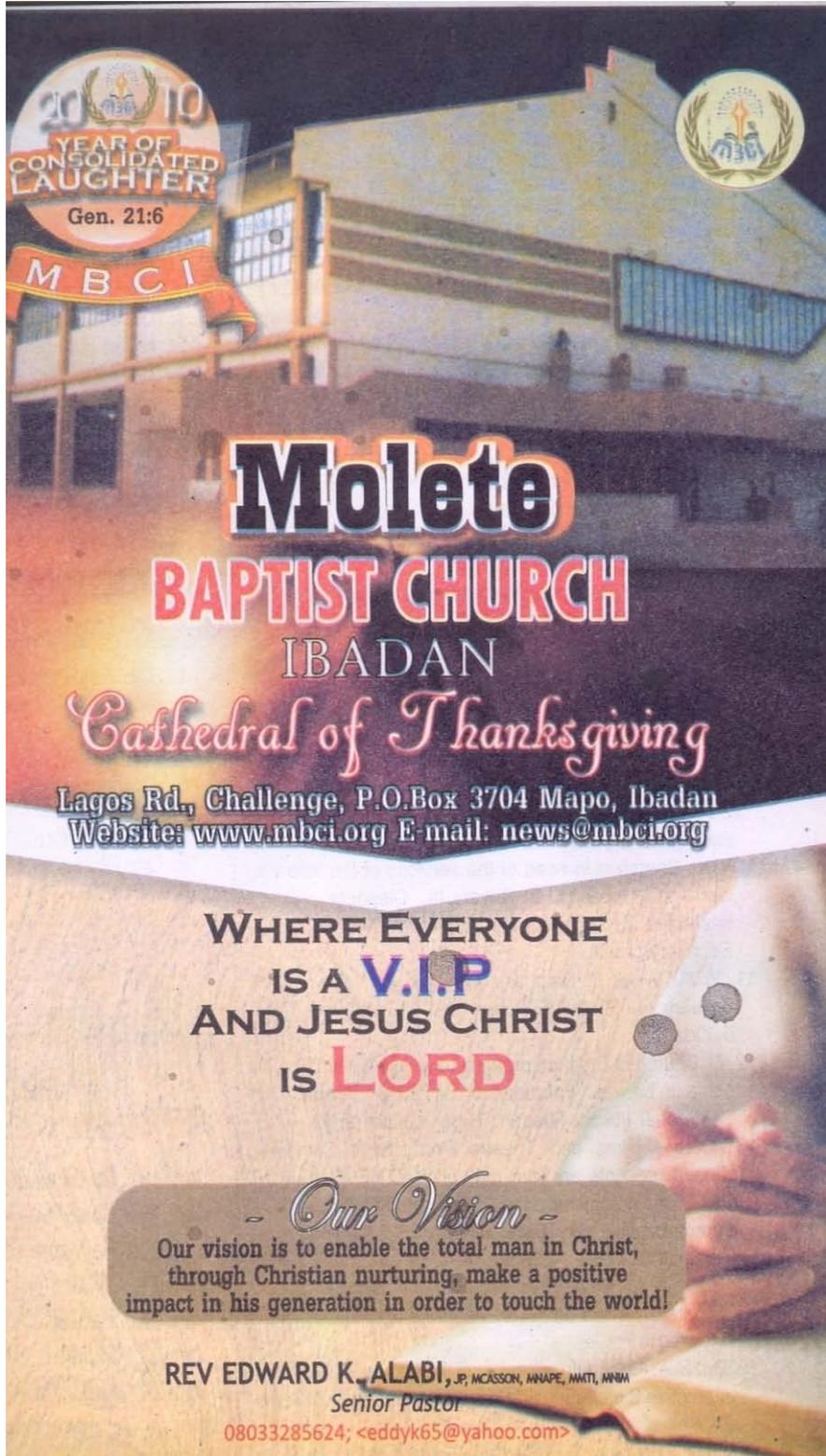


Plate 3. Church bulletin of the Molete Baptist Church, Ibadan.

³⁶² Venerable Gbade Adekola of Christ Church Mapo, Ibadan is a case in point.

ST. PAUL'S ANGLICAN CHURCH ODO - ONA

SEED OF FAITH

(OFFERING ENVELOPE)

God shall supply my needs according to His riches in Jesus name.

Plate 4. Offering envelope of St. Paul's Anglican Church Odo-Ona, Ibadan

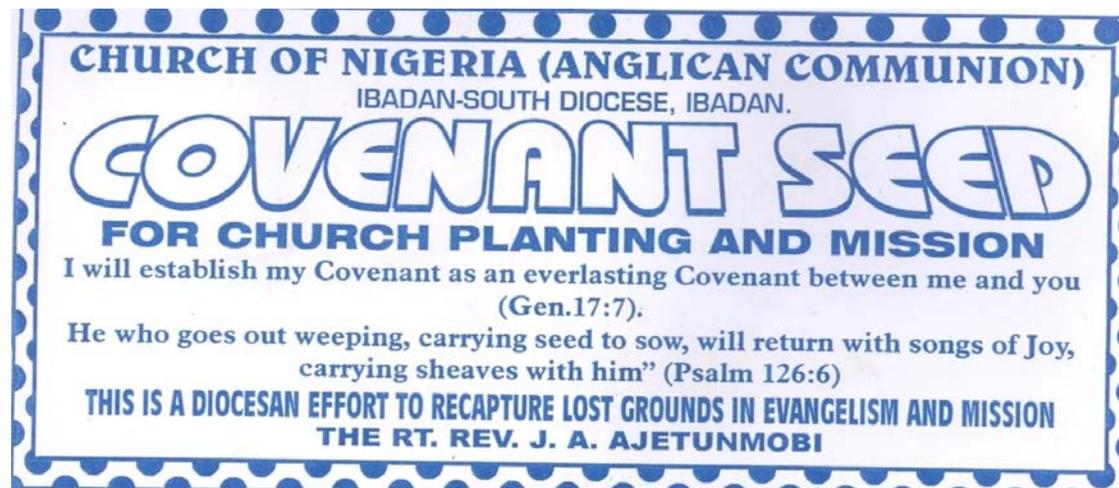


Plate 5. Church planting and Mission offering envelope of the Ibadan-South Diocese of the Anglican Communion

4.6.2. Impact on Islam

NASFAT, a body comprising of Muslims across the different denominations was formed in 1995 in Lagos and now has branches all over the country and beyond. Ostensibly formed to keep Muslims busy on Sundays and away from proselytising activities of Christians,³⁶³ they gather every Sunday wearing

³⁶³ Interview with Mrs. Modinat Akinola, Administrative Secretary of NASFAT, Samonda branch, Ibadan on 19 January, 2010 at NAFSAT site. See also, J.D. Adewale, *Creation of*

white robes from 8.30 a.m. till 12.30 or thereabout. Activities soon included night vigils called *Tahajjud* on the first and third Friday of each month. Many faithfuls adorn their cars with stickers of the organization. The most significant fact of the emergence of this organization is that it attests to the popularity and pervasive influence of Charismatic/Neo-Pentecostalism in Nigeria. For it is provoking a form of renewal, or rather resistance to its aggressive incursion in mainline churches as well as Muslim groups.

4.7. Prosperity - A foreign element in African Christianity or an Indigenous part of African Christianity?

Paul Gifford, while noting the African traditional penchant for well-being, is unequivocal in asserting that prosperity teaching as we have it today in African Christianity is a foreign element - specifically imported from the American-based Faith Movement. He says: "This gospel of Prosperity does not belong in Africa's revival. It did not originate in Africa. It originated with the media evangelists of the U.S."³⁶⁴ For Matthews Ojo, on the other hand, prosperity teaching is an extension of the healing agenda that has always been the preserve of Pentecostals right from the days of the *Aladura*. According to him, Neo-Pentecostals have interpreted healing as that which pertains to the body resulting in physical healing, healing of "all forms of failures in life" resulting in the prosperity gospel among others.³⁶⁵ He concedes that an emphasis on prosperity has assumed greater proportions since the mid 80s to the 90s because of the appalling economic condition of African states and because of association with American tele-evangelists.³⁶⁶

Basic to the difference between Gifford's view and Ojo's is their working understanding of the concept of prosperity. Gifford is specifically talking

dioceses: strategy for evangelism. A study in contemporary church history, (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 2008), p. 103.

³⁶⁴ Paul Gifford, 'Prosperity in African Christianity', p. 382

³⁶⁵ Matthews Ojo, 'The charismatic movement in Nigeria today', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 19:3 (July 1995), pp. 115

³⁶⁶ Ojo, *The end-time army*, pp. 206-209

about the prosperity gospel, which is the teaching that prosperity is part of the atonement, this indeed is new and to those who espouse this view, they concede that it is new. Kenneth Hagin, a foremost figure in the Faith Movement, mentioned that it was a new concept for him in the 1950s and he used different occasions in his ministry to test its veracity.³⁶⁷ Bishop Oyedepo usually recalls with clarity that he received the “prosperity mandate”, in 1987, yet he had received the mandate to commence ministry since 1981.³⁶⁸ Ojo, however, is talking more about prosperity in general, and that it is inclusive in the healing program of the Pentecostals. If by Pentecostals, he is referring to the Classical Pentecostals of the Azusa Street fame, then we may note that these Pentecostals did not have the understanding of healing as inclusive of prosperity as most of them were very poor. If by Pentecostals he is referring to the *Aladura*, we may note that these were not well-known for their wealth. Rev. Akindayomi, the founder of RCCG and a former prophet with the C&S never did emphasise giving in the church and led a frugal life.³⁶⁹ In fact, quite a number of believers then felt that being a Christian and being rich was an irreconcilable paradox. I do, therefore, consider the Neo-Pentecostals’ emphasis on prosperity or financial success to be in discontinuity with its Pentecostal precursor and I agree with Gifford that it is a new and foreign element in African Christianity. If the Neo-Pentecostals consider prosperity as part of the healing agenda of the Pentecostals, then what they are doing is a *re-interpretation* of a very old concept in light of their new realities such as the hardship brought about by the “IMF-inspired Structural Adjustment Programmes”.³⁷⁰ The Structural Adjustment Program has brought about what Rosalind Hackett calls a “Spiritual Adjustment Program” as evident in prosperity preaching.³⁷¹

³⁶⁷ Kenneth E. Hagin, *Biblical keys to financial prosperity*, (Tulsa: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 1995), pp. 58-68

³⁶⁸ David O. Oyedepo, *Signs and wonders today. A catalogue of the amazing acts of God among men*, (Ota: Dominion Publishing House, 2006), pp. 23-26

³⁶⁹ Asonzeh, *A new paradigm*, p 25.

³⁷⁰ Ojo, *The end-time army*, p. 208. See Hackett, ‘The gospel of prosperity in West Africa’, p. 205.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Furthermore, though Ojo has rightly noted “the relevance of this teaching to traditional African cultural values”,³⁷² yet the practice of prosperity/affluence in the prosperity gospel far outweighs what obtained in traditional Yoruba culture. The capacity for accumulation in Yoruba traditional setting was much more limited and compromised by the obligation of the rich to cater for the needs of his/her extended family members and the many hangers on. The Yoruba adage *Olowo kan, otosi mefa, otosi ni gbogbo won*, ‘One rich person in the midst of six poor people means all of them are poor’ best exemplifies this understanding. The prosperity gospel, as it is being played out now, is essentially an urban affair, where people are far removed from their home place and therefore distant from the many family obligations. In addition, the individualistic tenor of the prosperity gospel is quite different from what obtains in Yoruba traditional society, for as Marshall notes “churches stressed the nuclear and not the extended family”.³⁷³

4.8. Appraisal of Neo-Pentecostalism

As noted above, Neo-Pentecostalism is a pervading phenomenon that has changed the face of Christianity among the Yoruba and generally in Nigeria. In this appraisal we shall explore the factors that are responsible for its success and the attendant weakness(es) that such factors may imply.

4.8.1. Flexibility

At the present, where the administration of these churches is usually under the control of an individual, the churches have been able to introduce changes in their structure, doctrinal emphases, focus of ministry, program of worship, posture, and whatever change they deemed fit. It is in light of this ability to be flexible that they have been found to be relevant, for they could easily adapt to changes in their context. This gives them an anchor in their socio-cultural

³⁷² Ojo, *The end-time army*, p. 208.

³⁷³ Marshall, *Political spiritualities*, p. 114

context while they lay claim to belonging to a global phenomenon. However, the success of these churches when they move across borders beyond their 'natural habitat' to different cultures may be something else, unless they find some of their own to reach out to.

Flexibility is also responsible for their re-reading and re-interpretation of scripture, as Gordon Fee has noted, "the Pentecostals' experience has preceded their hermeneutics"³⁷⁴, for to them, experience is primary. It is on the basis of their experience or shall we say the experience of the leader that they interpret the Bible. Since they consider the bible to be sacred text, they seem to feel obliged to make recourse to the bible to legitimise their experience. This process of having continual experience, re-reading scripture to make sense of or to ground their experience keeps the ministers busy, sustains the interests of their members, especially the youth and keep scholars on their toes, for change is a watch word with the Neo-Pentecostals. With most of the key church leaders being in their 60s, the next twenty years or more will be a space of time keenly watched by observers.³⁷⁵ Implications for the future is that there is more to come in terms of innovations that would be brought to this brand of Christianity to meet the ever-expanding needs of the people as they seek to come to terms with their ever-changing contexts.

4.8.2. People-Oriented

Some scholars like Richard Burgess³⁷⁶ would prefer to call this a consumer-oriented brand of Christianity. As Anderson posits, the problem with mainline churches was that they were answering questions that no one was

³⁷⁴ See Gordon Fee, 'Hermeneutics and Historical Precedent - a Major Problem in Pentecostal Hermeneutics', in Russell P. Spittler (ed.) *Perspectives on the new Pentecostalism*, (Grand Rapids: Baker House, 1976), p. 122

³⁷⁵ E.A. Adeboye is 68 years having been born in 1942, see Asonzeh, *A new paradigm*, p. 69; Oyedepo is the youngest at 56 years, see Kuponu, 'The Living Faith Church', p. 19; Kumuyi is about 69 years old now, was born in 1941 according to Ojo, 'Deeper Life Bible Church of Nigeria', in Paul Gifford (ed.) *New dimensions in African Christianity*, (Nairobi: All Africa Conference of Churches, 1992), p. 137.

³⁷⁶ Burgess, *Nigeria's Christian revolution*, p. 259.

asking.³⁷⁷ Neo-Pentecostals, like their predecessors, the *aladura*, have made themselves relevant to the concerns of the people, and herein lies their strength and weakness. Strength, for they have the crowds because they are filling a void in the life experiences of the people. In the midst of the economic crunch in Nigeria, for example, there is no other voice that has risen so clearly to provide some semblance of hope, courage and stability for the people. In the midst of helplessness and despair, the Neo-Pentecostals have presented to the people an immanent God, an ever-present help in time of trouble. Asamoah-Gyadu asserts:

The greatest virtue in the health and wealth theology, in my estimation, is the indomitable spirit that believers develop in the face of life's odds. Disease, poverty, unemployment, bad harvest, declining business can all be overcome 'in the name of Jesus'. In essence misfortune becomes only temporary.³⁷⁸

However, in this strength of the Neo-Pentecostals also lies the seed of its weakness, it is so people-oriented that it fails to serve as the conscience of the people. It does not stand apart from the people to offer a critique of their assumptions and values. In this way, it fails to bring about the transformation so necessary for its own renewal, that of the people as well as the nation's. Neo-Pentecostalism accepts uncritically the assumption that it is money that makes a person, hear Bishop Oyedepo as he explains the verse "...Wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence..." Ecclesiastes 7:12, he argues, says:

Many saints in the Church are defenceless, because they don't have the social security required to be here on earth. You need money to have prominence in the social circles of the world.³⁷⁹

Neo-Pentecostalism's over-emphasis on miracles sometimes makes the people miss the greatest miracle of all, the crucifixion of self to the values imposed on it by the world and its culture. None of the churches would ask families seeking to have children to consider the adoption of orphans as an option as

³⁷⁷ Anderson, *African reformation*, p. 35.

³⁷⁸ Asamoah-Gyadu, 'The Church in the African State. The Pentecostal/Charismatic experience in Ghana', *Journal of African Christian Thought* vol 1, no. 2 (December 1998), p. 55

³⁷⁹ David O. Oyedepo, *Covenant wealth*, (Lagos: Dominion Publishing House, 1992), pp. 45-46.

they wait to bear their biological children. None would teach that one's children are not necessarily one's biological children only but as many children as one can provide nurture and help to as the Yoruba tradition suggests. None would say like the Yoruba *aso nla ko ni eniyan nla*, gorgeous clothing/dressing does not suggest that one is a great person.

Perhaps, the greatest disservice being perpetrated by Neo-Pentecostalism is lack of contentment in its members. Most of the meetings are meaningless to someone who is just seeking to know the Lord for its own sake, as an end in itself and not as a means to an end. As Stalsett aptly puts it:

Another aspect has to do with the character of the consumer culture. Production today, says Bauman, is not primarily about satisfying human needs. It is not even first about satisfying human desire. Production today is primarily production of desires, desires that – in an instant can be gratified. Or rather, *almost* satisfied. For the consumption does not quench desire completely, but creates a thirst for more. 'Desire does not desire the satisfaction of desire. Desire desires desire,' Bauman quotes Mark C. Taylor and Esa Saarinen. Thus the consumer is always on the move, reaching out for something else, something more.³⁸⁰

Adeboye in his bid to persuade his hearers/readers to ask for what God alone can give them says:

What you need to do, today, is to make up your mind that you are going to stop struggling to survive. Things must change. You need also to make up your mind that you are going to become so blessed financially, that your future generations will also remain wealthy. You must desire that God should bring you to a level of prosperity at which even if your grandchildren do nothing for life, they will remain rich. The moment you put your mind on achieving that stage of prosperity, you will realize that no human being can take you to that kind of level. Therefore, when you know that the kind of prosperity which you desire is so unique, you will turn unto God for an encounter.³⁸¹

³⁸⁰ Sturla J. Stalsett, 'Offering on-time deliverance. The pathos of Neo-Pentecostalism and the spirits of globalization', in Sturla J. Stalsett (ed.) *Spirits of globalization. The growth of Pentecostalism and experiential spiritualities in a global age*, (London: S.C.M. Press, 2006), p. 201.

³⁸¹ E.A. Adeboye, *Divine encounter*, p. 97.

Above is an invitation to desire what one does not need, an invitation to keep on desiring more.

4.8.3. Non-Transformatory

At the time of the Charismatic Pentecostal churches employers went out of their way seeking to employ born-again Christians for they were considered to be honest and hard workers. This was a time when believers lived in rupture with the society and its norms. As Marshall notes things have changed since then:

...the emphasis on salvation in the next world, which was so important in the first decade, has given way to an emphasis on salvation in the here and now and the performance of miracles. This shift in the teleology of conversion has implied a shift in the teleology of processes of moral subjectivation and the work of the self on the self, and opens up the space in which the prescriptive power of the Born-Again program begins to lose its “revolutionary” force. The degree to which converts conducted themselves with a strict respect for Born-Again values and codes weakened, and from the early 1990s it was increasingly possible to be “Born-Again from the waist up,” applying in an ad hoc manner many of the moral prescriptions at the heart of the message. Increasingly, becoming Born-Again would be seen as a mode of tapping into spiritual power for one’s personal protection and social mobility, rather than a means of radical ethical change through new modes of self-fashioning.³⁸²

If morality in private life is eroded, so much more is it in public life. Daniel Jordan Smith writing earlier than Marshall captures the ambivalence between personal morality of some of the born-again at an earlier time and their outright collusion with corruption in the public domain:

[T]he powerful moralism of Pentecostal Christianity has become increasingly domesticated, moving away attention from the public sphere. Personal behavior in the domestic arena, such as being a good spouse or parent, eschewing alcohol, gambling, and extramarital sex, praying in the home, and not allowing one’s children to dress indecently or act disrespectfully, are emphasized in church sermons, collective gossip, and individuals’ assessment of their own morality. I know numerous businesspeople and politicians who are devout born-again Christians and who maintain strict codes of personal behavior even as they participate in election rigging, the overinvoicing of

³⁸² Marshall, *Political spiritualities*, p. 177.

contracts, and the outright looting of government coffers...it is the born-again Christians who really try to live by their churches' teachings regarding personal and intimate behavior, and yet still participate in public actions that perpetuate corruption, who encapsulate the complexity of the relationship between religious morality and corruption. The domestication of Pentecostal moralism, focussing attention on sexuality, marriage, and family, has enabled the prosperous to live piously even as they loot the state and society.³⁸³

While this statement may seem as crass overgeneralization, it arises from the observation that the great number of churches with its bursting-at-the-seams population and the attendant increased spiritual activities has not had a commensurate effect on the morality of the nation. Furthermore, the fact that some leading born-again have been implicated in the failure of the banking industry in Nigeria has lent credence to this statement. The strongest critique of the prosperity gospel is that though it has popularised Christianity so that more people claim to be Christians, yet their influence in society in terms of transformation is negligible compared to the 70s. To this end, some members of the movement are voicing their concern and asking for renewal and true transformation.³⁸⁴

4.8.4. Greater Engagement in the World

A feature of the Neo-Pentecostals is their greater involvement in the world when compared with the earlier Pentecostals/Charismatics. Like the mission churches they are heavily involved in education, providing schools, colleges and universities.³⁸⁵ However, despite this greater engagement in the world, Ojo's earlier critique of these churches still stands, for they do not lend their voice to burning issues in the country.³⁸⁶ The greater engagement with the

³⁸³ Daniel Jordan Smith, *A culture of corruption. Everyday deception and popular discontent in Nigeria*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 214.

³⁸⁴ Marshall, *Political spiritualities*, p. 240ff

³⁸⁵ Notable among them are Covenant University run by Winners' chapel, The Redeemer's University run by RCCG and many others.

³⁸⁶ An exception to this general description is Pastor Tunde Bakare of the Latter Rain Assembly. He has been prominent in his critique of other fellow ministers and the current situation of the country. He is presently the convener of Save Nigeria Group (SNG), a group concerned with the state of affairs in the country. He recently participated in a walk

world has meant greater fraternity between the leaders of some of these churches with politicians, some of whom may be their clients. However, this uncritical alliance with corrupt heads of government and the high and mighty in the society³⁸⁷ means that they turn a blind eye to such regimes' atrocities.³⁸⁸ One could further argue that such a penchant for association with the powers of the day betrays a sense of inferiority, whereby the church leaders seem to derive their sense of worth or significance by association with the 'high and mighty' in the society. Furthermore, their emphasis on prosperity has been so read by some of their members to mean a licence to get rich by whatever means.

4.9. Conclusion

The history of Christianity and Islam among the Yoruba in Nigeria shows that the impulse for progress and enhancement of life within the traditional culture and religion gave both Christianity and Islam some foothold among the Yoruba. This is because, inherent in the Yoruba traditional religion is the creativity that makes it reach out to any religion or idea that promises to preserve and enhance life. According to RT, this is the cognitive environment of the Yoruba, the *relevance* of each religion is judged by how it modifies this cognitive environment to produce cognitive effects. In this regard, Campus Christianity and its off springs, which was essentially in rupture to the society, achieved cognitive effects and was *relevant* by contradicting the Yoruba assumption of earthly well-being. Neo-Pentecostalism, on the other hand, attained *relevance*, by affirming the Yoruba cultural expectation of

protesting against the inaction of the relevant authorities in filling the vacuum left by the ailing Nigerian President Musa Yar' Adua, who had been out of office for more than two months without handing over to his Vice President. See Vanguard News Online of Feb 15, 2010, 'Yar'Adua: Soyinka, others give FEC 10-day ultimatum', <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2010/02/15/yaradua-soyinka-others.....>

³⁸⁷ Kalu Ogbu's apologetic counter to this criticism is that "it is better to establish contact and gain influence, than to ignore the ruler", see Kalu Ogbu, 'Historical perspectives', p. 14

³⁸⁸ The paradox of this situation is that while these preachers acknowledge themselves to be prophets, they do not evince the courage and charisma of the true prophets in the Bible that stood as the conscience of the nation by repudiating the evil of heads of government of their day.

earthly well-being in its prosperity preaching. The cognitive effect it brings to a Yoruba hinges on its promise to enhance life in all facets. Its resonance with Yoruba culture in terms of promoting *alafia* and *olaju*, therefore makes it attractive and appealing to the Yoruba. However, Neo-Pentecostalism's uncritical acceptance of the culture denies it the bite it needs to be a transforming force in the society. Neo-Pentecostalism's effort at bringing divinity into the public realm is commendable and fitting in the Yoruba context where worship is a communal and lively affair. So its concern about the economic deprivation of the majority of the Nigerian populace in the context of national economic woes is quite in order. However, and despite its popularity and relevance, its critics say that it has not delivered on its promises, for poverty still abounds in the land.

In the next chapter we shall look at the socio-cultural context of the text of scripture under consideration John 10:10. In this way we shall satisfy the second pole of Draper's model and also build the context that makes up the cognitive environment of the writer and the original readers of the text.

CHAPTER 5 - THE LITERARY, SOCIO-CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF JOHN 10:10

5.0. Introduction

This chapter seeks to situate the text of John 10:10 within its literary and socio-cultural context according to Draper's pole of distantiation. In the process of this exploration, the assumptions which might have informed the first readers' understanding of the fourth gospel shall be brought to the fore. These assumptions, as we have noted, constituted the cognitive environment of the original interlocutors according to RT. This exploration is to enable us hear the text as the other, in the process of which we might find how similar or how dissimilar they are to the Yoruba people of South Western Nigeria. This study is a narrative reading of the fourth gospel in the sense that it takes the gospel as it is found in the common text without making recourse to issues of emendation or transposition of some parts.³⁸⁹ However where textual critical issues would make a difference in the reading of the text this shall be pointed out. The aim of this chapter is to exegete John 10:10 in relation to its use of 'abundant life'. With regard to methodology, we shall have a look at passages in the gospel that refer to the concept of life and its synonyms and then do an exegesis of John 10:10.

5.1. The Fourth Gospel

5.1.1. Genre

The fourth gospel belongs to the corpus of biblical literature known as the gospels to which also belong the synoptic gospels. The gospels, in comparison with the writings of the same period, seem to be widely accepted to be biography in terms of genre.³⁹⁰ A biography generally seeks to highlight the

³⁸⁹ See Raymond Brown's summary of this discussion in *The gospel according to John* vol I p. xxvi ff.

³⁹⁰ Discussion is not conclusive among scholars about the genre of the Gospels. Robert Guelich sees the gospels as *sui generis*, see his 'The gospel genre' in Peter Stuhlmacher (ed.) *The gospel and the gospels*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991) pp. 173-208; M. Smith sees the gospels as belonging to the subgenre of aretalogy,

life of a distinguished individual in terms of his/her deeds and words as Burridge asserts:

...[T]he gospels share all the same generic features of ancient biographies. They are prose narratives...with only a bare chronological structure of the subject's birth or arrival on the public scene and their death; in between they contain stories, sayings and anecdotes about the person, with a constant focus on their words and deeds.³⁹¹

However, since such individuals are held up as embodiments of the virtues cherished in particular societies and, therefore, as objects of emulation; one understands why some scholars feel that the gospel stories about Jesus do not quite fit the biography genre. This is because the gospel stories present Jesus as the unique son of God who is an object of faith and not just an object of emulation. David Aune³⁹² posits three important features of categorizing literature in the genre of biography. These are content, that is, the subject of interest; form, referring to the style of writing; and function, referring to the goal of the writing. He concludes, "the Gospels are a subtype of Greco-Roman biography."³⁹³ In this work, the gospels are understood to fall under the general category of biography while noting their peculiarities because of their subject of interest.

5.1.2. The Peculiarities of the Fourth Gospel

Though all focusing on the person of Jesus, differences abound in the manner each writer of the gospel presents, orders, and highlights his understanding of Jesus and his mission. Scholars have noted that each writer, given the fact that they may have had access to different sources, wrote differently though with varying degrees of agreement at various points. The peculiarity of each gospel has given rise to the notion of redaction criticism and later the idea of the

'Prolegomena to a discussion of aretologies, divine men, the gospels and Jesus', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 90 (1971), pp. 74-99.

³⁹¹ Richard Burridge, *Imitating Jesus. An inclusive approach to New Testament ethics*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), p. 24

³⁹² David. E. Aune, *The New Testament in its literary environment*, (Philadelphia: The West Minster Press, 1987).

³⁹³ David E. Aune, *The New Testament*, p. 64.

community behind each gospel. While all do agree that stories are not isolated, disjointed, unconnected pieces of data but are a skilful weaving of facts, assumptions, hopes and aspirations towards a particular end or purpose; not all agree that the differences we have among the gospels are as a result of the communities behind them.³⁹⁴ As Peterson concludes “all evidence indicates that it is unlikely that Gospels were originally written to address the needs of particular and insular communities”.³⁹⁵ However, the fourth gospel, unlike the synoptics, demonstrates that it is a collaborative effort; with an author who is presented as an eye-witness and a “we” that attests to the veracity of what is written (John 21:24). Oscar Cullman on the basis of this posits a community called the ‘Johannine Circle’ behind the gospel.³⁹⁶ In this work we shall note where necessary the differences in the presentations of some narratives of the gospel writers without worrying now about what might account for such differences.

In contradistinction to the synoptics, with the exception of the gospel of Mark, the fourth gospel does not give us information about the conception or infancy stories of Jesus. As far as the fourth gospel is concerned, the man referred to as Jesus in the synoptics is none other than *logos*, the creator of the world. Where the other gospels narrate the different miracles that Jesus performed such as exorcism and healings, the writer³⁹⁷ of the fourth gospel

³⁹⁴ Dwight N. Peterson argues against the quest for the community behind the text of Mark for it failed to achieve its purpose of exerting some sort of control over the text as to what was plausible and what was not. The failure arises from the inability of scholars to agree as which community was behind text. See his *The origins of Mark: The Markan community in current debate*, (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 152ff; Edward W. Klink III espouses a similar view asserting that the reading modality for a gospel should be different from the reading modality of an epistle, see his *The sheep of the fold: The audience and origin of the gospel of John*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

³⁹⁵ Dwight N. Peterson, *The origins of Mark*, p. 201.

³⁹⁶ Oscar Cullmann, *The Johannine circle*, (London: SCM Press, 1976). See also, Brown, *Anchor bible*, p. xlvi

³⁹⁷ The term ‘writer’ is being used in a non-technical way to refer to whoever was responsible for the fourth gospel in the form we have it presently. I am aware of Jerome Neyrey’s distinction between a writer and an author. A writer as someone who takes dictation and is no way responsible for the ideas expressed in the piece of writing and an author “who imagines the project, organizes the materials and establishes the editorial point of view”, see his *The gospel of John*, p. 2. What I mean by the ‘writer’ here is what Neyrey refers to as the

seems to give particular attention to those signs that revolve around the themes of life and light.³⁹⁸ Prevalent also in the fourth gospel are binary concepts, better known as dualities; darkness and light, death and life, above and below, the world and believers, through these concepts, the author of the fourth gospel succinctly and clearly presents his narrative. Almost absent in the fourth gospel are the parables that are the staple of the synoptics, instead we have dialogues which sometimes end up as monologues. The writer of the fourth gospel is about the only one, perhaps with the exception of Luke's gospel, that gives us the reason for his retelling the story of Jesus, which is that faith in Christ may be sustained. With the exception of the gospel of Mark, none of the other two synoptics give a prologue that serves as an introduction to what will unfold in the gospel.³⁹⁹ These peculiarities of the fourth gospel are quite instructive in that they give us hints about the issues that are of concern to the writer of the gospel.

5.1.3. Displacements in the Fourth Gospel

Mention has been made of some sections in the fourth gospel that apparently suffered misplacements. This is sometimes because the setting described does not cohere with previous discussion in the gospel, it betrays some "geographical and chronological jumps".⁴⁰⁰ For instance, the controversy between Jesus and the Jews about his person and mission in chapter 5:16-47 is interrupted by chapter 6:1-7:13, therefore 5:47 should be followed by 7:14-25. Moreover the geographical jump of movement of Jesus from Jerusalem in

author and by this I mean the author as presented to us through the text, which in literary parlance is known as the implied author.

³⁹⁸ C.H. Dodd has observed that the signs performed by the Jesus of the fourth gospel seem to be evenly divided between these two concepts, see *The interpretation of the fourth gospel*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), p. 357

³⁹⁹ The views of scholars differ on what constitutes the prologue and where there is agreement; there is disagreement in terms of its function in the Gospel. Elizabeth Harris in *Prologue and gospel. The theology of the fourth evangelist*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), sets out the historical basis of prologues and gives a survey of scholars' opinions about the prologue in the fourth gospel. In this work, the prologue is considered to be the first eighteen verses of the Gospel.

⁴⁰⁰ Raymond Brown, *The anchor bible*, p. xxiv; See also C.K. Barrett, *The gospel according to St John*, 1st edition, pp. 18ff.

chapter 5 to sea of Galilee in chapter six to Galilee in chapter 7:1-13 and back in Jerusalem in 7:14ff is resolved by such suggested re-ordering. Also notable is the end of chapter 14, where Jesus asks that they leave the scene, yet chapter 15 starts discussion on a new topic till chapter 17. Chapter 20 appears to conclude the gospel, then we have chapter 21 that hangs rather loosely at the end, perhaps, betraying different authorship. There are other observations of repetitions that seem to add no value to the general tenor of the gospel. For this reason, some scholars have recommended some rearrangements of some parts of the gospel.⁴⁰¹ As Leon Morris observes, sometimes in the process of fixing one problem more are created. This study takes the fourth gospel as it appears in its present form without any emendation, following the counsel of Dodd:

...the work lies before us in an order which (apart from insignificant details) does not vary in the textual traditions traceable to an early period...I conceive it to be the duty of an interpreter at least to see what can be done with the document as it has come down to us before attempting to improve on it⁴⁰²

5.1.4. A General Outline of the Fourth Gospel

The fourth gospel neatly divides into five parts:

The prologue (John 1:1-18). These first eighteen verses of the book set the tone for the rest of the gospel. The prologue introduces themes that are further developed in the gospel: themes such as life; light; the eternal origin of *logos*, Jesus, the subject matter of the gospel; his acceptance and rejection; and the role of witnesses among others.

The public ministry of Jesus (1:19–12:50). The public ministry of Jesus spans about sixty percent of the entire gospel. It includes the signs he performed (healings chapters 2, 5, 9; feeding a multitude chapter 6, raising the dead chapter 11 etc); his dialogues with people (inquirer like Nicodemus in chapter

⁴⁰¹ See Brown's recommendation, *The anchor bible*, p.xxxiv ff, Bultmann also proposed some emendation.

⁴⁰² C.H. Dodd, *The interpretation of the fourth gospel*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), p. 290.

3, antagonists chapter 8: 12-30, the confused as in chapter 6); his teachings (Shepherd discourse in chapter 10, his self-conception in chapter 5); different peoples' perception of him (in chapter 9, chapter 12 - triumphal entry to Jerusalem, chapter 6 - people wanted to make him king); and his deeds (upturning the Temple in chapter 2). All these take place in the public domain under the watchful eyes of the ruling elites and the crowds. Some of the actions and dialogues that take place in Jerusalem are couched around the different Jewish feasts like the Passover, the Tabernacles and the Dedication. The signs Jesus performs are his appeal for acceptance by all. While some do believe as a result of his speech and signs, the plot shows an increasing hostility of the ruling elites and the crowds to Jesus and his message. The acceptance-rejection theme hinted at in the prologue is played out resulting in Jesus spending the remaining period with his disciples, thereby making a clear distinction between the world and the believers/disciples.

The farewell discourse chapters (13:1 – 17:26). As Jesus' life on earth draws to a close, he turns his attention to the disciples whom he hopes would continue his message and work. The focus of these chapters is to prepare the disciples for his death and subsequent departure from them. He does this by seeking to foster a sense of service, community and love among them, to encourage and to introduce them to another enabler - the Holy Spirit (parakletos). The discourse ends on the note of his prayer for present and future disciples.

The passion and resurrection narrative (chapters 18:1 – 20:31). This is the climax of the gospel - the political statement he made by and in his 'cleansing' of the Temple in chapter 2, and the conflict that has been building up since chapter 5 is to be 'resolved' in the arrest, suffering, crucifixion, death and burial of Jesus. For the Jews - the ruling elite, it is the end of a non-entity with political pretensions; for Jesus, it is the coming of his hour - his glorification; and for Peter, it is a time of denial. The resurrection - the ultimate sign of life is different from the other signs; for here Jesus is not the agent but the patient,

not the subject but the object and this vindicates him as the Messiah – the one sent by God. Or perhaps more appropriately, the gospel is construing Jesus as both the agent and the patient, both the subject and the object of resurrection, for He is the “resurrection and the life” (11:25), “as the father has life in himself, so he has granted the son to have life in himself (5:26), “destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days” (2:19) as the one sent by God, he fully represents God and is God (1:1).

The epilogue (chapter 21): Rightly seen as the longer ending of the gospel, after an original ending in chapter 20, the restoration of Peter is the main focus of this chapter. The need for the chapter is posited as an explanation of the prominence that Peter later assumed in the Early Church in view of his earlier denial of the Lord. Most significant for our study, however, is the charge Jesus gives Peter to feed his sheep (21:15-17) thereby putting him in the capacity of a shepherd – a leader of his people. He is to be a good shepherd like his master.

5.2. Some socio-cultural elements found in the fourth gospel

5.2.1. Ruling Elite

One of the initial encounters of the reader of the fourth gospel with a body with a semblance of authority in the gospel is a body of Jews known in the fourth gospel as ‘the Jews of Jerusalem’ or sometimes simply referred to as ‘The Jews’. They seem to be responsible or have a sense of responsibility for ensuring order in the society. Evidence for this is the dispatch of priests and Levites to Bethany from Jerusalem by the body to investigate the ministry of John the Baptist: what was he up to, how does he see himself in light of God’s plan for Israel (Jn 1:19ff)? The group appears to be ostensibly careful that the law is observed in the society and for this reason may be thought to be essentially concerned only with religious issues. This reasoning is, however, anachronistic for it assumes a division between the secular and the ‘spiritual’, but in the world of the fourth gospel, the religious, the social, the political, the

economic sectors of life are a unity. Jesus' confrontation with this group at the Temple (Jn 2:14-25) illustrates this unity. Jesus' act of casting out the traders and their wares from the temple was rightly perceived by the Jews of Jerusalem as an affront to their authority and they demanded a sign from him. The temple functioned as the seat of religion, government and economy presided over by the high Priest who is a political as well as a religious figure.⁴⁰³

This group, which, consists of chief priests and Pharisees, are sometimes referred to as Jews or sometimes as individual groups (7:32), evidence of their political influence is that they could muster Temple guards (7:32). While the term 'Jews' is not unambiguous in the fourth gospel for it does not always refer to this ruling/powerful group, see for instance the Jews in 6: 41 that grumbled about Jesus' statement that he had come from heaven later seemed to be identified as his disciples 6:60; the Jews in 8:31 are believers who at the end of the chapter were ready to stone him. There is enough clarity in the text to discern when the gospel is referring to a group that has authority and the general sense of Jews as people or crowds is in view.⁴⁰⁴ Common to the term is that it refers collectively to a group in opposition to Jesus. However, the focus of this section of the work is to delineate the contours of ruling groups and its hierarchy as discernible from the text. As a powerful group, the Jews, sometimes referred to in chapter 9 as Pharisees (see vv 13-16 cf v.18), are responsible for the casting out of the formerly blind man out of the synagogue (9:22, 34). This group does not work alone; it works in conjunction with the Sanhedrin (the Jewish highest ruling body) regarding issues that need the approval of the Roman authorities in the person of its representative, Pilate (11:47ff).

⁴⁰³ N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the people of God*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), p. 225.

⁴⁰⁴ It seems that instances where there are discussions between Jesus and the 'Jews', even when it results in controversies, name calling, attempts at stoning him (Jn 10:19ff) e.t.c., the 'Jews' in view are not the official authorities. However, some of these 'Jews' serve as informants to the authorities (see 11:46 where some of the Jews who had witnessed the raising of Lazarus went to report the sign to the authorities).

5.2.2. Function of Signs

At the temple incident, the Jews of Jerusalem, perceiving an affront to their authority threw down a challenge to Jesus. He was to show them a sign that legitimised his action for that kind of show down he had just exhibited. Signs seemed to function generally as the credentials of someone making a claim to divine support, this occurs several times in the gospel. The foreknowledge displayed by Jesus that he had seen Nathaniel even before Phillip called him changed Nathaniel's scepticism to belief, from 'can anything good come out of Nazareth?' to "you are the son of God, the king of Israel". The signs performed by Jesus in the fourth gospel are meant to confirm his divine authority and origin and generate faith in the observers of the signs. The aim of the fourth gospel in recording the signs is that its readers may come to faith/maintain their faith in Jesus as the Son of God (20:31). That not all that saw or observed the signs believed is also reported in the gospel. However, the fact that both groups acknowledged that 'miracles' took place and attributed such to a power above the natural portrays a worldview that believes in the interplay of the natural and the supernatural. The function of signs in the fourth gospel is to evoke faith in the agent that he was sent by God (9:31-33; 10:38 - "We know that God does not answer sinners, ...if this man was not from God he would not have been able to open my eyes"; "believe for the sake of the works that I am in the Father and the Father is in me"). All these betray a worldview where the physical and the spiritual worlds are in constant dialogue.

5.2.3. The Question of Origin and Group Identity

The prologue of the fourth gospel is couched in a manner to address the question of the origin of Jesus. For the fourth gospel, on the articulation of the divine origin of Jesus hinges the proclamation of Jesus as Messiah. The rest of the gospel at different sections seeks to address this question. Questions posed in 7:41ff "how can the Christ come from Galilee?" and in 6:42ff "is this

not Jesus, the son of Joseph whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, I have come from heaven?" are also pertinent in a culture where the identity of an individual is submerged in group identity. Another expression of group identity mentality is Caiaphas' speech "it is better that one man dies than for the whole nation to perish" (11:50), the group is greater than the individual. Chapter 3 of the gospel introduces us to Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a leader of the Jews, who seems to make personal inquiries about Jesus. Though coming as an individual, he seemed to come as a representative of his group: 'we know that you are a teacher' (v. 2), though it is possible that he is only making reference to the collective knowledge of the group/people without necessarily representing them.

5.2.4. Messianic Expectation

This is palpable in the text. The quick response of Nathaniel in describing Jesus as king of Israel at a first meeting, and also by the crowds that had just had their fill, suggests a number of things. Messianic expectation was rife because of the socio-economic-political realities of the day. Or Jesus was striking a cord within the people that confirms their expectation of what the Messiah would do or be. The climax of this expectation is the account in chapter 12 of Jesus mounting a donkey with the people hailing him as the king of Israel (12:13). Furthermore, it was on the charge of having a political agenda - king of the Jews, that he was crucified. Obviously, to the people whom we found in the fourth gospel there is no separation between the political (this worldly) and the spiritual (the otherworldly). His action in the Temple usually known as the cleansing of the Temple was as much political as spiritual. This type of understanding accords well with the known predilection of Jews, they, unlike the Greeks, do not separate between matter and spirit.

5.2.5. Dualities

The notion of duality found in the gospel is both Jewish, as Qumran writings⁴⁰⁵ testify, and strategic. Strategic because it emphasizes the transcendence of God to the world he had made: light - darkness, life - death, heaven - earth, it also made necessary the agency of Jesus as God-man, the broker, the intermediary between God and humanity.⁴⁰⁶ This is why the signs were necessary - to attest to divine support for Jesus and his mission and thence his (Jesus') ability to mediate the goods of the kingdom - eternal life. This resonates with the patron-client relationships that are characteristic of Mediterranean societies and the Roman Empire in particular. Roman patron-client relationship is a fictive kinship relationship between a patron who has access to resources and a client who entrusts himself to the care and protection of that patron. It is a reciprocal relationship between two people of unequal resources with duties and obligations that ensure the continuity of the relationship. A detour into a description of Roman patron-client relationship may serve to illuminate our understanding of Jesus of the fourth gospel.

5.3. The Political Setting of the Fourth Gospel

The political setting of the events described in the fourth gospel and the writing of the same is the Roman Empire, where Rome, an overlord, rules the provincials such as Judea and its environs by means of client-kings. These are kings who got their position by virtue of being protégés of the Roman emperor. The Roman Empire lasted from 27 BC to AD 476, the peak of which was from 27 BC till AD 235.⁴⁰⁷ Even the latest date projected for the writing of

⁴⁰⁵ See 1QS 3:13-4:26 with its mention of sons/Angel/Prince of light and darkness. The War Scrolls also attest to same usage, see 1QM 1:1-15.

⁴⁰⁶ Ronald Piper, 'Glory, honor and patronage in the fourth gospel. Understanding the doxa given to disciples in John 17' in John.J. Pilch (ed.), *Social scientific models for interpreting the bible*, (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 281-309.

⁴⁰⁷ See Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller (eds.), *The Roman empire. Economy, society and culture*, (London: Duckworth, 1987), p. 1

the fourth gospel by scholars⁴⁰⁸ is well covered by this period. However, it is pertinent to note that the groundwork for the socio-cultural context of the empire is traceable to the Roman Republic a period between 508 BC to 27 BC.

5.3.1. Patron-client relationships in the Roman Empire⁴⁰⁹

5.3.1.1. *Historical background:* The establishment of patron-client relationship is attributed to Romulus, the first king of Rome⁴¹⁰ who was said to have “had the common people enrolled as clients of the leading men”.⁴¹¹ A deeply stratified society where the nobility, the landowners were distinct and separate from the common people, who worked the land, patron-client relationship was a means of linking the two groups. Once a patron has adopted someone as a client, this relationship is passed on to the generations to come, so that it becomes hereditary. Such social relations had the support of the law such that a patron or his family could not testify against a client or his relations in court and vice versa. This means that the law formally recognized patron-client relationship, and patrons who did not honor their relationship to their clients were liable to punishment.⁴¹² The relationship is characterized by mutual obligation and mutual reciprocity tied to the honor/shame of the individuals/families concerned. This relationship was

⁴⁰⁸ The dates projected for the writing of the fourth gospel are: Barrett proffers a date not later than A.D. 140 and not earlier than A.D. 90 (109), while Raymond Brown prefers an A.D 90 – A.D. 100 date as the final form for the writing of the gospel (p. LXXXVI), Keener accepts a date in the nineties (p. 142).

⁴⁰⁹ I am aware of the work of Claude Eilers *Roman patrons of Greek cities*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), where he distinguishes between a social-science depiction of patron-client relationship and a strictly Roman conception of patron-client relationship. Jonathan Marshall in his *Jesus, patrons, and benefactors: Roman Palestine and the Gospel of Luke*, (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009) builds upon the work of Eilers. Having read these works, I understand their point of view but found that they have not proposed any other framework for conceptualizing personal patronage. Marshall does suggest using the term *reciprocity*, but this is a blanket term that blurs the distinctive nuance of patronage. For this reason I am using the patron-client model of the social scientific approach. I shall, however point out areas where Eilers disagree when necessary.

⁴¹⁰ Karl-J Hölkeskamp, ‘History and Collective Memory in the Middle Republic’ in Nathan Rosenstein and Robert Morstein-Marx (eds), *A companion to the Roman Republic* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), p. 491.

⁴¹¹ Deniaux, ‘Patronage’ in Nathan Rosenstein and Robert Morstein-Marx (eds) *A companion to the Roman Republic*, p. 401 citing Cicero’s *Republic* 2:16.

⁴¹² Deniaux, ‘Patronage’, p. 401.

intricately woven into politics where someone seeking to run for an office was expected to canvas for votes from individuals on the strength of his past achievements. This brought the patron-client relationship into the public domain; for it was on the strength of his attested reputation in delivering services or help that a patron could be trusted to do more in the future as a magistrate or holder of any public office. However, whatever were the historical antecedents for patronage among Romans under the Republic, times had evidently changed in Imperial Rome.

Imperial Rome was characterized by the following:

- (a) The urban poor in Rome were so numerous that each having a personal relationship with so few patrons (aristocrats) was just not feasible.
- (b) The state increasingly took over the responsibility of patrons such as distributing resources such as land and corn thereby making the role or function of patrons less relevant.
- (c) The introduction of secret ballot system of voting freed the client from publicly registering his support.⁴¹³
- (d) Concentration of power in one person - the emperor and not in a host of senators.⁴¹⁴

However, without the stimulus of elections and the need to vote, patron-client relationship still persisted for a number of reasons:

- (a) The economic hardship brought about by the imposition of taxation on peasants and the urban poor created the need to have a patron.⁴¹⁵
- (b) Lack of bureaucratic structure and the need for those in the periphery to access the resources that are concentrated in the centre made patron client relationship a necessity.
- (c) The motivation on the part of patrons to encourage the patron client relationship was that it made them visible to the centre of power. Since the

⁴¹³Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, 'Patronage in Roman Society. From Republic to Empire', in Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (ed) *Patronage in ancient society* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 70

⁴¹⁴ Wallace, 'Patronage in Roman Society', p. 78

⁴¹⁵ Tricia Gates Brown, *Spirit in the writings of John. Johannine pneumatology in social-scientific perspective*, (London: T&T Clark International, 2003), p. 37

emperor wanted to maximize the gifts he distributes, bestowing honor on a person of a large following implies that more people get to know about the deed and his popularity thereby soars. For this is the whole point of the relationship, that the good deeds of the patron be brought into public knowledge for this is where honor is earned. Then what are patron-client relationships?

5.3.1.2. *Definitions:* Patron-client relationship, according to Boissevain, “is an asymmetrical, quasi-moral relation between a person (the patron) who directly provides protection and assistance (patronage), and / or who influences persons (clients) who depend on him for such assistance. Clients, in turn, provide loyalty and support when called on to do so”.⁴¹⁶

5.3.1.3. *Key features of Personal Patronage:*

- (a) Reciprocity: This means that the relationship is based on mutual reciprocity. At stake is the honor of each party in a context where being at the receiving end is considered shameful.
- (b) Asymmetry: This basically means that the relationship is between two unequal parties. Inequality is in terms of status and in terms of the goods that are exchanged.
- (c) Personal: The relationship in view is between two persons. Some scholars prefer to refer to it as dyadic relationship. This is in contrast to relationships between an individual and a group.
- (d) Voluntary: The relationship is entered to voluntarily, usually at the initiative of the client. Eilers is quite insistent that for it to be a true patron-client relationship the client takes the initiative in asking to entrust himself to the patron and the patron must consciously accept.

⁴¹⁶ Jeremy Boissevain, ‘When the saints go marching out: reflections on the decline of patronage in Malta’ in Gellner and Waterbury’s *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies* (London: Duckworth, 1977), p. 81.

This definitive act of entrusting oneself has been referred to as *applicatio/deditio*.⁴¹⁷

5.3.1.4. *Types of Patronage*:⁴¹⁸

*Public patronage*⁴¹⁹ – in which a patron became the protector and benefactor of a group (e.g., a craftsman’s guild, a religious association, even an entire city); such patronage usually involved large gifts of money for public buildings, alimentary schemes, public entertainment, etc, but could also involve various forms of protection and advocacy.

Personal patronage – in which a patron aided an individual of lower status through money, gifts, dinner invitations, helps with lawsuits or business affairs, and other forms of advice and protection. Patron-client relationships might be maintained through several generations of the same families.⁴²⁰

5.3.1.5. *Obligations and Duties of Patrons*: Offering legal assistance, legal advice, and legal protection was the “most important duty of a patron”⁴²¹, for private suits and public trials were quite common in the Roman society. Since the Roman law forbade payment for legal assistance, one’s “knowledge of the law, eloquence, and constant accessibility”⁴²² was a sure means to shore up one’s credentials as a patron “to recruit new clients and to encourage new exchanges of services”.⁴²³ The effect is that there is an increase to the

⁴¹⁷ Claude Eilers, *Roman patrons*, p. 32. See also Deniaux ‘Patronage’. P. 404.

⁴¹⁸ Some scholars, like Deniaux, have often depicted the relationship between a freed man and his master as a form of personal patronage, Eilers disagrees with this for it can hardly be said to be a voluntary relationship - one of the conditions for the occurrence of personal patronage relationship.

⁴¹⁹ Both Jonathan Marshall in his *Jesus, patrons, and benefactors*, pp. 47-49, and Stephen Joubert for different, though related reasons consider this as *euergetism* or act of benefaction and not *patronium*, see Stephen Joubert’s *Paul as benefactor: Reciprocity, strategy and theological reflection in Paul’s collection*, (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), pp. 63-66.

⁴²⁰ Eilers moderates this view by saying that though there are instances where patron-client relationship passes from father to son, but this is not automatic and is not obvious from epigraphic inscriptions. Rather, “the Gracchan *lex repetundarum* assumes that the descendants of patrons and clients would remain amiable: this is why they cannot act as prosecutors or witnesses even if they were not themselves patrons or clients”, see his *Roman patrons*, p. 79.

⁴²¹ Deniaux, ‘Patronage’, p. 407; see also Eilers, *Roman patrons*, pp. 88-91.

⁴²² Deniaux, ‘Patronage’, p. 408

⁴²³ Deniaux, ‘Patronage’, p. 408

individual's prestige as he acquires more following because of his legal competence. The implication of this is that more people are under obligation to him to reciprocate his good gesture in the short or long run. This can easily translate into electoral support should the patron decide to run for public office. Distance was no hindrance to one's discharge of one's duty as a patron as he/she could write letters of recommendation known as *commendatio* on behalf of his client to those who can act as the judge or advocate in such suits. By this means a patron could well serve clients or provinces that were physically far from him. In imperial Rome, the duties of patrons extended beyond legal assistance to encompass all of life: "help their clients to procure citizenship, or get assigned to military commands or governmental offices, provide them with resources such as money, land or state-subsidized food and connections to important people".⁴²⁴

5.3.1.6. *Obligations and Duties of a Client*: The obligations that a client has towards a patron are all encompassing and not restricted to any one aspect of life. In the absence of a regular police force, clients provided security for their patrons.⁴²⁵ In times of drought or scarcity of grain, the clients of a patron would provide enough grain so as to bring down the high cost of the same in the city the patron rules over⁴²⁶, "they contributed to the dowry of the patron's daughter, they participated in collecting ransom for a patron who had been captured or a fine levied on a patron who had lost a suit, and they shared his expenses of public office".⁴²⁷ Gratitude is the most single obligation of a client and publicizing the good deeds of the patron best does this. The expression of gratitude is found in stone inscriptions where the patron is

⁴²⁴ Brown, *Spirit in the writings of John*, p.39. Eilers is of the view that the act of getting appointments or government positions is properly known as *suffragium* and appears sceptical to regard this as part of patron-client relationship, see his *Roman Patrons*, pp. 4-5

⁴²⁵ Deniaux, 'Patronage', p. 411

⁴²⁶ Deniaux, 'Patronage' p. 411

⁴²⁷ Deniaux, 'Patronage', p. 402.

eulogized and his good deeds listed for public knowledge⁴²⁸. In addition, clients leave legacies for their patrons in their wills.⁴²⁹

5.3.1.7. *Categorizations of Patrons: Patrons and Brokers*: Jeremy Boissevain's distinguishes between "two categories of patronal resources"⁴³⁰:

The first are resources, such as land, jobs, scholarship funds, specialized knowledge which [the patron] controls directly. The second are strategic contacts with other people who control such resources directly or have access to such persons. The former may be called *first order resources*, the latter *second order resources*. Persons who dispense first order resources may be called *patrons*. Those who dispense second order resources are *brokers*.⁴³¹

Brown elaborates on this: "a broker facilitates communication between a patron who has specific resources and a client who needs the resources which that patron possesses".⁴³² To fulfil this function, a broker must represent the interests of both parties. He is in a unique position, though he serves as a sub-patron to the client, he very well cannot take the place of the ultimate patron.

5.4. The Nature of the Roman Society

By virtue of its location in the Mediterranean society, imperial Rome and its provinces subscribed to certain conceptions of how their world ran. Some of the conceptions that underlie their assumptions and behavior are these:

Group-orientation: This depicts a culture where individuals understand themselves/ define themselves and are defined in turn by others in relation to the group to which they belong.⁴³³

⁴²⁸ Brown, *Spirit in the writings of John*, p. 39

⁴²⁹ Richard Saller, *Personal patronage under the early empire*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 71.

⁴³⁰ Saller, *Personal patronage*, p. 71.

⁴³¹ Jeremy Boissevain, *Friends of friends. Networks, manipulators and coalitions* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974), pp. 147-148.

⁴³² Brown, *Spirit in the writings of John*, p. 29

⁴³³ Phillip Esler "The Mediterranean context of early Christianity" in Phillip F. Esler *The Early Christian world* vol 1 (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p.16.

Honor-Shame culture: Honor is an individual's/ group's sense of worth or value according to the prescriptions of a society. Public acclaim of honor is integral or else the claim to honor is false and leads to shame. So as Malina says "honor is public reputation".⁴³⁴ All activities are geared towards the increase or one's honor or obtaining honor.⁴³⁵ Acts that go against the grain of the society are sanctioned by being regarded shameful by the society in public and by subjecting the 'offenders' to some form of sanctions.

Limited goods worldview: This worldview posits that the amount of desirable goods or honor in society exist in limited quantity. One, therefore, gains honor or goods at the risk of depriving someone else.⁴³⁶

5.4.1. Some Features of the Roman Society

5.4.1.1. *Hierarchical*: Juridically speaking, at the apex of the Roman Empire, is the Emperor, then is the Senate, followed by the Equestrians, the Decurions who are the top hundred men of a city, below them are the urban plebian, followed by the rural peasantry, and lastly are the ex-slaves followed by the slaves.⁴³⁷ The differences in rank/status are evinced by the clothing of each. The senators' and their sons' clothing/*toga* had broad purple stripes while that of Equestrians was narrow with gold rings on their fingers. Male citizens wore plain *togas*.⁴³⁸

5.4.1.2. *Display of rank/status*: Rank or status makes no sense without its display. Two domains where status/rank is displayed are public functions e.g. the amphitheatre, public banquets; and private houses. In the latter, status is displayed by the number and quality of callers at the morning greeting,

⁴³⁴ Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social-science commentary on the gospel of John*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), p. 121.

⁴³⁵ Esler, 'The Mediterranean context', pp.16-18.

⁴³⁶ Esler, 'The Mediterranean context', p. 18-19, see also See Bruce Malina's 'wealth and poverty in the New Testament and its world', *Interpretation 41:4* (1987), pp. 354-367.

⁴³⁷ Keith Hopkins 'Elite Mobility in the Roman Empire' in M.I. Finley (ed) *Studies in ancient society* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), p.103.

⁴³⁸Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller, *The Roman empire*, p.116

salutatio where “clients and lesser friends of the great and powerful congregate at the doors of their patrons in the early morning to pay their respects in return for food, money, clothing and other favors”.⁴³⁹ Another occasion is attendance at private dinners where guests are seated according to their rank/status and “sometimes the quality of food and drink were chosen to correspond to each guest’s status”.⁴⁴⁰

5.4.1.3. *Ingratitude*: Ingratitude is considered a grievous sin among the Roman elites. Seneca was reported to have so implied by stating that the crime of ingratitude was worse than being a traitor, tyrant or homicide “Homicides, tyrants, traitors there always will be; but worse than all these is the crime of ingratitude”.⁴⁴¹

5.5. Hints of Patron-Client relationships in the Fourth Gospel⁴⁴²

The social milieu of the writing of the fourth gospel is well acquainted with patron-client relationships.⁴⁴³ This relationship is evident between a Roman citizen and individuals or provinces and observable in the many epigraphic inscriptions scattered throughout the empire.⁴⁴⁴ The synoptic gospels,

⁴³⁹ Garnsey and Saller, *The Roman empire*, p.122.

⁴⁴⁰ *ibid*

⁴⁴¹ (Garnsey and Saller, *The Roman empire*, p. 148 quoting (*Ben.1.10.4*))

⁴⁴² See Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social-science commentary*, pp. 116-119.

⁴⁴³ While this work makes no claim as to the particular location of the writing of the Fourth gospel, though aware that some scholars like C.H. Dodd have suggested Ephesus in line with the traditional view, see his *The interpretation of the fourth gospel*, p. 9; In agreement with Richard J. Cassidy, I choose to take the broader context of the Roman Empire as the context of writing, see Richard J. Cassidy *John’s Gospel in new perspective*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1992), p. 1.

Patron-client relationship is not the preserve of traditional societies, though indeed it exists there. Modern societies like the Japanese society, the former USSR, and even democracies such as the U.S. have been found to exhibit in different degrees patron-client relationships or addenda of such. See this discussion in S.N. Eisenstadt and L. Roniger’s *Patrons, clients and friends. Interpersonal relations and the structure of trust in society*. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

⁴⁴⁴ See S.N. Eisenstadt and L. Roniger’s *Patrons, clients and friends*, pp. 52-53; Jonathan Marshall has looked at various towns and cities in Palestine for evidence from inscriptions of benefaction and patronage. He has clearly found evidence that in varying degrees benefaction (which in social-scientific terms is patronage) would have been familiar to residents of Palestine. Moreover, their Herodian rulers, especially Herod I and to lesser degrees Herod Antipas, Phillip the tetrarch and Agrippa I made constructions and minted coins in honor of

especially the gospel of Luke, capture the social context in which the events described in all the gospels thrived. One such story is in Luke 7:1-6 and is about a Roman centurion that sends a group of Jewish elders to plead on his behalf for Jesus to come heal his dear servant. The Jewish leaders recounted the good deeds of the centurion saying, “this man deserves to have you do this because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue”. Jesus did not question the appropriateness of their request and was on his way to the centurion’s place. So the Jewish leaders act as brokers to access Jesus’ power while they in turn received protection and benefaction from him. However, a similar story in the fourth gospel, John 4:47ff, presents the royal official approaching Jesus without any broker. This signals the position of the gospel to brokerage, no other brokerage is encouraged between humans and God except Jesus’. In addition, access to Jesus needs no brokerage as we shall find out in John 10:10.

In recapitulation, patron-client relationship basically depicts a relationship between two parties of unequal social status. It is characterized by reciprocity and sustained by a sense of obligation and trust. It is a means for the allocation of resources outside the patron’s familial and kinship ties and in a sense creates a fictive kinship relationship. Some modern religious contexts continue to lend credence to this relationship, especially the understanding of saints as patrons, so much so that the two words are coterminous in such contexts.⁴⁴⁵ In modern societies, there has been a spill over of this relationship into politics, leading to the ideas of ‘god-fatherism’⁴⁴⁶ among other things.

their various patrons. See Marshall’s discussion in chapters 2-3 of his *Jesus, patrons, and benefactors*.

⁴⁴⁵ Eisenstadt and Roniger, *Patrons, clients and friends*, p. 66.

⁴⁴⁶ The idea of god-fatherism was originally couched in religious contexts where a fictive familial relationship is created between the child of a client and a patron. The patron acts in the capacity of a benefactor to the child all through life see Eisenstadt and Roniger, *Patrons, clients and friends*, pp. 76-77. Ayokunle Omobowale calls a Yoruba political patron *baba isale* ‘father at the base’ see ‘Clientelism and social structure: an analysis of patronage in Yoruba social thought’, *Afrika Spectrum* 43 (2008) 2: 215.

The client depends on the patron for tangible benefits⁴⁴⁷ while the patron expects gratitude and loyalty from the client. This neat categorization, however, oversimplifies the fact that the relationship is “legally unstructured, ambiguous from a conventional point of view and open to conflicting interpretations and to instrumental manipulations”.⁴⁴⁸ Patron-client relationship portrays a context where the flow of resources is controlled and yet open as Eisenstadt and Roniger state:

It is, indeed, this combination of the openness of access to markets with the continuous, semi-institutionalised attempts to limit such free access that constitutes the crux of the clientelistic model.⁴⁴⁹

The fourth gospel does show traces that an understanding of patron-client relationship is one of the assumptions that underlie its writing and, therefore, its understanding. In addition, the Jesus of the fourth gospel, it seems, advocates a complex web of patron-client relationship with his followers as a broker for his Father. We shall discuss these two positions in turn. Right from chapter one, we see a castigation of the ‘world’ as an entity that failed to do obeisance to its benefactor, λόγος. Extending the Roman concept of patron-client, we could say that the fact of creation has made λόγος a patron⁴⁵⁰ in Roman parlance and the world that he made his client. The reciprocity and the sense of obligation on the part of the world that should characterize the relationship is lacking as verses ten and eleven tersely state “He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him”. The tenor for the conflict between the world and λόγος incarnate that would soon pervade the gospel is hereby set. From the

⁴⁴⁷ Tangible benefits could range from employment opportunities, provision of land for farming, provision of resources to cushion the effects of drought or crop failure to defense in court, obtaining positions in party politics, obtaining recommendations to higher authorities. See S.N. Eisenstadt and L. Roniger’s *Patrons, clients and friends*.

⁴⁴⁸ Eisenstadt and Roniger, *Patron, clients and friends*, p. 53

⁴⁴⁹ Eisenstadt and Roniger, *Patrons, clients and friends*, p. 168

⁴⁵⁰ Patron here in the sense of a broker, for he came to broker peace between the creator and the world. In the prayer of chapter 17, Jesus continues extending a hand to the world to be reconciled with its maker, see John 17: 21, 23 “...so that the world may believe that you have sent me”

perspective of a patron-client relationship, the blame is squarely put at the doorstep of the world – it was guilty of ingratitude – an unforgivable sin according to Cicero. In verse twelve a contrast is seen as a group emerges that is in the world but not of the world “to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God”. For the group that accepts and believes in λόγος, the patron-client relationship brought about by creation deepens to something else which would later unfold in the gospel – “I no longer call you servants...I have called you friends” (Jn 15:15) – yet the patron-client system remains still intact for “no one gets to the father except by me”.⁴⁵¹ This curious distinction between servants/clients and friends is instructive of the disrepute to which the term *cliens* had fallen. In fact some scholars have denied the prevalence of patron-client relationship on account of the fact that the term was not used in literature. But as Saller has pointed out, since “*cliens* certainly carried connotations of social inferiority, and, as a result, aristocratic authors most often used it with reference to “humble men”.⁴⁵² Saller notes that “some Romans think it as better as death to have accepted a patron or to be called clients” for this reason the term *amici* (friends) was more widely used. As Saller puts it quite succinctly “though willing to extend the courtesy of the label *amicus* to some of their inferiors, the status-conscious Romans did not allow the courtesy to obscure the relative social standings of the two parties. On the contrary, *amici* were subdivided into categories: *superiors*, *pares* and *inferiors* (and then lower down the hierarchy, humble *clientes*)”.⁴⁵³ A Latin translation would render friends as *amici* and this would highlight all these possibilities of friendship among equals, or with a superior or an inferior.

⁴⁵¹ Phillip’s attempt to bypass Jesus and have a direct access to the father is denied (see John 14: 8-9).

⁴⁵² Saller, ‘Patronage and friendship in early Imperial Rome: drawing the distinction’ in Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (ed) *Patronage in ancient society*, 1989, p. 52. Also see Deniaux’s explanation on p. 403 of ‘Patronage’.

⁴⁵³ Saller, ‘Patronage and friendship’, p. 52.

5.5.1. The 'calling' of the disciples

The fourth gospel presents a unique Roman patron-client-inclined method of the 'calling' of the disciples that is quite unlike the account of the synoptics. While in the account of the synoptic gospels, we see Jesus calling on certain people to become his disciples, the fourth gospel shows the would-be disciples, with the exception of Phillip, showing up literally at the 'doorstep' of Jesus in a true clientelistic fashion. According to Deniaux, an individual could make a request to enter a state of clientship voluntarily, such a request is called *applicatio or commendatio*, which means an act of entrusting oneself. Andrew Drummond concurs with this view by saying that patron client relationships usually occur at the instigation of the client.⁴⁵⁴ The uniqueness of the 'calling' of the disciples is in the fact that it was at the recommendation of someone: Andrew came to Jesus at the recommendation of John the Baptist, Peter came at the recommendation of Andrew, Nathaniel came at the recommendation of Phillip. In this manner, they served as brokers linking their 'clients' to the patron, Jesus.

5.5.2. Other Patrons/ Brokers in the Fourth Gospel?

The first two chapters of the fourth gospel seem to identify other would-be patrons and, the gospel in later chapters puts such claims to rest. Perhaps, the strongest possible claims are John, Moses, Abraham and Mary as brokers.⁴⁵⁵ The fourth gospel goes to great lengths to demonstrate that John is not the patron; at best he appears as a broker that introduces clients to the patron (Jesus) and then fades out of the scene. John the Baptist is described merely as a witness to the light and not the light himself (Jn 1: 8). John the Baptist of the

⁴⁵⁴ See Andrew Drummond, 'Early Roman Clientes' in Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (ed) *Patronage in Ancient Society*, 1989, p. 101; Also see Deniaux, 'Patronage' p. 405. However, Tricia Brown notes that it is quite honorable for patrons to seek out clients, Tricia Gates Brown, *Spirit in the writings of John*, p. 110. Claude Eilers is quite clear that "patron-client relationship was formed at the request of the client, see his *Roman Patrons of Greek Cities*, p.25.

⁴⁵⁵ There seems to be some minor claims as in Pilate's assertion that he had power to release or crucify Jesus (Jn 19:10). For the Samaritan woman it would be Jacob "are you greater than our father Jacob?" Jn 4: 12

fourth gospel openly declares his inferior position that he is not the patron/Christ (Jn 1: 15, 20 26-27, 29). The demotion of John as a would-be patron is complete when two of his disciples transfer their allegiance to Jesus (Jn 1: 37). At best, "John is, in a sense, sent from God as a broker. He brokers access to Jesus by revealing him to Israel".⁴⁵⁶ But once he accomplishes this he fades out of the scene, the fact that he does not continue as a broker, implies that he was, as he called himself, a voice and not a broker.

The mother of Jesus, as she is referred to, is not so prominent in the fourth gospel.⁴⁵⁷ We find her in the second chapter when Jesus performs his first miracle and then at the cross towards the end of the gospel. In Cana, Jesus and his disciples attend a wedding along with Mary his mother. At a critical point in the course of the wedding program wine finished. Mary, serving as a broker, informs Jesus of the shortage of wine with the expectation that he would fix the problem. Jesus asserts his independence as one who does what he wants at his own time with the famous "my time has not yet come" (Jn 2:4). At the end of the day, Mary's brokerage effort seemed to pay off as Jesus did fix the problem. A good question would be: would Jesus have changed water to wine without the prompting of Mary? Most probably yes for the few other signs performed by Jesus happened without the intercession of Mary. But, perhaps like John, hers was just to introduce Jesus to the scene and fade away. Depicting the roles of John and Mary as that of brokers may not be acceptable, for brokers are the middle-men or connecting link between clients and patrons. The clients have no direct access to the patron whose help they need. Someone who knows both the client and the would-be patron steps in and provides the missing link. In such a case, the broker acts as a sub-patron to the client and the client would do well to inform as many as care what the broker has done. So the relationship between the client and the sub-patron/broker is not expected to terminate after he has introduced the client

⁴⁵⁶ Brown, *Spirit in the writings of John*, p. 80.

⁴⁵⁷As we have noted the Fourth gospel much like Mark does not give an account of the birth of Jesus, an account that would have enhanced the status of Mary as the mother of the savior.

to the patron.⁴⁵⁸ In our reading of the fourth gospel both John and Mary fade away after they have introduced the clients to Jesus. In the case of Mary, our next meeting with her is at the cross and it is now Jesus' turn to introduce her to a patron: the disciple at the cross, who then took her into his own home (Jn 19: 26-27). On the other hand, Jesus is the only credible broker, according to the fourth gospel, for he is the only one who knows the father well enough to guarantee access to him and his blessings.

Abraham is touted as a broker by the Jews especially in chapter eight of the gospel in light of Jesus' claim to set free anyone whom he wishes free. The Jews claimed a great pedigree in Abraham and therefore needed no freedom, for they have it already, they claim. The dialogue degenerated into some name-calling and the people took offence at Jesus' 'arrogance' so much so that they asked if he thought that he was greater than Abraham. Jesus' assertion that he existed before Abraham led to an attempt to stone him. In this way the fourth gospel lays to rest the claims of the Jews to have Abraham as a broker, for one greater than Abraham has come.

Moses is a more formidable contender for the role of a broker as portrayed by the Pharisees. Right from the first chapter of the fourth gospel the scene is set for what would later follow in the gospel. Moses is compared with Jesus in a contrastive manner: "the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (Jn 1:17). In an apparent repudiation of the fame of Moses as one "who spoke face to face with God" (Exodus 33: 11), the one who saw the back parts of God (Exodus 33: 21-23), the fourth gospel says that no one has ever seen God except the only begotten one of God who lies at the

⁴⁵⁸ Among the Yoruba, brokers are still expected to be respected though in a real sense he/she might not be able to break the relationship between the client and the patron. However, differences abound as Eisenstadt observes that patron-client relationship in Thailand is quite fragile as "clients did not hesitate to change their allegiance if their patrons were unable or unwilling to provide them with access to resources", p. 137.

bosom of the father.⁴⁵⁹ In a context where eyewitnesses' account is highly valued in judging matters, the writer of the fourth gospel suggests that the profile of Jesus as a broker is more credible than Moses'. Yet this is just but a hint of how the matter may be resolved later, for the disciples of Moses (Jn. 9:28) carried on the contention until they got Jesus killed.

Instances abound in the fourth gospel where the prominence of Moses in the thinking of the people is demonstrated. After the sign of feeding the multitude as recorded in chapter 6, the people come again looking for Jesus. Knowing that their eagerness to find him was prompted more by the food they had eaten, Jesus asks the people to seek more than ordinary food but "food that lasts till eternity" (verse 27), which he can give them. The people ask for a sign that would make them believe in him, they then made reference to their forefathers' eating of bread in the desert. Jesus picks up their allusion to Moses as the one that fed their forefathers with manna and makes a claim that he is greater than Moses for he now qualifies the bread he is talking about as the true bread.⁴⁶⁰ He drives home his claims, later on in the chapter, that what he offers is very different from what Moses had offered their forefathers, for while their forefathers ate and died, what he offers (which is himself) bestows eternal life on the eater such that the eater does not die at all. In another instance, in the course of the dispute over the healing of the man born blind in chapter 9, the central position of Moses in the religious leaders'

⁴⁵⁹ Draper has argued that the one Moses saw was the Logos (which became incarnate as Jesus), for "no one could see God and live" (Exod 33:20), see J.A. Draper, 'Practising the presence of God in John'. Ritual use of scripture and the eidos theou in John 5:37', *Orality, literacy, and colonialism in antiquity*, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), p. 164; See also, Draper, "'The Law came through Moses. Grace and truth through Jesus Christ: (John 1:17). Moses and the Sar Harpanim in Jewish mystical speculation', a paper given at the NTSSA conference at Hamanskraal, April 2008; Draper, "'Ils virent Dieu, puis ils mangèrent et burent" (Exode 24:11). L'immanence mystique du dieu transcendant dans la création, la théophanie et l'incarnation dans "l'étrange" Jésus de l'évangile de Jean', in Baudouin Decharneux et Fabien Nobilio (éds.), *Figures de l'étrangeté dans l'Évangile de Jean*, (Mons: EME Publishing, 2007), pp. 237-258 (translation by J.A. Draper)

⁴⁶⁰ It is likely that the people sensed that the sign of multiplying bread in a remote place is a parallel to Moses' feeding of the Israelites in the desert. Therefore, Jesus' sign was not unique enough, they needed something more authentic before they could repose confidence in him or give him a claim greater than Moses'.

psyche is explicitly stated. The Jews, as they are referred to in this chapter, retorted, at the taunt of the former blind man, that they were Moses' disciples, for they knew that God spoke to Moses but as for Jesus, they did not know his origin. The highlight of the signs performed by Jesus and which ultimately sealed his fate before the religious leaders was his raising of Lazarus from the dead. The significance of the signs is borne out by Jesus' reference to the fact that he performed signs which no one else ever performed (Jn 15: 24), this compares favourably with the statement of the formerly blind man "nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind" (Jn 9: 32), yet they refused to believe in him. Jesus notes the important position Moses holds in the theological discourse of the people: in the controversy over the Sabbath, Jesus appeals to the Jewish practice of circumcising children on the Sabbath, seemingly breaking one law to fulfil another in honor of Moses (Jn 7:22-23). In another instance, Jesus renders invalid their appeal or recourse to Moses, when he says that Moses stands as their accuser and not their mentor for Moses foretold Jesus, so their rejection of Jesus was tantamount to their rejection of Moses' writings (Jn 5: 45-47).

In all the instances cited above, where John, Mary, Abraham and Moses acted as would-be brokers, the writer of the fourth gospel affirms Jesus as the only credible broker. Arguing from another perspective, Buck says "John's extreme christology---*christus solus*----allowed for no other centers of interest, let alone rival sects. In his zeal, John was suspicious even of the figure of the Mother of Christ, who later developed into the Mother of God".⁴⁶¹ But a close reading of the gospel may lead us to consider whether the writer of the fourth gospel is putting forth Jesus as a patron or as a broker and to this question we now turn.

⁴⁶¹ Harry M. Buck, 'Redactions of the fourth gospel and the mother of Jesus' in David E. Aune (ed) *Studies in New Testament and Early Christian literature. Essays in honor of Allen P. Wikgren* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972), p. 172.

5.5.3. The Role of Jesus: a Broker or a Patron?

Having clearly portrayed Jesus as a patron, we need to know the position that the writer of the fourth gospel allocates to Jesus. Is Jesus a broker, a link between clients and a patron or is he a patron in his own right? This may sound tautological because a broker remains a patron to the client, but the point to be made is that a broker is not the ultimate goal sought in the relationship, but is only the gateway to the patron. While clients will do well to maintain their relationship with the broker but in the actual sense of the relationship, is the broker necessary for the continuation of the relationship between the patron and the client once he has facilitated the relationship?

The ambiguity that characterizes Jesus' role as a broker or as a patron is found right from the first verse of the fourth gospel. The relationship between *λόγος*, who is also referred to as God, and God (a distinct being) is not explained but assumed in this verse. As noted above, *λόγος* is a patron to the world by virtue of creation, an interesting twist comes in verse 13 of the first chapter for those who accept the patronage of the *word* are curiously not called the children of the *word* but the children of God. Verse 14 explicitly states that the *word* having become enfleshed has his origin in God. Perhaps this is a key to understanding the concept of patron/broker role of Jesus in the fourth gospel, the *word's* descent to the world puts him in a role that affords him to be the link between God and humanity for he now shares a relationship with both parties (resonates with Hebrews 5). As the *word* in the bosom of the Father, he was undoubtedly a patron to the world but having become a citizen in the world of flesh and blood (though not of the world), he is able to serve as a broker to the unknowable Father, who is the true patron. But by being a broker does this make him cease being a patron? The relationship between the enfleshed word and God is clearly portrayed in verse 16 of chapter 2 as a son-father relationship. The patron-client relationship in Republican Rome was a family affair. If a patron accepts someone as a client, the generations after that patron subsist in such a

relationship with the client and his family. Reading through the fourth gospel one observes that Jesus is unequivocally presented as a broker in the fourth gospel. A broker, as defined by Boissevain,⁴⁶² dispenses “second order resources” for he/she is in “strategic contact with other people who control such resources directly or have access to such persons”. Ultimate patrons on the other hand have direct control, over the resources. A broker is effective to broker goods and services to his clients based on the degree of his intimate relations with the patron. To this end, the Jesus of the fourth gospel makes reference to himself as someone sent by God, as someone who speaks what God asked him to speak (12:49), as someone who obeys his father, as someone intimate with God, God shows him everything (5:20) everything the Father has belongs to him (16:15). His intimate relationship with God is consistently presented throughout the whole gospel. He is the one who had been with God at the beginning, as *logos*, he is God’s agent in creation, he is the one that was from the bosom/side of the Father (1:18). On account of this he is matchless: Moses could not compete with him (1:17), Abraham paled to insignificance before him: “before Abraham was I am” (8:58). Nicodemus acknowledged him as the teacher come from God for no one could do the miracles which he did unless God was with him (3:2). The Samaritan woman’s attempt to compare him with Jacob who dug a well for them was met with a greater claim “the water I will give you will become a well in you springing to eternal life” (4:14). The man born-blind of chapter 9 asserts “nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind, if this man were not from God he could do nothing” (9: 32-33). The question about the origin of Jesus baffled his detractors among other things, “we know God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don’t even know where he comes from” (9: 29). This question will occur again and again in the fourth gospel. This is one reason why the issue of believing in Jesus, accepting him is so crucial in the gospel. For without believing him or accepting him as God’s

⁴⁶² Boissevain, *Friends of friends*, p. 147f.

broker, there is no way he can serve as the means by which the resources can be dispensed. Brown's comments are instructive at this point:

Jesus' greatest advantage over other purported brokers to God is his heavenly origin and his ability to claim for himself the honor status of his Father, God. Jesus is τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ (the only begotten son) and thus can claim an edge over all other brokers...The effectiveness of Jesus' brokerage depends entirely on his unique ability as God's Son to mediate access to God.⁴⁶³

What then are the gifts, *beneficia* that he is able to access for his clients? The terms *beneficium*, *officium*, and *meritum*, according to Saller, are the favors which parties involved in patron-client relationship bestow on each other.⁴⁶⁴ The gifts and favors that Jesus is able to get for his clients are dispersed throughout the gospel. They range from the right to become children of God (1:12), eternal life (3:15, 6:40, 17:2), baptism of the Holy Spirit (1:33, 14:16), his name (16:23-24).⁴⁶⁵ I have deliberately left out the signs that Jesus performed for they function not as gifts, *beneficia* to clients, but as a form of the Roman *commendationes*. Brokers' success does not only hinge on how well related or intimate they are to holders of primary resources but on the fact that their well-connectedness is public knowledge. Jesus' intimate relations with the 'Father' would not make him a broker unless this knowledge is made known to the public. The signs performed by Jesus, in this light, were meant to bring him to public notice as one approved by God and by this means have people repose their confidence in Him. Strictly speaking, *commendationes* are recommendations written by a broker on behalf of his client to a patron. It is in this light that one views John the Baptist's testimony of Jesus, as a well-recognized prophet, he introduces Jesus to the people. In a monologue in chapter five, Jesus acknowledges John's testimony but considers the

⁴⁶³ Brown, *Spirit in the writings of John*, p. 95

⁴⁶⁴ Saller, *Personal patronage*, p. 15-21, however Deniaux defines *beneficia* as favors bestowed by a patron and *officia* as marks of gratitude by a client. I follow after Saller more convincing argument that in terms of usage as an act of generosity, there is an overlap in their meaning (p. 20).

⁴⁶⁵ Brown has a longer catalogue than these, see her *Spirit in the writings of John*, p. 105; also see Jerome Neyrey's *The gospel of John. The New Cambridge Bible Commentary*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

testimony of the 'works' greater than John's. The episode of the feeding of the 5,000 by Jesus, perhaps, best illustrates the understanding of signs as *commendationes*. After feeding them, the crowd wanted to forcefully make Jesus a king⁴⁶⁶, but he quickly withdrew from them. About the following day, the crowd found him out after much searching and Jesus mildly rebukes them for seeing the feeding as an end in itself and not just a *commendatio*.

It is, perhaps, pertinent at this juncture to note what duties were prescribed for the clients. They were to love one another as he had loved them (15:12, 17), they were to abide in him (15:4), they were to obey him (15: 10).

5.5.3.1. *The role of the παράκλητος*: The relationship of Jesus with his disciples becomes more complex at his imminent departure. He promises to send the παράκλητος (16:7) or that the Father will send him through his intercession or in his name (14:16, 26). The paraclete, as a broker, "provides access to Jesus after Jesus' departure";⁴⁶⁷ he will remind them of the words Jesus had spoken to them (14:26), he will testify of Jesus (15:26), he will guide into all truth (16:13), he will glorify Jesus (16:14). The paraclete, therefore, effectively becomes a second broker taking the place of Jesus to his disciples after Jesus' ascent to heaven. This demonstrates the importance of the accessibility of a broker both to his clients and the patron in order to function effectively.

5.5.3.2. *The Triumphal Entry*: The account of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem in chapter 12 is the last public act of Jesus before his arrest and passion. This account, much like the synoptics' account of Jesus' cleansing of the Temple, is strategically placed in the narrative. It is an act that made the charge of being "the king of the Jews" stick on Jesus. I would suggest that it was a calculated political move or a move calculated to have political

⁴⁶⁶ This will suggest making Jesus the ultimate patron and not just a broker. It is, perhaps, a deliberate piece of irony that the charge for killing Jesus was that he was king of the Jews.

⁴⁶⁷ Brown, *Spirit in the writings of John*, p. 61

resonance in the mind of the authorities. This is amply demonstrated by the fact that patrons in imperial Rome made themselves visible as men of substantial support by striding around town with a large following. The larger the following, the greater the prestige of the patron and the louder the signal this sends to the authorities of someone that cannot be ignored by virtue of his following. Power having been concentrated at this time in the hands of the emperor, the emperor seeks to do acts that would get him the greatest accolade. This is best done by giving honor or being known as a friend of someone with a large following. For then there will be many other people who would feel honored thereby and who will then publicize the good deed. I would suggest then that Jesus was making a political statement that was sure to get him noticed by the local authorities who had feared his soaring popularity. This is borne out by the statement in verse 19 “So the Pharisees said to one another, see this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him”. This insight can be combined with the limited goods understanding of the society and this leads one to know why Jesus got into trouble with the honorable ones of his day. For as he increased in honor, they decreased in honor or perceived themselves so to be, just as John said, “he must increase and I must decrease”. However, unlike John, their reaction was to seek to be rid of him.

5.5.3.3. *A Patron-client reading of Jesus’ discourse with the Samaritan woman in chapter 4:* Jesus opens up conversation with the Samaritan woman by asking for water to drink, thereby opening himself up to receiving a *beneficium* from the woman and in patron-client parlance asking to be her client. The woman was quite reluctant and rightly so too because he had no *commendatio* to recommend him to her and moreover the long standing enmity between Samaritan and Jews could not be so quickly overcome. This, perhaps, illustrates a fact about the patron-client relationship; it thrives on friendship: one must be or be seen as a friend or a friend of a friend for the relationship to commence. Jesus’ counter to the woman’s antipathy is an offer of a *beneficium*:

the offer of living water. The roles are being changed now; Jesus is becoming the broker to the Father and she becomes the client. The woman's attention was arrested, she needed water especially a living one⁴⁶⁸ but what is the credential of this stranger? On what basis could he offer what Jacob, their patron, never gave? Indeed, Jacob had dug a well for the community, Jesus, in verses 13-14, contrasts what he will give with what Jacob gave. For no one needs a new patron if the old one satisfies all the needs of the client. As the woman was aware, she always needed to come to the well to draw water because the satisfaction provided by the well was only temporary. Jesus promises to give water which has the propensity to become a spring of water in that person and for this reason the person is never ever thirsty again. In contrast to Jacob's temporary solution to thirst, Jesus' solution lasts till eternity but more importantly, it leads to eternal life. Having heard the appeal/ *commendatio*, the woman was ready to switch sides and change patrons, we might say. To strike home the appeal and perhaps, to disengage the mind of the woman from mundane issues of water and drinking, Jesus asks more personal questions which eventually culminate in Jesus revealing himself as the expected Messiah. At the return of Jesus' disciples, the woman leaves but only, as a good client, to proclaim the noble character of her patron to her community. Many Samaritans accepted Jesus as their broker to the Father-patron as found in verse 39 and the woman became "a broker to the broker". However, as is usual in the fourth gospel, the woman was soon no longer needed as a broker, her *commendationes* had paid off, the Samaritans could then say "we no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves and we know that this man really is the savior of the world".

5.5.3.4. *A patron-client reading of Jesus' prayer for the disciples in chapter 17:* Unlike the gospel of Luke, Jesus in the fourth gospel hardly prays. About

⁴⁶⁸ Living water could be an ironic reference to the contrast between static water from the well and flowing water of the river, both in a literal and "spiritual sense".

three instances can be cited as occasions in which Jesus prayed in the fourth gospel. The first is when he gave thanks over the five loaves of bread and the two small fish that he used to feed a multitude of people as found in chapter 6.⁴⁶⁹ A second occasion is his prayer at the graveside of Lazarus in chapter 11 just before he raised him up from the dead. However, in all the accounts of Jesus' prayer that we have in all the gospels altogether none is as long as the prayer of Jesus in chapter 17. If in the two instances cited above, Jesus prayed just before he performs the signs, what sign does Jesus' prayer in chapter 17 pre-empt?⁴⁷⁰ Jesus' prayer in this chapter is petition for his disciples and those who would later believe in him through their testimony. The chapter is, however, not all about Jesus' prayer for his disciples, he prays for himself as well, but our focus here is his prayers for his disciples. The prayer is pivotal on a number of accounts: it confirms Jesus' role as a broker, it shows that the concept of eternal life is the central mission of Jesus' ministry and it seems to express a break between the disciples and the world among other things. Of great interest to this part of our discourse is its confirmation of Jesus as a broker. It is, therefore, instructive to note in this regard that the prayer of Jesus in patron-client terms can be seen as *commendatio* which Deniaux defines as an 'act of entrusting'.⁴⁷¹ Saller, in arguing against the notion that *commendationes* served as confidential reports which the emperor consulted in making appointments, asserts that though *commendationes* often mention some attributes of the client, yet these attributes were rather too general to guide the emperor in judging the suitability of the client. Rather, what often happened was that the decision of the patron (emperor) was informed by his relationship with the broker on the one hand and by the relationship of the client with the broker as described in the *commendatio* on the other hand. In this regard, *commendationes* often described the relationship between the broker and the client. In this way "the recommender illustrates his client's

⁴⁶⁹ Some may, perhaps, object to this as prayer but looking at the prayer in chapter 11 at the graveside of Lazarus, in terms of content it is mainly thanksgiving. Though we don't have the content of the thanksgiving in chapter 6, it was presumably addressed to God hence a prayer.

⁴⁷⁰ Of course, this does not assert that Jesus always prayed before he performs a sign.

⁴⁷¹ Deniaux, 'Patronage', p.405.

loyalty, integrity and industry by reference to his display of those qualities in their mutual friendship".⁴⁷² The point being made here is that the patron having known the broker could judge what to expect from any friend of his, for as Saller says "in the Roman view a man's character was reflected in his friends".⁴⁷³ Saller, in addition, notes that *commendationes* are usually made in person and not by letter.⁴⁷⁴ Therefore, we shall note to what extent Jesus' prayer conforms with or departs from the pattern of *commendationes* in the Roman empire. Some of our English translations like NIV have rightly interpreted Jesus' speech here as prayer but it is instructive that the Greek bible says "lifting his eyes into heaven he said...", so here we have a direct address as if he was appearing in person before the one whom he called 'father' to make his petition or rather *commendatio*. One departure from ordinary *commendationes* may be the fact that it is taking place when the clients are present. This is not without justification, for in verse 13 Jesus says it is so done in order that the disciples might have full joy. Six related issues are discernible in the prayer:

a. Jesus makes reference to his relationship with the Father-patron: Instances of this are found in the following verses: v.11 - the patron had given the broker his name; v.24 the patron loved the son before the creation of the world; v.10 - all that the patron has belongs to the broker and all that the broker has belong to the patron. In verse 1, Jesus refers to himself as the son and the patron as the Father. Brown makes reference to instances where members of family serve as brokers linking their clients to a patron, who is their own blood relation.⁴⁷⁵ Jesus' prayer was first for himself that the father may glorify the son for the time had come (v. 1). He makes recourse to their long standing relationship: the father has given him authority to give eternal life to as many as would accept him (v.2); he has brought glory to the father

⁴⁷² Saller, *Personal patronage*, p. 109.

⁴⁷³ *ibid*

⁴⁷⁴ Saller, *Personal patronage*, p.110. This is one reason for the paucity of literature on such acts.

⁴⁷⁵ Often cited is Livia the wife of Augustus who served as a broker between her many clients and Augustus (her husband) and later her son Tiberius (her son), See Brown, *Spirit in the writings of John*, pp. 32-33.

by completing the work the father gave him to do (v.4); he had glory with the father before the world began, he wants to be glorified in this same way (v.5).

b. Jesus makes reference to the relationship he has with the disciples for whom he now prays: v.12 - the broker protected the clients by the name which the patron had given him; vv.14, 16 - both the broker and the clients are not of this world.

c. Jesus makes specific requests from the patron for his protégés: v.11 - the patron should protect the clients who are still in the world by his powerful name; v.15 - the patron should protect the clients from the evil one; v.17 - (request) the patron should sanctify the clients by the truth which is his word; v.21 - both the new and old clients may be one just as the patron and the broker are one; v.24 - the broker wants the clients to be with him and see his glory.

d. Jesus serves as the link between the disciples (clients) and the Father (patron); v. 6 - Jesus has revealed the patron to the clients; v.14 - the broker gave the clients the patron's word; v. 26 - the broker has made the patron known to the clients and will continue to do so.

e. The disciples' relationship with the patron: v.6 - the clients originally belonged to the patron before they were acquainted with the broker.

f. Commendation of the disciples: v. 6, 8 - the clients have obeyed the patron's word; v. 7, 8 - the clients know that the patron is the source of all that the broker (Jesus) has; v. 8 - the clients have accepted the words which the broker gave them and these are words that the patron gave the broker in the first place; v. 8, 25 - the clients are certain that the broker came from the patron; v.10 - all that the patron has belongs to the broker and all that the broker has belongs to the patron; v.9 - the clients belong to the patron; v.10 - the clients have brought glory to the broker.

5.5.4. A Critique of Patron-Client Relations in the Fourth Gospel

We have seen how the fourth gospel makes use of the complex system of patron-client relations in its context to illuminate the role/function/relationship of Jesus with

his disciples and the Father. It is, however, instructive to note how the writer of the fourth gospel also subverts the popular notions of patron-client relations in the Gospel also.

5.5.4.1. *Sole brokerage*: Notable is his advocacy for *sole brokerage*, this is understandable for the goods of the kingdom which is primarily eternal life is found only in him. This is quite different from what obtains in imperial Rome as Brown quoting Brunt states “it was common for individuals to engage in relationships with more than one patron”.⁴⁷⁶ While some like John the Baptist and Mary introduced others to Jesus, they did not remain a link between the people and Jesus. We, therefore, see Jesus of the fourth gospel maintaining a direct relationship with his followers with all brokers out of the picture.

5.5.4.2. *Feet washing*: Jesus’ act of washing the feet of his disciples as found in chapter 13 though inexplicable by the patron-client model, yet is presumed by it. While patrons could do a myriad of things for their clients, washing their feet was definitely out of the question; that was the preserve of slaves. That patron-client relationship is, however, presumed by the text is evinced by Peter’s consternation at this act and Jesus’ statement in verses 13-14 “you call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord’, and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.”

⁴⁷⁶ Brown, *Spirit in the writings of John*, p.39.

5.6. Conclusion

In recapitulation, reading the fourth gospel through the lenses of patron-client model has demonstrated quite vividly the function of signs as a form of *commendationes* – they invite the observers to the claims of the *signator* as one from God. In addition, the reading has brought to the fore the significance of the centrality of the claims of Christ in terms of his relationship to the Father in the Gospel. For his ability to deliver the goods of the kingdom depends on his intimacy with the patron. Furthermore, the reading has also clearly presented the obligations of the clients which guarantee the continuation of the relationship, for reciprocity is a key component of the relationship. Most germane to our study, the reading has shed light on the crucial importance of the concept of life in the gospel for it is the *beneficium/ officium* of the patron to his clients. It is what the clients hanker after and what the broker/patron is most obliged to offer or else he ceases to be relevant to the clients. It is, therefore, to this important concept that we now turn in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6 - EXEGESIS OF JOHN 10: 1-18

6.0. Introduction

In the previous chapter, we looked at the socio-cultural context of the fourth gospel as gleaned from the text. We observed that the political cum social relations of Rome are reflected in the gospel with particular reference to patron-client relationship, a relationship that we have noted also exists in the Yoruba society, albeit in an informal, uninstitutionalized way. In this chapter the context of the text is brought in conversation with the context of the reader and we shall see how each illuminates the other. The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to bring the Yoruba reader with his/her assumptions of the world, which in RT terms is the context that partly makes up his cognitive environment to converse with the text in its context. We shall note the manner in which the Yoruba reader may find the text *relevant* in terms of the modifications that would be made to his cognitive environment.

6.1. The Concept of Life ζωή in the Fourth Gospel

The concept of life ζωή is found in each of the constituent parts of the fourth gospel with the exception of the epilogue, which some see as an addition after the whole work had been written.⁴⁷⁷ In the prologue (1:1-18), -“in him was life and the life was the light of humans” (1:4); the public ministry of Jesus (1:19–12), - the healing of the boy in Capernaum, the offer of water of life (4:10) and bread of life (6: 35); the farewell discourse (13–17), “I am the way, the truth and the life” (14:6); and the passion and resurrection narrative (18–20) “and these have been written in order that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah ... and by believing you may have life in his name” 20:31. The epilogue (21) is the only exception that has no explicit mention of ‘life’, but even then, Peter’s charge to feed the sheep bears resonance to sustaining the life of the sheep, a major theme in our text 10:10. The depiction of ‘life’ in

⁴⁷⁷ C.K. Barrett, *The gospel according to St John. An introduction with commentary and notes on the Greek text*, (London: SPCK, 1955), p. 479; Barnabas Lindars, *The new century bible commentary. The gospel of John*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Ltd./London: Marshal Morgan & Scott Publishing Ltd., 1972), p. 687.

these major sections of the gospel shall be explored with a view to noting its continuity or discontinuity with our findings from the exegesis of John 10:10. The term ‘abundant life’ is found within the context of the Shepherd Discourse in 10:1-18. This passage is our main focus of exegetical consideration. We shall generally identify the passages that explore the theme of ζωή and note the nuances of meaning that they suggest.

6.1.1. The prevalence of the concept of life ζωή in the Fourth Gospel

The concept of life, as hinted above, is pervasive in the fourth gospel.⁴⁷⁸ This fact is borne out in many accounts in the gospel. For instance, in the second recorded sign in chapter four, Jesus declares a sick boy in Capernaum alive (ζῆ) in Galilee. In chapter 6, the multiplication of bread to feed so many people brings about the assertion by Jesus that he is the bread of life ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς (6:35). Furthermore, the raising of Lazarus from the dead leads to Jesus’ self-assertion as the resurrection and the life ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ἀνάστασις καὶ ἡ ζωή (11:25). Jesus’ resurrection itself is the ultimate sign of life. The fourth gospel writer, in order to ensure that his readers do not miss the important reason for recording the miracles, informs his readers that the signs are recorded to inspire/sustain faith in Jesus, the ultimate aim of which is the acquisition of life καὶ ἵνα πιστεύοντες ζωὴν ἔχητε ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ (20:31).⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁸ Leon Morris notes that “more than a quarter of all the New Testament references to life occur in the Gospel of John” *The new international commentary of the New Testament. The gospel according to John revised*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), p. 73.

⁴⁷⁹ The argument sometimes is whether the signs are meant to initiate faith in unbelievers or to sustain the faith of believers in Christ. The textual support both for the aorist tense (to initiate) and for the present tense (to sustain) are early enough to make the editorial committee include both in the text of Greek New Testament. However, since the signs in the fourth gospel are presented to attest to the fact that Jesus was sent by God; “believe for the sake of the works (10:38), the works that I do bear witness that the father sent me” (5:36), one would think to opt for the aorist tense variant. But given the fact that the Gospel must have circulated first among believers and secondly, the fact that signs are in themselves ambiguous as the Gospel itself shows; for they give no guarantee that those who observe them come to faith. Therefore, if the main purpose of the writing was to initiate faith in non-believers, the gospel then would attest that it might not be a successful venture. I, therefore, take the position that the signs are meant to sustain faith in the believers. However, David Aune in his *The New Testament in its literary environment*, holds the two possibilities in tension, though he asserts that early Christian literature was written exclusively for Christian consumption” p.

While the synoptics narrate the parables of Jesus concerning the kingdom, the fourth gospel narrates discussions of Jesus with people or it sometimes records monologues of Jesus with 'life' ζωή as a central focus. The discussion with the woman at the well leads to Jesus' offering her the 'living water' τὸ ὕδωρ τὸ ζῶν (4:11), the monologue in chapter 5 is all about the locale of 'life' "for as the father has life in himself, (ὁ πατήρ ἔχει ζωὴν ἐν ἑαυτῷ), so he has granted the son to have life in himself " (Jn 5: 26) and those eligible to obtain life are "the one who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life" ζωὴν αἰώνιον (Jn 5: 24). The prologue, which is an introduction to the gospel, as found in Jn 1:1 -18 makes mention of the concept of 'life', for "in him was life ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν and the life ζωὴ was the light of men" (Jn 1: 4). The prevalent use of the concept of life ζωὴ in the fourth gospel has been compared with the synoptics' prevalent use of the concept of the kingdom of God/heaven by scholars⁴⁸⁰ and the consensus is that both concepts are related. However, while the synoptics use the concept of the kingdom of God almost always with a future reference in view, the fourth gospel more frequently uses the concept of life as a present reality.⁴⁸¹

59, he notes that since households turned to Christianity at the conversion of the head of the family, it is possible to have "non-Christian members of Christian households" an example being Onesimus, the slave of Philemon, see p. 60

⁴⁸⁰ C.K. Barrett asserts "ζωὴ αἰώνιος in John resembles 'Kingdom of God' in the synoptic gospels...that which is properly a future blessing becomes a present fact in virtue of the realization of the future in Christ", see his *The gospel according to St John. An introduction with commentary and notes of the Greek text*, 2nd ed., (London: SPCK, 1978), p. 215; See also C.H. Dodd, *The parables of the kingdom*, (London: Nisbet & Co. Ltd., 1935), p. 43. G.R. Beasley-Murray, while basically in agreement with this view, notes that the terms are not necessarily equivalents, see his *Gospel of life. Theology in the fourth gospel*, (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), p. 3.

⁴⁸¹ "He who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the son of God and those who hear will live" Jn. 5:24-25. However, 'eternal life' as a future reality is also amply demonstrated in the Gospel: Jn. 6:40 "Everyone who sees the son and believes in him has eternal life and I will resurrect him on the last day", Jn. 12:25 "The one who loves his life shall lose (destroy) it, and the one who hates his life in this world shall keep it into eternal life".

This has made many scholars⁴⁸² point to the realized eschatology that is found in the gospel.

Eschatology is a theological term for the study of last things or end of time, this necessarily imbues the term with a focus in the future. However, with a nuance of eschatology as the time of restoration of all things, realized eschatology, a term coined by C.H. Dodd, means that the blessings of salvation or restoration has already commenced in the present by virtue of Christ's coming into the world. David Aune succinctly puts it: "... those aspects of eschatological salvation which are somehow conceived of as partially realized in Christian experience within the frame work of present time, history and worldly conditions".⁴⁸³ Dodd, in his work on the parables of the kingdom in the synoptic gospels, found that in continuity with the Jewish teachings of the period, Jesus' teachings on the Kingdom of God have future dimension and in discontinuity with Jewish teachings present the kingdom of God as a present reality:

This declaration that the Kingdom of God has already come necessarily dislocates the whole eschatological scheme in which its expected coming closes the long vista of the future. The *eschaton* has moved from the future to the present, from the sphere of expectation into that of realized experience.⁴⁸⁴

So in the fourth gospel, eternal life is a present reality with future implications:

I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life (5:24, NIV)

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him. (3:36, NIV)

I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life (6:47, NIV)

⁴⁸² C.H. Dodd *The interpretation of the fourth gospel*, p. 7; See David Aune's *The cultic setting of realized eschatology in early Christianity*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972); Raymond. E. Brown *The anchor bible. The gospel according to John (i-xii)*, (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966), p. cxvi ff.

⁴⁸³ Aune, *The cultic setting*, p. 7

⁴⁸⁴ Dodd, *The parables of the kingdom*, p. 50.

6.2. The Literary-Critical Problem of John 10:1-18

As observed in the previous chapter, some scholars have pointed out some discrepancies in the text and co-text of John 10:1-18.⁴⁸⁵ The abruptness with which the text starts suggests a break with the previous discourse in chapter 9. So some scholars like Bernard have suggested some transposition, whereby verses 19-21, which reports the response of the Jews to Jesus statement in 9:41 directly follows after. Another notable discrepancy is the separation between vv. 1-18 and vv. 22-29 despite the fact that they both address similar themes of sheep and shepherd. For this reason, it has been suggested that verses 22-29 which give a different time frame – the feast of dedication, precede verses 1-18 and directly follow after verse 19-21 in the new reconstruction. Verse 30 will then follow after verses 1-18. While this solution helps to smoothen the reading to a considerable extent, the biggest problem, however is that it divorces the text (verses 1-18) from the context of the blind man's expulsion from the synagogue. Placing the text in the context of the Feast of Dedication greatly reduces its *relevance* in terms of derivable cognitive effects to the leadership of the day. For this reason, we are taking the arrangement of the passage as it occurs in the Gospel.

6.3. Translation of John 10:1-18⁴⁸⁶

1-6

1. Truly truly I say to you, anyone who does not come through the door into the sheep pen but *ἀλλὰ* goes up by another way is a thief and (*καί*) a robber; 2. But (*δέ*) the one who comes through the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3. The doorkeeper opens for him, and (*καί*) the sheep hear his voice, and (*καί*) he calls his own sheep by name and (*καί*) he leads them out. 4. Whenever he leads out his own, he goes before them, and (*καί*) his sheep follow, because they recognize his voice. 5. They shall never follow a stranger but (*δέ*) they shall flee away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of a stranger. 6. Jesus spoke this parable to them; but (*δέ*) they did not understand what he spoke to them.

⁴⁸⁵ See Schnackenburg, *The gospel according to St. John*, vol. 2, (London: Burns & Oates, 1980), pp. 276ff; J.H. Bernard, *The international critical commentary. A critical and exegetical commentary on the gospel according to St. John*, vol II, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928), pp. 341ff.

⁴⁸⁶ This is my translation based on Nestle-Aland GNT 1898/1979 edition. The translation follows the GNT as closely as possible but has disambiguated some terms that shall be explained in the comments.

7-18

7. Then Jesus said again, “Truly truly I say to you I am the door of the sheep. 8. All that came before me were thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not obey them. 9. I am the door; anyone who enters through me shall be safe and shall go in and go out and shall find pasture. 10. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came so that they may have life [ζωήν] and have it abundantly.

11. I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays his life (ψυχήν) for the sheep; 12. But (καί) the hireling, who is not the shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and (καί) abandons/leaves behind the sheep and (καί) flees – then (καί) the wolf attacks and (καί) scatters the sheep – 13. Because he is a hireling so he (καί) is not concerned about the sheep.

14. I am the good shepherd and I know mine and mine know me. 15. Just as the father knows me so also (καί) I know the father; and (καί) I lay down my life (ψυχή) for the sheep. 16. And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; and these I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one shepherd, one sheep.

17. Because of this my father loves me because I lay down my life, so that I may take it up again. 18. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own volition. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again; this is the instruction that I received from my father.”

6.3.1. Outline of the Passage

1-6 Parable of the sheep and the shepherd

7-10 Jesus the door and giver of abundant life

11-13 Jesus the good shepherd

14-16 One sheep, one shepherd / Jesus has other sheep

17-18 Jesus willingly lays down his life

6.4. Setting the Literary Context of John 10:1-18

In the general outline of the Gospel, chapter 10 of the fourth gospel, the chapter of study under discussion, is in the main section of the public ministry of Jesus (chapters 1:19–12:50). Chapter 10 is sandwiched between the story of the healing of the man-born-blind (chapter 9) and the raising of Lazarus from the dead (chapter 11). While chapter 9 portrays Jesus as the light of the world, chapter 11 portrays Jesus as the resurrection and the life. The link between light and life is already hinted at in the prologue (1:4) “in him was life and the life was the light of men”. The audience and location of

chapter 9 are the same for chapter 10:1-21, for Jesus' discourse in chapter 9 with the Pharisees continues through chapter 10:21.⁴⁸⁷

Chapter 9 is about the man born-blind that was healed by Jesus on a Sabbath day. Neighbors led the man to the Pharisees who then questioned him on how he got healed and by whom. Being unable to deny that a miracle had indeed occurred, the Pharisees tried to discourage the man from making much of Jesus whom they alleged was a sinner. The man disagreed with them insisting that the good work done on him happened by God's power and the one used of God to perform the miracle could not have been a sinner. The chapter ends on a note of the man being cast out/ excommunicated. Jesus hearing of this met with the man and disclosed to him that he was the son of man. The man's response in worshipping Jesus shows that he understood the designation 'son of man' as a messianic title. Jesus then stated enigmatically that he had come so as to give sight to the blind and to make blind those who saw (10:39). Perceiving that he was making a thinly veiled reference to them, the Pharisees asked Jesus if they were blind. It is in this context of replying to them that Jesus began a monologue that runs through verse 1 of chapter 10 till verse 18. Verses 19-21 record the response of the Jews to Jesus: some believe in him while some do not. Verses 22-39 being set in a different context, the feast of dedication in Jerusalem, shall not engage us now.

6.5. Comments

6.5.1. Parable of the sheep and the shepherd (vv. 1-6)

1. Truly truly I say to you, anyone who does not come in through the door into the sheep pen but (ἀλλὰ) goes up by another way is a thief and (καί) a robber; 2. But (δέ) the one who comes in through the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3. The doorkeeper opens for him, and (καί) the sheep hear his voice, and (καί) he calls his own sheep by name and (καί) then leads them out (ἐξάγω). 4. Whenever he leads out his own (ἐκβάλλω), he goes before them, and (καί) his sheep follow, because they recognize (οἶδα) his voice. 5. They shall never follow a stranger but

⁴⁸⁷ Bernard noting that the Feast of Dedication (10:22ff) takes place in October while the Feast of Tabernacles (7:1--10:21) takes place in December, prefers to have 10:22-29 follow directly after 9:41. This, however, does not solve the problem of having the Feast of Dedication before that of the Tabernacles. The order he follows is 9:41, 10:19-29, 10:1-18, 10:30ff

(δέ) shall flee away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of a stranger. 6. Jesus spoke this parable to them, but (δέ) they did not understand what he spoke to them.

The first five verses of this chapter are referred to by the narrator of the fourth gospel as *παροιμία* which translates the Hebrew word *mashal* that covers “all figurative illustrations: parable, allegory, proverb, maxim, simile, metaphor, etc”.⁴⁸⁸ Scholars are divided over understanding the discourse as allegory or parable using modern understanding of such concepts.⁴⁸⁹ The fourth gospel has very few parables when compared to the synoptics and the writer of fourth gospel writer’s designation of the short discourse in vv 1-5 as *παροιμία* ‘parable’ is quite different from the synoptics’ use. In the synoptics each item of a parable *παραβολή* usually has a single referent in view: for example in the parable of the sower, the seed is the word, the soil is the human heart’s receptivity. In the narrative under discussion, 10:1-18, different aspects of the parable assume different significance at different junctures of consideration. So that Jesus who calls himself the gate will also call himself the good shepherd in the same discourse. It appears, therefore, that the writer of the fourth gospel is using the term *παροιμία* in a broader sense than the synoptics, much like the Hebrew *mashal*. Beate Kowalski observed as much for she, like Schnackenburg, views the discourse more of a *sui generis* for the form of the discourse is not fully explained as Wisdom parallel or as Apocalyptic parallel nor even as Parables in the synoptic tradition.⁴⁹⁰ However, from RT point of view, a writer would use a form of communication that her readers can make sense of in light of their expectation for *relevance*. For this reason, while there are differences in the form of the discourse from other forms the continuity should rather be emphasized for

⁴⁸⁸ Raymond Brown, *The anchor bible*, p. 390.

⁴⁸⁹ Rudolf Schnackenburg takes the discourse as *sui generis*, p. 285; while Brown sees vv. 1-5 as consisting of several parables while vv.7ff consist of allegorical explanations, p. 390; Bernard takes vv. 1-5 as an allegory, p. 348.

⁴⁹⁰ Beate Kowalski, *Die Hirtenrede (Joh 10, 1-18) im Kontext des Johannesevangeliums*, (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk GmbH, 1996), pp. 141-151. Many thanks to Prof. J.A Draper who provided me a translation of this work.

readers are not looking for a rigid resemblance but a loose resemblance.⁴⁹¹ Readers would note a loose resemblance between the parables in the synoptics and the parable in view here (10:1-18) for both have a strong element of comparison, and both exhibit the characteristic obscurity to their immediate audience that makes an explanation of the parable necessary.

The setting of the discourse is the temple area following closely after the story of the healing of the man born blind. These verses, coming on the heels of the rejection and ejection of the formerly blind man from the synagogue, have been seen as a rebuke of the Jewish religious leadership comparable to Ezekiel 34.⁴⁹² Many scholars have posited Ezekiel 34 as the background to understanding the shepherd discourse, it is, therefore, worth looking at more closely. The notion of shepherds as leaders is quite well-known in the bible and in the Mediterranean culture. Kings were referred to as shepherds in Ancient Orient like Babylon and Assyria, while gods were called shepherds in Egypt.⁴⁹³ In the Old Testament Yahweh was known as the Shepherd of Israel (Psalm 23; Isaiah 40:11), military/political leaders were also referred to as shepherds (2 Sam 7:7). The significance of this title lies in the fact that sheep are depicted as vulnerable animals, for they are susceptible to attack from wild animals and some of them are prone to straying from the flock. For this reason, they need to be guided to suitable pasture land and water holes; they need to follow a leader/shepherd who is concerned for their well-being, who defends them in the face of attack and who nurses the wounded and search for those that have strayed away. It is in light of these realities that Ezekiel writing in the context of the Babylonian exile blames the shepherds of Israel for the plight of the sheep. Part of the accusation was that: the shepherds took care of themselves to the detriment of the sheep whom they fed on (vv.2-3); the shepherds failed to nurse sick sheep, bring back stray sheep or even look

⁴⁹¹ See chapter 2.

⁴⁹² See Gary T. Manning Jr., *Echoes of a Prophet. The use of Ezekiel in the gospel of John and in the literature of the Second Temple period*, (London: T&T Clark, 2004), pp. 103-4

⁴⁹³ J. Jeremias, ποιμήν in Kittel's TDNT vol VI, pp. 485-502, p. 486.

for the lost, rather they have been brutal to the sheep (v.4); the sheep, being left without a guide/ shepherd, wandered and strayed away and became prey to wild animals (vv.5-6). The Lord, in response, serves a notice on the shepherds; they cease to be shepherds of his sheep, while he assumes direct oversight of his sheep (v.10). The Lord becoming the shepherd, he searches for and rescues the lost, cares for the weak and sick, provides pasture and safety for the sheep (vv. 11-16, 25). The Lord also judges between the fat sheep (most likely the shepherd who had fed on the rest of the sheep) and the lean sheep (who had been driven away) and place both of them under one Davidic shepherd. The erstwhile shepherd now depicted as the fat sheep was really an under-shepherd, a shepherd under the real shepherd, who owns the sheep. The sheep is promised sufficient pasture and protection from wild animals:

I will bless them and the places surrounding my hill. I will send down showers in season; there will be showers of blessing. The trees of the field will yield their fruit and the ground will yield its crops...They will no longer be plundered by the nations, nor will wild animals devour them. They will live in safety and no one will make them afraid.⁴⁹⁴

The Yoruba society is mainly agrarian with few domesticated animals kept for meat. However, pastoral communities are well-known to the people and the Yoruba bible translates the office of a 'pastor' as *oluso agutan* literally 'the watcher of sheep' – shepherd. Nevertheless, the concept of a leader as a servant (for that is what the shepherd is to the sheep in this text) is quite strange to the Yoruba society. The leader must be served rather than serve. However, a modicum of caring for the people is expected of him, for a highly tyrannical leader could be deposed or advised to commit suicide.⁴⁹⁵ We gather from Peter's response to Jesus' attempt to wash his feet (chapter 13) that the society depicted in the fourth gospel also does not expect leaders to

⁴⁹⁴ Ezekiel 34:26-28 (New International Version - NIV) .

⁴⁹⁵ See Samuel Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, p. 173 "the person of the king is regarded as sacred. Kings are venerated as gods, ... but the moment a king's enormities provoke an open rebuke, or on being told publicly 'We reject you,' by the constitution of the country he must die that day." See also p. 192 "At last an empty covered calabash was sent to the king – for his head! A plain indication that he was rejected."

serve but to be served. It is in this light that the good shepherd is viewed not only as an ideal to be emulated by leaders but also as judgement on leadership that is not modelled after its pattern. Indeed, many of the themes found in John 10:1-18 make better sense when read in light of Ezekiel 34 and it is to this that we now turn.

Jesus' parable in 10:1-18 centres on a common scenario of animal husbandry in a rural setting. Jesus remarks that a shelter, which might just be a place demarcated for the sheep has a door. The door may serve to ensure that the sheep remain within the confines of the shelter and do not stray away. In addition, the door also signifies legitimate access to the sheep, and only people with legitimate business such as the shepherd pass through the door to get to the sheep. A strong adversative introduced by ἀλλά contrasts the shepherd that has legitimate access to the sheep with thieves and robbers who do not have legitimate access. Their lack of legitimacy is evinced by their non-use of the door to gain access to the sheep, rather, they climb the wall to enter the sheep pen. The conjoining of the two nouns thieves and robbers indicate a basic commonality of the two as those who are not after the well-being of the sheep but who are out to steal.⁴⁹⁶ The difference between the two is the degree of violence perpetrated by each of them. A thief perpetrates his 'trade' /steals by stealth, surreptitiously, and cunningly while a robber steals with violence.⁴⁹⁷ However, beyond this semantic distinction, the noun ληστής can also be translated as a bandit or an insurrectionist. Given the harsh economic realities of the time with various taxes and rents levied on the people to sustain the ruling apparatus of the elite and provide surplus to Rome, a number of bandits arose. Seeking reprieve from economic repression and political domination, they attacked the rich, who were seen as collaborators with Rome, by stealing from them. Their acts of resistance endeared them to

⁴⁹⁶ The commonality between a thief and a robber is borne out in the text by the use of the singular demonstrative pronoun ΕΚΕΙΝΟΣ and the lack of an article for both of them, see Schnackenburg, *The gospel*, p. 282.

⁴⁹⁷ Norman Hillyer, 'Rob, steal', in Colin Brown (ed) *New Testament Theology*, vol. 3, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), pp. 377-379.

the poor, who saw them more as ‘freedom fighters’.⁴⁹⁸ Viewing ληστής in this light would in RT terms, suggest some unwarranted implicatures of a savior who is in league with the masses against the ruling elites who are collaborators with Rome of which the shepherd is one. For this reason, we shall view ληστής in its non-political role as a plain robber.

The presence of a door-keeper in verse 3, who regulates access to the sheep, demonstrates the function of the door as a means of the security of the sheep. The door-keeper opens for the shepherd and as the shepherd utters his voice, perhaps, in greeting the door-keeper, the sheep hear his voice. The verb ‘to hear’ ἀκούω “embraces both physical hearing and the apprehension of something with the mind”⁴⁹⁹, these two happen concurrently as the sheep hear the voice of the shepherd. The shepherd turns his attention to the sheep and calls the sheep by name. Is this in a distributive sense of calling each individual sheep by name or in a collective sense of calling the entire sheep by a name? Some scholars have posited the possibility that the sheep pen hosts different folds, so the shepherd’s calling out his own sheep by name is a means of separating his sheep from others.⁵⁰⁰ The use of the conjunction ‘and’ καί to link the actions of the calling of the name of the sheep by the shepherd and the leading out of the sheep by the shepherd suggests actions that are in sequence: the shepherd leads out the sheep after having called them by name, the conjunction καί therefore has the nuance of ‘and then’. The use of the phrase “his own” τὰ ἴδια (in verses 3 & 4) to depict the shepherd’s relationship to the sheep suggests some degree of intimacy, a personal sense of ownership or a personal sense of having oversight of, that resonates with the action of the shepherd naming the sheep in the first place. The action of

⁴⁹⁸ Barabbas, who was released for Jesus to be crucified, was an insurrectionist. The clamour of the crowd to release him attests to his popularity. (John 18:40). For more on banditry in the first century, see Richard Horsley & John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs. Popular movements at the time of Jesus*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1985), pp. 48ff.

⁴⁹⁹ Wilhelm Mundle, ‘Hear, Obey’ in Colin Brown (ed.) *New Testament Theology*, vol. 2, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986, p. 172. (pp. 172-178)

⁵⁰⁰ See Schnakenburg, *The Gospel*, p. 280; Bernard, *A critical and exegetical commentary*, vol II, p. 350.

leading out the sheep is repeated in verse 4, but this time the verb in use is ἐκβάλλω instead of the verb ἐξάγω used in verse 3. It is instructive to note that the verb ἐκβάλλω has been used in chapter 9:34 to describe the casting out of the man born blind ἐξέβαλον αὐτον ἔξω (he was cast outside). This nuance of forceful ejection is akin to the brutal and harsh treatment of the sheep by the shepherds in Ezekiel 34:4, but contrasts sharply with the gentle prodding of the shepherd leading out the sheep in John 10:4. The shepherd as leader goes before the sheep giving direction as to where to tread and the sheep follow in obedience. The sheep follow the shepherd because they know, οἶδα, that is, they recognize his voice as that of the one who had been caring for them over time. That the nuance of knowledge based on experience is in view here is brought to sharp relief in verse 5 by the mention of the fact that the sheep will never follow a stranger. The stranger is so called because the sheep have no relational experience with him; his voice is strange to their hearing, for it does not resonate with what is familiar to them, so they do not recognize it. For this reason, the sheep will flee from rather than follow a stranger. Whether the stranger is well intentioned, perhaps like the door-keeper, or ill-intentioned like the thief and robber mentioned above, to the sheep these two categories of people are one: they are strangers. The discernment of the sheep is very crucial for their safety, given their inability to defend themselves.

The narrator notes that Jesus' interlocutors did not understand the parable. This sets the scene for the next section where Jesus attempts to explain the parable by drawing out its implications and application.

6.5.2. Jesus the door and the giver of abundant life (vv. 7-10)

7. Then Jesus said again, truly truly I say to you "I am the door of the sheep. 8. All that came before me were thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not obey them. 9. I am the door; anyone who enters through me shall be safe and shall go in and go out and find pasture. 10. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came so that they may have life [ζωήν] and have it abundantly.

There are correspondences between verses 1-6 and this section vv. 7-10. The repetition of key words such as: 'thieves and robbers'; and 'door of the sheep' demonstrate this link. Verses 7-10 could, therefore, be seen as the application and amplification of the general description given above in verses 1-5 as well as some new developments. The importance but not the prominence of the 'door' has been observed in the previous section. Verse 7, with a new twist to the metaphor in focus, Jesus calls himself the door of the sheep. The door signals the designated point of entry into the sheep pen that provides legitimate access for anyone to get to the sheep. In addition, there is a sense of exclusivity that brooks no competition that is implied in the use of the definite article and the resultant term "the door" - as the sole means of access. This accords well with the sole-brokerage model of Jesus. Verse 8, Jesus, by calling himself the door, contrasts himself with thieves and robbers who gained entry to the sheep pen by climbing in (verse 1). Since they came into the sheep pen before the door came⁵⁰¹, that is without using the door, they are liable to the charge of being thieves and robbers for their means of entry to the sheep pen was by climbing in. To whom then does the phrase "thieves and robbers" refer?

Common to literal thieves and robbers is illegitimacy, their bid to acquire other people's possessions either by stealth or violence defines them. Against this backdrop comes Jesus who is consistently presented in the fourth gospel as the 'sent-one' of the father, the one from the bosom of the father, his legitimacy derives from his having been sent by the father. In addition to being credentialed by the father, he stands in continuity with the works of Israel's God. To this end he marshals an array of witnesses with whom his words and deeds align: John the Baptist (You have sent to John and he has

⁵⁰¹ There is a textual issue here, for the phrase "before me", which states the temporal sequence of the thieves' coming in relation to Jesus is of "doubtful authenticity", for while some witnesses have it, some do not. See Bruce M. Metzger, *A textual commentary of the Greek New Testament*, (United Bible Societies, 1971) p. 230.

testified to the truth John 5:33), the Scriptures (5: 39, these are the scriptures that testify about me), Moses (If you believed Moses, you would believe me, John 5:46). In contrast, however, are the leaders who stand in opposition to the works of the father: “let there be light” (Genesis 1: 3) and “I am the light of the world” (John 9:5), those who would rather have a man remain in darkness being blind than the man have the light of vision on a Sabbath day. Like the shepherds of Ezekiel 34 that did not care for the sheep, the leaders in chapter 9 would rather cast out the sheep than look for the stray sheep. Therefore, reference to the Jerusalem leadership is palpable here. Literal thieves and robbers also thrive on the ignorance or non-awareness of their victims to perpetrate their ‘trade’, an antidote to this, therefore, is the discernment of the sheep.

The sheep of our text, being discerning, did not follow the thieves and robbers. A pertinent question is what is responsible for the discernment of the sheep, given the fact that ‘the door’ had not come? For the coming of the ‘door’ could make the sheep discern the difference between the ‘door’ and the ‘thieves and robbers’ but what makes for their rejection of the ‘thieves and robbers’ even before the arrival of the ‘door’? The sheep were able to reject the ‘thieves and robbers’ mainly because they were steeped in Israel’s scripture and traditions. The celebration of different feasts, which the fourth gospel uses to great effect, serves as a constant reminder of the words and works of Israel’s God.⁵⁰² The deeds of the ‘thieves and robbers’ stand in sharp contrast to the deeds of God that they were familiar with, so the sheep did not obey them.

The metaphor of door in verse 9, conjures up not only the idea of access to the sheep, but also access of the sheep to security, freedom and pasture/nourishment. Ezekiel 34 already demonstrates the concern of God for

⁵⁰² See N.T. Wright, *New Testament and the people of God*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), pp. 233, 241.

the security of the sheep: that they should no longer be susceptible to the attacks of wild animals. It also evinces God's concern for the provision of pasture for the sheep, hence the promise of "showers of blessing" that will ensure continual pasture for them, for pasture was indispensable for the sustenance of sheep. Jesus fulfils the necessity for security and provision, for as the door of the sheep; he provides safety for the sheep by keeping them from straying away. They are only at liberty to go in and out looking for pasture.

The Greek verb in use here 'to save' σωζω has a basic sense of being delivered or rescued from a dangerous or perilous situation. In some other contexts it has the nuance of being well kept or a state of well-being.⁵⁰³ It is in this regard that the Roman emperor was regarded and also regarded himself as Savior of the world because he ended civil war and brought peace so that people were at liberty to travel and pursue their interests.⁵⁰⁴ This sense of salvation as safety and well-being implies a context that is devoid of any element of threat, and I posit that this is the nuance in focus here. The effectiveness of the door is on its ability to shut out danger so that the sheep can safely move around seeking pasture⁵⁰⁵ "they will live in safety and no one will make them afraid" (Ezekiel 34:28). This resonates with the concept of *alafia* among the Yoruba - an all embracing term, which though basically translated 'peace', connotes ideas of security, provision, good health and a

⁵⁰³ Werner Foerster, σωζω, TDNT vol VII, p. 967. Georg Fohrer's discussion of the verb σωζω from OT perspective is equally pertinent and instructive: "The Hebrew word usually translated 'to save' is yashar יָשַׁר which has a basic sense of 'to be roomy, broad' as opposed to oppression which is construed as 'narrowness' giving the sense of "being hemmed in, constricted, oppressed, imprisonment' so rescue implies moving to an open place". However, since this change is brought about by the effort/intervention of a third party, it properly amounts to a rescue/deliverance for without such an intervention "the oppressed would be lost" p.973. Bernard also takes the verb σωζω in the sense of safety, see pp. 346, 355.

⁵⁰⁴ See Warren Carter, *John and empire. Initial explorations*, (New York: T&T Clark, 2008), p. 188; See also, Peter Herze, 'Emperors' in Jörg Rüpke (ed) *A companion to Roman religion*, (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2007), pp. 304-316.

⁵⁰⁵ This sense of the door shutting out danger (being saved/being safe) precludes the idea of the thief and robber climbing the wall to enter the sheep pen. Indeed being saved from danger and being safe from danger are really two sides of the same coin. While one emphasizes rescue from imminent danger, the other emphasizes absence of danger.

general sense of well-being. Jesus also satisfies the need of the sheep for supplies, for the metaphor of a 'door' resonates with the idea of a broker who facilitates the access of his client to the resources of the patron. In this case Jesus, as the door, provides access to pasture a major resource for sheep, for pasture connotes "places of refreshment, security and satisfaction."⁵⁰⁶ Pasture, therefore, is indispensable for the growth of the sheep, and having access to pasture is a guarantee of a rich supply of provisions for the sustenance of the sheep. This calls to mind the words of Psalm 23:1, "the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want." The ideal state which 'pasture' connotes came to depict "coming restoration or golden age of God's favor" in prophetic visions.⁵⁰⁷ To a Yoruba reader, reading verse 9 "I am the door; anyone who enters through me shall be safe and shall go in and go out and find pasture" may have the following implicatures: Jesus as the door, anyone who enters through him means anyone who believes in him shall be safe. 'To be safe' here means safety from witches, wizards and all malevolent people and spirits. This safety means safety from all that could hinder the person from fulfilling his/her destiny. The liberation implicit in the safety means that the person is free to go in and out in peace and find provision by make a living. In a social context where kidnapers, robbers, general insecurity of life and property abound, preachers could make much of this verse to assure the people of God's protection and provision. To an RT question of whether the writer of the Gospel would have had such an interpretation in mind as at the time of writing? Or better still, would such an interpretation be in consonance with the tenor of the passage? Or would such a message be an adequate metarepresentation of the passage and verse under review? For those who consider the writing as sacred text, what is inconceivable to the human writer

⁵⁰⁶ Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit and Tremper Longman III (eds.), 'Pasture', *Dictionary of biblical imagery*, (Downer's Grove, Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1998) p. 630.

⁵⁰⁷ See Jeremiah 50:19 "But I will bring Israel back to his own pasture and he will graze on Carmel and Bashan; his appetite will be satisfied on the hills of Ephraim and Gilead"; Zephaniah 2: 6-7 "the land by the sea, where the Kerethites dwell, will be a place for shepherds and sheep pens. It will belong to the remnant of the house of Judah; there they will find pasture. In the evening they will lie down in the houses of Ashkelon. The Lord their god will care for them; he will restore their fortunes."

at the time of writing does not limit the potential meanings, which the text could nurture. This is because there is a 'real author' who is believed to have inspired the writing and who transcends limitation in terms of cognition. Secondly, by virtue of the fact that we have a metaphorical use of language here where sheep refer to people, we cannot aspire to a rigid-resemblance type of interpretation. Rather, loose-resemblance type of interpretation where the meaning(s) derived share similar contextual implications with the original representation is acceptable.⁵⁰⁸ In light of the above, the Yoruba reading above will be quite in order. The most important issue here is the exclusive brokerage of Jesus, that is the nerve centre not only of this section but also of the entire fourth gospel. It was a hotly contested issue in the fourth gospel among the Jews (see John 7: 37 – 8:58).

The actions of thieves are well represented by "the thief" in verse 10. A characteristic thief has a reason for coming, as introduced by the ἵνα clause, the purpose of a thief is to steal, kill and destroy. Linked by the conjunction καί, these are acts of aggression with increasing degree of violence. The verb 'to steal' κλέπτω, as mentioned above, means "to take secretly and without permission the property of someone else".⁵⁰⁹ According to Preisker the verb κλέπτω has a basic sense of stealing, it "denotes the secret and cunning act of stealing as compared to ὀρπάζω which is characterized by violence". The verb 'to kill' θύω has two senses: the sense of 'to slaughter' "in contexts referring to persons, the implication is of violence and mercilessness,"⁵¹⁰ and the sense of 'to sacrifice', which means "to slaughter an animal in a ritual manner as a sacrifice to deity". In the context of John 10:10, the first sense of 'to kill' is more appropriate. Killing is an act that terminates life in this present world. However, acts that, though, do not literally terminate life but kill in

⁵⁰⁸ See chapter 2, See also Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*, pp. 107-108; 233-235; 275-6.

⁵⁰⁹ See Louw and Nida vol. I, 57.232, See also, Herbert Preisker 'κλέπτω κλέπτῆς' in Gerhard Kittel (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol III, pp.754-756, κλέπτω has a basic sense of stealing, it "denotes the secret and cunning act of stealing as compared to ὀρπάζω which is characterized by violence" p. 754.

⁵¹⁰ See Louw and Nida, vol I, 20.72, See Louw and Nida, vol I, 53.19.

degrees by reducing the quality of life, reducing living to mere drudgery, thus making living more of a pain than joy are equally included here. The verb 'to destroy' ὑπόλλυμι has the basic sense of 'to destroy' which could mean to bring "to ruin or cause the destruction of persons, object or institutions".⁵¹¹ In the middle voice, its translation as 'to perish' brings to the fore its implication for life after death. Each action of the thief: stealing, killing and destroying indicates loss in measures that are increasingly difficult to recover. While what was stolen can be restored or returned, that which was killed, (loss of life) can only be retrieved by resurrection or a raising from the dead, that which was destroyed seems irredeemably lost, all one could hope for is, perhaps, a replacement.

Jesus, in contrast to the thief, comes, for the purpose of giving life (ζωή). It is quite instructive that while three actions are attributed to the thief, only one is attributed to Jesus. This suggests that Jesus' act of giving life overwhelmingly surpasses all the three actions attributable to the thief. The thief steals, kills and destroys the sheep but Jesus gives life to the sheep. The actions of the thief and that of Jesus are understandable at two levels: the literal and the metaphorical. At the literal level, only two actions of the thief are applicable to the literal sheep – the actions of stealing and killing, for the action of destruction⁵¹² implies an existence beyond physical death, which literal sheep are not reputed to possess. Jesus' action of giving life in order to reverse or negate the actions of the thief therefore implies a recovery of what was stolen; a restoration to physical existence of what was killed; and a replacement of what was destroyed.⁵¹³

⁵¹¹ Louw and Nida vol I, 20.31, Louw and Nida vol I, 57.67; 57.68; 27.29.

⁵¹² The verb 'to destroy' can also mean to die/ be killed but in an instance where the action of killing is already in focus, the action of 'to destroy' means more than physical death. Similar usage of the verb with the sense of the future age is found in verse 28 "And I give them eternal life ζῶην αἰώνιον, and they shall never ever perish ἀπολωνται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, and no one shall take ἄρπάσει (to take by force) them out of my hand."

⁵¹³ The idea of destruction here is similar to that expressed in Luke 12: 4-5 (NIV) "I tell you friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will

The Greek word ζωή 'life' usually translates the Hebrew חיים *hayyim* and sometimes from חַי in the Greek Septuagint and derives from the basic understanding that God is a living being and he is the author of all of life. Therefore, a basic sense of ζωή is as "the physical vitality of organic beings, animals, men (sic) and also plants."⁵¹⁴ In the Old Testament, 'life' is presented as the ideal, it is the "supreme good" and the longer it is, the better, for "it is a reward for the righteous that fulfil the commandment."⁵¹⁵ As mentioned earlier, the book of Daniel stands out as the only book in the Old Testament that uses the concept of ζωήν αἰώνιον translating *hayyim olam* חיים עלם to refer to the idea of a future life beyond the grave. The Maccabean experience where the righteous died young in defence of their faith at the hands of the ungodly brought about the expectation that death does not end true life, therefore, "true life must be eternal."⁵¹⁶ Furthermore, in the Old Testament, "mere existence is not life,"⁵¹⁷ life is meant to be enjoyed and not endured, so where sickness, famine, and other conditions of living reduce the quality of life, such is an undesirable situation of life. To this end, "sickness is as bad as death", while "healing and reviving are equivalent to life" in this regard. All these ideas about the concept of life both in the Old Testament and in Judaism are affirmed in the New Testament. However, in discontinuity with these ideas is that eternal life which was thought to commence only after death actually commences in the present; this idea is most evident in the fourth gospel. "In the New Testament thinking indestructibility is part of the concept of life... since it is indestructible it is often called αἰώνιος."⁵¹⁸ Therefore, alongside the understanding that *life* ζωή depicts natural, physical life is the idea that true life is more than being physically alive. The possession of *life*

show you whom you should fear: fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell..."

⁵¹⁴ Rudolf Bultmann, 'ζῴω, TDNT, vol II, (pp. 832-843), p. 832.

⁵¹⁵ Gerhard von Rad, 'Life and Death in the OT', TDNT, vol II, (pp. 843-849), p. 849,

⁵¹⁶ Bultmann, 'Concept of life in Judaism', TDNT, vol II, (pp. 855-861), p. 856,

⁵¹⁷ Bultmann, 'Concept of life in the OT', TDNT, vol II, (pp. 849-851), p. 850,

⁵¹⁸ Bultmann, 'Concept of Life in the NT', TDNT, vol II, (pp. 861-872), p. 864,

ζωή in the present world enables one to participate in the Age to Come because it is God's own type of life. However while God has life in himself and does not need anything to sustain it, "man (sic) must sustain it by nourishment and toil."⁵¹⁹ Therefore, the juxtaposition of pasture in verse 9 with 'life' in verse 10 makes quite evident the correlation between nourishment/pasture and life.

The purpose of Jesus' coming into the world that is the reason for his incarnation and all it entails, according to the FG, is that the sheep (believers) may have life. This basic description of the purpose of Jesus' coming also serves as the logic behind his deeds as John 20:31 says of the signs performed by Jesus: "these are written that you may believe... and by believing you may have life in his name". This concept of life as our analysis shall show pervades the fourth gospel, sometimes the noun 'life' is qualified by the adjective 'eternal' and sometimes not, but commentators agree that there is no difference intended in meaning whether the noun has such a modifier or not. Some textual witnesses have in addition to the statement: "I am come that they may have life" "and have (it) abundantly" and some witnesses have the addition read "and have (it) more abundantly." Some scholars have explained the omission of the phrase "abundantly" or "more abundantly" in some witnesses such as P⁶⁶ and D as a case of *homoioteleuton*.⁵²⁰ This is a case where similar group of words end two sentences and a scribe omits one line and skips to the other line with similar ending words or phrases. While this explains the omission in P⁶⁶ and D, it does not explain the reason why P⁴⁴ and P⁷⁵ read "more abundantly" while others read 'abundantly'. I would personally prefer the shorter reading of P⁶⁶ "that they may have life" and see the use of the adjective and its comparative form as a means of explication.

⁵¹⁹ Bultmann, p. 850

⁵²⁰ See Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The text of the New Testament*, trans. Erroll F. Rhodes, (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans, 1987), p. 280. See Barrett, *The gospel according to John*, p. 310. Raymond Brown explains the reason for the omission to be due to haplography, a subset of homoiouteleuton, since "the last two lines of vs. 10 both end in the Greek verb echousin ("have")", *The anchor bible*, vol I, p. 386.

That is, making the implicit fullness of life explicit, for *life* cannot be had in any other measure but full from our understanding of the concept of life above. In RT terms, we may consider it an explicature: “an explicitly communicated assumption”.⁵²¹ For Schnackenburg, abundant life “does not amount to more than life but, rather, life in its highest degree, eternal life”.⁵²² However, considering the early age of one of the witnesses, P⁷⁵ (3rd century), if there was any addition, it was inserted so early that it is only considered an alternative reading.

Secondly, the use of modifiers in the fourth gospel was almost always meant to contrast an object that contends for primacy in comparison with what Jesus offers, hence: the living water in contrast to static well-water, the true bread from heaven in contrast to the bread given by Moses in the desert, the good shepherd in contrast to the thief/hireling who is a shepherd, the true vine in contrast to Israel as vine. In the case at hand, there does not appear to be any good that is being touted as being comparable to ‘life’. However, the idea of an abundant supply is not strange in the rest of the fourth gospel. For instance, the provision of wine at Cana is a more than enough supply, the feeding of the multitude with twelve baskets of left over food, as well as the almost net-breaking catch of fish in chapter 21. In addition, the super-flowing nature of this life has already been hinted at in the use of metaphors such as “rivers of living water” (7:38) or “spring of water welling up to eternal life” (4:14). The Greek adjective, *περισσεία* and its cognates, which is used also in chapter 6:12, 13 of the gospel, has a basic sense of an abundant or excessive supply. Louw and Nida explain it thus:

To exist in large quantity, to have more than enough...to be very great, a degree which is considerably in excess of some point on an implied scale of extent, to be excessive, to be very great, to be surpassing, ...to be superfluous, pertaining to that which is exceptional in the sense of

⁵²¹ Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*, p. 182.

⁵²² Schnackenburg, *The gospel*, p. 293

being more than what is expected – exceptional, outstanding, remarkable, unusual”.⁵²³

So driving home the sufficiency of ‘life’ to invalidate all the actions of the thief, Jesus of the fourth gospel says that the life he gives his sheep is an abundant one.

6.5.3. Jesus the good shepherd (v. 11-13)

11. I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays his life (ψυχὴν) for the sheep; 12. But (καί) the hireling, who is not the shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and (καί) abandons the sheep and (καί) flees – then (καί) the wolf attacks and (καί) scatters the sheep – 13. Because he is a hireling so (καί) he is not concerned about the sheep.

11. The importance of the role of a shepherd to the sheep has already been mentioned in the first section of this passage (vv. 1-5). It is to the shepherd that the door-keeper opens the door leading to the sheep pen. It is the shepherd that calls his sheep by name, it is his voice that the sheep recognize and he is the one that leads them out to pasture. In light of this, we would think that Jesus would have called himself the shepherd. Jesus instead calls himself the good shepherd. We have already observed that in the fourth gospel Jesus renames popular concepts, usually by adding a modifier, in order to subvert old notions or readings of the same and bring on a new meaning. To the Samaritan woman who would argue that they had water already and there was no need for what Jesus wanted to offer, Jesus promises ‘living water’ which someone will drink and not be thirsty any more (4: 10ff). To the people who ate of the bread in chapter 6 he calls himself the “true bread from heaven” (6:32). Jesus, talking to an audience made up of leaders of the people calls himself the good shepherd. That leaders are often depicted as shepherds is observable from the prayer of Moses that the Lord would raise a leader for the people of Israel so that they are not like sheep without shepherd (Numbers 27:15-17). In contradistinction to the shepherds of Ezekiel 34 and, more appropriately and directly, the leaders who had kicked out the man

⁵²³ Louw and Nida vol I, 59.53; 59.54; 78.3.

born blind from their midst, Jesus is the good shepherd. While other leaders had fed on the sheep (Ezekiel 34:3), and had not cared for the sheep, Jesus deserves the designation of the good shepherd, because he lays down his life $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ for the sheep. In the LXX, different Hebrew words get translated as $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$, life, for instance, *nefesh* נֶפֶשׁ (generally translated ‘breath’ is most commonly used), *ruah* רוּחַ (‘spirit’ is translated twice), *hayyim* חַיִּים (‘life’ is translated once), *lev* לֵב (‘heart’ is translated about twenty-five times).⁵²⁴ $\Psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$, in the New Testament, depicts ‘natural physical life’, in addition, it is used as a synonym for the whole person, and furthermore, it is used to depict the seat of emotion/feeling and appetites.⁵²⁵ The nuance of $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ as natural, physical life is in view in the assertion of Jesus: “the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep”.

12. In contrast to the good shepherd is the hireling, one who receives wages for his care of the sheep. He is not the shepherd in the sense that the sheep do not belong to him. In the Mediterranean world where animal husbandry was a key economic activity, shepherds were expected to provide care, nurture and pasture for the sheep. Hazards were frequent as shepherds had to lead the herd far away from town in search of water and pasture, especially in dry seasons. This often exposed the shepherd and his flock to dangerous animals that would prey on the sheep. The lives of the sheep and the shepherd were often on the line as a result of this, not only was the business dangerous it was also lonely.⁵²⁶ A notable example in the Old Testament of a brave shepherd who withstood the onslaught of predators in defence of his flock was David, who rescued his flock from the bear and lion (I Sam. 17:34ff). That such was expected of shepherds is borne out by the fact that kings were referred to as shepherds in Ancient Orient like Babylon, and Assyria while gods were called

⁵²⁴ See Edmond Jacob $\Psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$, $\psi\upsilon\chi\iota\kappa\acute{o}\varsigma$, ἀνάψυξις, ἀναψύχω, διψυχος, ὀλιγόψυχος TDNT vol IX, (pp 608-631), p. 617.

⁵²⁵ See Albert Schweizer, ‘ $\Psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ in the New Testament’, TDNT, vol. IX, pp. 637-656.

⁵²⁶ Jacob’s recount of his experience as a shepherd in Gen 31: 38ff best illustrates this.

shepherds in Egypt.⁵²⁷ In the Old Testament Yahweh was known as the Shepherd of Israel (Ps 23; Isa 40:11). Military/political leaders were also referred to as shepherds (2 Sam 7:7), however implicit in the idea of leaders as shepherds in Israel was the understanding that they were acting as representatives of Yahweh. The failure of Israel's leaders to provide care, safety and nurture for Yahweh's flock brought Yahweh's pledge to raise up a Davidic shepherd over his people (Ex. 34:23; cf Jer. 3:15, 23:4).⁵²⁸ It was in the midst of this leadership failure that Jesus declares himself not just as a shepherd, but as the good shepherd. The proof of the good shepherd is that he lays down his life for the sheep. But could anyone function as the good shepherd whenever he risks/ if he should die/ his life for the sheep? Both Brown and Lindars understand 'the good shepherd' as 'a good shepherd' or a 'noble/model/ideal shepherd'.⁵²⁹ In this sense, Jesus typifies what should constitute a good shepherd, therefore, Jesus stands in continuity with shepherds such as David and Moses who nurtured God's people at the risk of their lives. This submission, however, goes against the grain of the text that talks of dying for the sheep (v. 18 - "I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again") and not just risking one's life for the sheep.⁵³⁰ In addition, such an interpretation whereby Jesus is just a good shepherd does no justice to the christological intent of the text which the writer of the fourth gospel has been at pains to demonstrate in the "I am" sayings. However, that the fourth gospel presents Jesus serves as an exemplar to his followers is

⁵²⁷ J. Jeremias, ποιμήν in Kittel's TDNT vol VI, pp. 485-502, p. 486.

⁵²⁸ Jeremiah 23:1-4 "Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture! Declares the Lord. Therefore this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says to the shepherds who tend my people: "Because you have scattered my flock and driven them away and have not bestowed care on them, I will bestow punishment on you for the evil you have done," declares the Lord. "I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and increase in number. I will place shepherds over them who will tend them, and they will no longer be afraid or terrified, nor will any be missing," declares the Lord.

⁵²⁹ See Brown, *The anchor bible*, p. 386; see also Lindars who takes the article as "generic, i.e. I am a good shepherd", p. 360 contra Schnackenburg, *The gospel*, p. 294, 297 who sees the metaphor as a christological self-revelation.

⁵³⁰ Carson's observation in this regard is quite instructive, for he notes that while shepherds may die in the process of defending the sheep it was never their intention to die - in contradistinction to Jesus for "far from being accidental, Jesus' death is precisely what qualifies him to be the good shepherd", see D.A. Carson, *The gospel according to John*, (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1991), p.386.

irrefutable, after washing the feet of his disciples, Jesus explicitly instructs them to do the same for one another (13: 14-17); “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you, greater love ...” (15:12-13). Jesus’ charge to Peter in the last chapter of the Gospel echoes his concern that his disciples should serve as good shepherds to the sheep. And in chapter 21, after being called to be a shepherd for Jesus’ sheep, he is told in what way he will die (i.e. like Jesus). Peter’s similar instruction to the elders in I Peter 5:2 “Be shepherds of God’s flock...” suggests that being a good shepherd to God’s flock is a traditional responsibility to all who hold leadership position in God’s household. A pertinent question at this juncture relates to cultures where leaders are not viewed as shepherds who ought to take care of the sheep. Rather, the sheep are to feed the shepherds. In the Yoruba context of a hierarchy of social status and the notion of conspicuous leisure, the leader or pastor is not expected to be condescending. A leader is a ‘Big Man’ who commands and gives orders. Yoruba pastors walk a tight rope of trying to be humble like their master, Jesus, and maintaining the dignity expected of their office in the society.⁵³¹ One of the ways some of them have coped is by placing emphasis on sanctification as a second definite act of grace that translates in the denial of the flesh and its tendencies.⁵³²

Hired hands were often paid to look after the sheep and, therefore, can be regarded as the shepherd, but in the time of danger his true role as a hired hand is demonstrated for he abandons the sheep at the coming of danger (the wolf). The wolf then has the freedom to attack and scatter the sheep. Yet the hireling is, perhaps, excusable since the sheep do not belong to him. This is the crux of the difference between Jesus as the good shepherd and a hired hand as a shepherd; the sheep belong to the shepherd but not to the hired

⁵³¹ This dilemma is borne out in the reinterpretation of the feet-washing act of Jesus. It is practiced in some churches as a symbol of empowerment, “as your feet are dipped into the water, you are empowered to walk in the realm of dominion”. See David Oyedepo, *Signs and wonders today*, p. 148.

⁵³² See E.A. Adeboye, *In the footsteps of Jesus. Deep teachings from the Holy Land*, (Lagos: Shalom Books Limited, 2007), p. 9

hand. The imagery of Jesus as the shepherd in the sense of being the owner of the sheep seems to transform Jesus from just being a broker to a patron according to our patron-client model. This is one of the unique features of the fourth gospel, that it describes the relationship between Jesus and the father in ambivalent terms that defy neat categorization, where we see both elements of unity and subjection.⁵³³ For instance, in verse 29 of chapter 10, Jesus claims that the sheep were given him by the father “My father, who has given them to me is greater than all.” This unique relationship between the father and son is referred to many times in the Gospel “...they were yours; you gave them to me...,” “All I have is yours, and all you have is mine” (John 17: 6, 10). So Jesus’ claim to be the owner of the sheep is mainly because of his relationship with father “I and the Father are one” (Jn 10:30) and this does not stop him from being a broker between the sheep and the father, it only makes his advocacy all the more effective.

Jesus in this section has compared himself with the thief and with the hireling. The difference between a thief and a hireling is quite glaring; to the sheep one is a stranger while the other is not. Secondly, one has legitimate access to the sheep while the other does not. In addition, the intentions of both are different; one comes to steal, kill and destroy, the other comes ostensibly to care for the sheep. However, at the end of the day the two are not so different after all, for the sheep are in danger with either of them, for the sheep do not belong to them. Therefore, the fact of belongingness is a crucial matter in this section. However, the danger posed to the sheep by the hireling is, perhaps, more dangerous, than the thieves, in a sense. This is because the sheep have learnt to trust the hireling, they ‘know’ the hireling, they recognize his voice and they follow him. A jolting sense of disappointment comes for the sheep when, in the hour of danger, the ‘shepherd’ flees, abandoning the sheep. The natural means of defence for the sheep, which is their discernment, fail them at this point for though useful

⁵³³ See also a related discussion by Schnackenburg, *The gospel*, p. 403.

and effective in guarding them against following a thief but it is not effective in dealing with a hired hand, who abandons them at the time of need. While a direct reference to a particular group or person is problematic, one may submit that a hireling suggests an internal and subtle danger,⁵³⁴ a danger brought about by the cowardice and selfishness of the hireling, who considers his life more precious than that of the sheep. On the other hand, thieves and robbers launch external attacks to the community. However, common to both of them is that they occupy positions of leadership in relation to the sheep.

6.5.4. One flock, one shepherd (vv.14-16)

14. I am the good shepherd and I know mine and mine know me. 15. Just as the father knows me so also (καί) I know the father; and (καί) I lay down my life (ψυχή) for the sheep. 16. And I have another sheep, which are not of this fold; and these I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one flock one shepherd.

Jesus reiterates his position as the good shepherd who knows those who are his and whom his own know. A hint of this mutual knowledge is already conveyed in verse 4 through a different verb οἶδα: he calls his own by name and the sheep οἶδα /know (recognize) his voice. In use in this verse 14 is the Greek verb γινώσκω. Though commonly translated as ‘to know,’ it has different nuances: “to possess information; “to learn to know a person through direct personal experience”; “to be familiar with”; “to understand”; “to acknowledge”; “to have sexual intercourse”.⁵³⁵ The sheep have come to know the shepherd by virtue of their personal relationship and interaction with him. They hear (recognize) his voice and follow him (verse 27). He is the one who leads them to pasture, the one who defends them when there is a threat. The one who gives them eternal life (verse 28). 15. The mutual relationship of knowledge and love between the sheep and the shepherd also exists between the father and Jesus. For the first time in the discourse, the father is introduced as being part of the scheme for the shepherd to die on

⁵³⁴ See also Kowalski, *Die Hirtenrende*, pp. 211ff.

⁵³⁵ Louw and Nida, vol 1, 28.1; 27.2; 27.18; 32.16; 31.27; 23.61.

behalf of the sheep. The conjunction 'and' καί seems to have the nuance of 'as a result' otherwise it is difficult to make sense of what the mutual knowledge of the father and son has to do with the son giving his life for the sake of the sheep. As mentioned above the sense of 'to know' here has a relational nuance. On the other hand, it seems ironic that the one who came in order to give life ζωή to the sheep must die in order to do so. Does this mean that the shepherd having led his sheep out confronts the wolf that came to attack the sheep, in the process of which the good shepherd dies in the process of defending the sheep? In a sense this act of the shepherd defies logic and the analogy breaks down at this point, for the death of the shepherd still leaves the sheep at the risk of any other predator, be it thieves or wild animals. It would have been 'better' for the shepherd to sacrifice one sheep to assuage the hunger of the wolf so that the rest of the sheep would be safe.⁵³⁶ However, this suggested reading is clearly not the case for "no one takes it (life) from me" (v. 18), rather, the good shepherd willingly, not accidentally, lays down his life ὑπὲρ τῶν προβάτων for the sake of the sheep. The death of the shepherd is not for his sake, he does not lose his life in the course of self-defence, rather, he dies for the benefit of the sheep. This is the thrust of the message: the good shepherd lays down his life ψυχή so that the sheep may have ζωή - it was a sacrificial act.⁵³⁷

A Yoruba reader is well acquainted with the role of sacrifice in traditional religion, where an object of lesser value is used in place of another that is reckoned to be of greater value. In the case of substitutionary sacrifice, animals are most likely to be used. But where human sacrifices are required, a slave or a foreigner would be used. Jesus' death on behalf of his sheep would fit a Yoruba understanding of substitutionary sacrifice as mentioned in chapter 3. However, the difference remains that Jesus' (a leader's) death on behalf of his sheep (believers) remains quite difficult though not totally

⁵³⁶ This is the same logic behind Caiaphas's statement in 11: 49-50.

⁵³⁷ See C.K. Barrett, *The gospel according to John*, (1955), p. 311; see also Schnackenburg, *The gospel*, p. 295.

inconceivable in Yoruba thought.⁵³⁸ In addition, in a social context where value is placed on status and hierarchy, the lesser should die, if need be, for the greater and not the other way round. Secondly, in view of the patron-client model, Jesus, the broker, does the unthinkable, pays the ultimate price in order to procure *beneficium* for his clients. The sacrifice of Jesus, indeed, remains a serious critique of the patron-client model as well as a critique of the *conspicuous leisure* of Yoruba leadership/eldership. The corollary of this is that any form of preaching that de-emphasizes Jesus' sacrificial act is hitting at the nerve centre of the message of the fourth gospel.

16. Jesus now mentions his other sheep that are not part of this fold, which he must bring in to join the rest. The proof that the sheep are his is that they obey him. His goal is the unity of the sheep, one flock under one shepherd much like his prayers for his disciples in the farewell discourse in chapter 17. The question often asked is who are this sheep that are not part of the flock yet? Some scholars have seen this as referring to Gentiles who would believe in Jesus⁵³⁹, while some have understood it in the sense of Jews in the diaspora.⁵⁴⁰ I subscribe to the view that Gentiles are in focus here. All the efforts of the writer of the fourth gospel in explaining Jewish terms, festivals and sites hint at his effort to reach a wider audience beyond his immediate community. Jews in diaspora still viewed themselves as Jews, other ἄλλοις sheep may mean different from the particular one in view. It is in light of this that one could conceive that this verse is intended as an apologetic or justification for

⁵³⁸ A similar occurrence in Yoruba history is the story of Oluorogbo, the only son of Moremi, who was sacrificed at the insistence of the river goddess Esinminrin. Moremi had risked her life for her town Ile-Ife by allowing herself to be captured by their enemies. She did this so that she might learn their secrets and reveal it to her people. However, she had enlisted the help of the goddess Esinminrin in achieving victory over the enemies vowing to make sacrifice to the goddess if she should succeed. She did deliver her people from the incursion of their enemies, but then the goddess asked her to sacrifice her only son, Oluorogbo. See <http://www.yorubanation.org/yoruba.htm>. Accessed 30/06/10. See also Johnson, *The history*, pp. 147-148

⁵³⁹ See Bernard, *A critical and exegetical commentary*, vol II, p. 361; See Brown's comments on this, *The anchor bible*, vol I, p. 396.

⁵⁴⁰ See Draper, 'Holy Seed and the return of the diaspora in John12:24', *Neotestamentica*, 34/2 (2000), pp. 347-359; and J.A.T. Robinson, *Twelve more New Testament studies*, (London: S.C.M., 1984).

Gentile mission or for diaspora mission. Since this mention of other sheep is repeated in Jesus' prayer for the disciples in chapter 17, it is a sure appeal for unity within a larger group that consists of parts that perceives itself different in kind to one another.

6.5.5. Jesus willingly lays down his life (vv.17-18)

17. Because of this my father loves me because I lay down my life, so that I may take it up again. 18. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own volition. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again; this is the instruction that I received from my father.

17. The love relationship between the father and Jesus and its link with the laying down of the life of the shepherd hinted at in verse 15 is now made explicit. The father loves Jesus because he chooses to lay down his life for the sheep. The pleasure of the father in this act of the son suggests that the father is personally interested in the sheep too (10:29, "my father who has given them....; 17:6, 'they were yours...'). The question raised above about the irony of the one who gives others life by losing his life is clarified here. He gives others ζωή by losing his ψυχή the loss of which is temporary, for he is going to regain it. The ἵνα clause may be seen as introducing a result and not a purpose clause, though many scholars view it as purpose clause. Brown's argument that the resurrection is part and parcel of the atonement is quite cogent as he states "... the resurrection is not a circumstance that follows the death of Jesus but the essential completion of the death of Jesus."⁵⁴¹ However, this does not make the resurrection the purpose of the death but an inevitable result that follows after the death as a climax. The main problem, however, with viewing the ἵνα clause as result clause is that it takes the initiative away from Jesus as one "who has authority to take it up again." So the telic or purposive sense of ἵνα seems the better option for now.⁵⁴² 18. There is emphasis on the fact that his laying down of his life is a voluntary action, he is

⁵⁴¹ Brown, *The anchor bible*, p. 399; also see Bernard, p. 364

⁵⁴² Carson in this vein takes the ἵνα clause as purpose clause for "Jesus' death was not an end in itself, and his resurrection an afterthought. His death was with the resurrection in view. He died in order to rise, and by his rising to proceed toward his ultimate glorification...", Carson, p. 388

under no compulsion whatsoever to lay down his life. Yet, this seemingly independent action of his is also the father's will. The father has given him the right to do as he pleased with it, so he chooses to lay down his life ψυχή and will take it up again at his own discretion.

In recapitulation, in John 10:1-18, Jesus is presented as the door and the good shepherd. As the door, Jesus affirms his role as a broker that provides access to his followers/for the sheep to pasture, where pasture stands for nourishment and an idyllic state of restoration. Provision of pasture, among other things, is a life-affirming gesture. Jesus, in contrast to the thief that steals, kills and destroys, comes to give life in all its fullness to the sheep as a *beneficium*. The correlation between 'pasture' and 'life' is hereby established: in the literal sense of the word 'pasture' is needed to sustain the physical life ψυχή of the sheep. Jesus by providing access for sheep to pasture provides life ζωή, thereby showing the correlation between pasture and life. What serves as pasture for literal sheep is life for people who are his sheep. The life ζωή that Jesus came to give is clarified in the light of the works of the thief to steal, kill and destroy. In this sense, the life Jesus gives is restorative, in light of the fact that pasture also stands for restoration in the prophetic genre,⁵⁴³ it speaks to issues of living in the present and goes beyond the present to the future. Are these observations on the concept of life peculiar to John 10:10 or are they corroborated by other passages in the gospel? It is to this question that we now turn.

6.6. The use of 'life' ζωή in the rest of the Fourth Gospel

The following passages are identified as expressing the fourth gospel's understanding of the concept of life. The main criterion for their selection is the occurrence of the noun ζωή or any of its cognates in the passages as well

⁵⁴³ Passages such as: Zephaniah 2:6-7 "The land by the sea, where the Kerethites dwell, will be a place for shepherds and sheep pens. It will belong to the remnant of the house of Judah; there they will find pasture. In the evening they will lie down in the houses of Ashkelon. The Lord their God will care for them; he will restore their fortunes."

as having enough context to disambiguate the term. We shall first explore passages that are quite close to our main passage of discussion 10:1-18. To this end, we shall start by looking at Jn.10:22-30, and relevant sections of chapters 11 and 12 before we look at a few other passages in the gospel. Each passage shall be followed by short comments based on the context of occurrence in the Gospel.

6.6.1. Other important passages for the Concept of Life in the Fourth Gospel

6.6.1.1. *John 10: 22-30*: 22. At that time there was the Jewish Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem and it was winter. 23. And Jesus was walking in the temple in the porch of Solomon. 24. Then the Jews surrounded him and said to him, "how long shall you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us clearly?" 25. Jesus answered them, I told you but you did not believe; the works that I do in the name of my father bear witness to me; 26. But you do not believe, because you are not among my sheep. 27. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28. And I give them eternal life ζωὴν αἰώνιον, and they shall never ever perish ἀπόλωνται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, and no one shall take ἀρπάσει (to take by force) them out of my hand. 29. My Father who has given them to me is greater than all, and no one can take them out of the hand of my father. 30. My father and I are one. [bold and italics mine for emphasis]

This is the most immediate parallel passage to our text and it resembles to it in the recurring themes of sheep and eternal life among others. Verses 26-28 are quite pertinent, the sheep of Jesus are people who believe him (v.26), they obey his voice and follow him just as mentioned in vv. 3, 4 and 16 above. Jesus gives them eternal life and not the "abundant life" mentioned in 10:10. This eternal life is in contrast to destruction or 'to perish'. The basic verb in use for 'to destroy' is ἀπόλλυμι which in the passive voice gets translated as 'to perish', it is the same root word that is used to depict one of the acts of the thief (ἀπόλεση) in verse 10 above. This affirms that the concept of life is here refers to eternal life but that it is a present possession given in this present mode of existence by Jesus with future implications - "they shall never

perish". Its relation to "abundant life" does not enter into the perspective here. In an obvious allusion to the activity of the wolf in verse 12 that comes to attack ὑπάζω the sheep at the flight of the hireling, Jesus, in verse 28, solemnly promises, using the same verb ὑπάζω, that no one can take the sheep by force from him, because his father who is greater than all is interested in their well being and is well able to protect them.

To whom then, does the term 'wolf' refer? The only other reference to wolves in the fourth gospel is found in verse 12 of our chapter. In some passages in the New Testament, 'wolves' are used to refer to false teachers.⁵⁴⁴ The other mention of 'wolves' is in the context of the sending out of the disciples, they were warned to be cautious for they were being sent out as sheep among wolves.⁵⁴⁵ For Kowalski, wolves, like strangers and thieves and robbers constitute external danger to the sheep and do not need to be particularly identified.⁵⁴⁶ Considering the dangers facing the sheep: thieves and robbers, hirelings, and wolves, the assurance in verse 29 that the greater-than-all-father is powerful enough to protect the sheep is quite comforting.

6.6.1.2. *John 11:1-27*

1-16⁵⁴⁷

Jesus and his disciples left for Bethany in Judea on account of Lazarus who had died after a short illness.

17-27

Jesus and his disciples found that Lazarus was already dead for four days and buried. Martha meets Jesus when he was yet on the way to their house and wished that Jesus had come earlier, for then her brother would not have died but she expressed the hope that God would grant whatever Jesus asked of him. 23. Jesus says to her, your brother shall resurrect. 24. Martha says to him, I know that he shall resurrect in the resurrection at the last day. 25. Jesus says to her **I am the resurrection and the life**; anyone who believes in me even though he dies shall live, 26. and the one who lives and believes in me shall never ever die, do you believe this? 27. She

⁵⁴⁴ Matthew 7:15 "watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves"; Acts 20: 29-30 "I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them".

⁵⁴⁵ See Matthew 10:16 and Luke 10:3.

⁵⁴⁶ Kowalski, *Der Hirtenrede*, pp. 211ff

⁵⁴⁷ This is only a summary of verses 1-16. This summary is given so as to present the context in which the verses below, which are our main concern, occur.

says to him, yes Lord; I have come to believe that you are the Christ the son of God who was to come into the world.

Comments

Very significant for us in this passage is the juxtaposition of resurrection as a future event and as a present reality. Martha rightly articulates the popular Pharisaic doctrine that resurrection properly belongs in the future. Jesus does not deny the future event of the resurrection but by raising Lazarus affirms that it is equally a present reality. Jesus' self-proclamation as the resurrection and the life derives mainly from the fact that he is the locale of life (1:4). As *life* when he comes in contact with the dead, they resurrect, when he comes into contact with the ones who are still alive, they shall never die (v.26). Because he is life ζωή, he is indestructible, then, we can understand that the laying down of his ψυχή can only be temporal, he is well able to take it up again. A related passage is 14:6 where Jesus affirms that he is *life*: "I am the way, the truth and the life".

6.6.1. 3. *John 12:20-26*:

20. And there were some Greeks among the ones going up to worship at the feast; 21. these came to Phillip from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him saying, "sir, we wish to see Jesus. 22 Phillip goes and tells Andrew; both Andrew and Phillip tell Jesus. 23. And Jesus answers and says to them, the hour has come for the son of man to be glorified. 24. Truly truly I say to you, unless the seed of grain that falls into the earth dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25. **The one who loves his (ψυχή) shall lose it, and the one who hates his (ψυχή) in this world shall keep it for/into eternal life (ζωήν αἰώνον).** 26. If anyone serves me, let him follow me, and where I am there my servant shall be; if anyone serves me the father shall honor him.

Comments

Of particular interest to us is verse 25, for the statement sheds light on Jesus' act of laying down his life (ψυχή). In losing his life in this world,⁵⁴⁸ he gains it forever. His act of readiness to lose his life becomes a pattern for his followers/sheep to emulate. If they are willing to lose their lives (ψυχαί),

⁵⁴⁸ It is instructive to note that the Greek verb translated here as 'to lose' ἀπόλλυμι is the same verb that gets translated in some other contexts as to destroy or perish.

they shall gain it back. Of note is the fact that the synoptics have similar readings, a comparison of these may suggest the fourth gospel's special take on the saying:

Matt 10:39: "Whoever finds his life shall lose it and whoever loses his life for my sake shall find it"

Mk 8:35: "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel shall save it".

Lk: 17:33: "Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it".

Jn 12:25: "The one who loves his (ψυχή) shall lose it, and the one who hates his (ψυχή) in this world shall keep it for/into eternal life (ζωήν αἰώνιον)".

It is observable that only the fourth gospel has the phrase 'eternal life' in its rendering, though all the passages have the future in focus. It clearly brings into sharp relief the losing of one's life in this present evil world to gain it in the coming world. Reading verse 25 in light of the preceding verse 24, gives the sense in which to understand verse 25. Verse 24 records a paradox, the seed falls into the ground and dies, this would suggest the destruction or end of that seed. But this seed dies only temporarily, for it soon sprouts and yields more of its kind. Whatever dies in the seed, therefore, does not incapacitate the seed from germinating. This could suggest that the real life of the seed did not die or that the dead seed being acted upon was restored to life and enabled to sprout. This analogy implies/suggests that ζωή is the true life that cannot die; the loss of ψυχή is, therefore, only temporary for the true life ζωή is able to animate the dead ψυχή. The raising of Lazarus, therefore, makes sense, a dead man ψυχή comes into contact with life ζωή or 'hears the voice of the son of God' and comes alive. The statement that those who serve Jesus should follow him in verse 26, may, then, be seen as an invitation to be prepared to lose their ψυχάι like Jesus.

6.6.1. 4. John 1:1-5:

In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God.

2. This (word) was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him.

4 In him **was life and the life** was the light of humanity (ἡ ζωὴ ἣν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων); 5. and the light shines in darkness and darkness did not overcome it.

Comments

The basic idea being projected here is that the locale of 'life' is λόγος the word through whom the world was made. The verse, therefore, brings up the connection between creation and life.

6.6.1. 5. John 3: 13-19, 36 - Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus:

13 No one has gone up to heaven except the son of man who came down from heaven. 14 And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, likewise must the son of man be lifted up.

15. So that whosoever believes in him **shall have eternal life.**

16 For God, in this manner, loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, in order that anyone who believes in him **shall not perish but have eternal life.**

17 For God did not send the son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world may be saved by him.

18 The one who believes in him is not condemned **But the one not believing in him is condemned already.**

19 And this is the condemnation that light has come into the world and human beings loved darkness rather than light, for their works were evil.

36 **The one who believes in the son has eternal life: but the one who does not obey the son shall not see life, but the anger of God remains upon him.**

Comments

These verses bring the idea of the future and present dimensions of eternal life together. The central means to obtaining eternal life both in the future and the present is by believing in Jesus. To have eternal life is the same as not to perish (v. 16), not to be condemned (v. 18) and not to abide under God's anger (v. 36), which are not three different things but three ways of expressing the same idea. Having eternal life is therefore synonymous with being saved from condemnation and God's anger. Our understanding of λόγος as the locale of life in the prologue has been further affirmed by the assertion that obtaining eternal life is by believing in the enfleshed λόγος.

6.6.1.6. *John 4: 46-54:*

46. He then went again into Cana of Galilee, where he had made water wine. And there was a certain nobleman whose son was ill in Capernaum. 47. This man having heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee came to him and requested that he might come down and heal his son, for he was about to die. 48. Then Jesus said to him "if you don't see signs and wonders you (pl) would never believe. 49. The nobleman says to him "Sir, come down before my child dies". 50 Jesus says to him "go; **your son lives**". The man believed the word, which Jesus said to him, and he departed. 51 But already, his servants were coming down to meet him saying that his child **lives**. 52 then he inquired from them the time that he became better; then they said to him that it was yesterday at the seventh hour that the fever left him. 53 Then the father knew that it was that hour in which Jesus had said to him "**your son lives**", and he and his whole house believed. 54 Now this is the second sign that Jesus performed when he came out of Judea into Galilee.

Comments

Most of the uses of *life* in the passages examined so far refer to the symbolic use of *life* to depict and express the life of the Age to come whether as a present reality or a future one. In the story above we have an instance of the use of the word to depict a state of well being in earthly existence. In verse 47 the nobleman asked Jesus to heal his son who was at the point of death. Jesus in response, did not use the characteristic word to depict healing, *ἰάομαι* or *θεραπεύω*, rather, he says the boy lives. The use of the verb form *ζάω* to describe a healing is quite significant for our understanding of the use of the word in the context of a tangible earthly experience.

6.6.1.7. *John 5:19-29:*

19. Then Jesus answered and said to them 'truly truly I say to you, the son is not able to do anything of himself unless what the father does; for whatever he does, these things the son does likewise. 20. For the father loves the son and shows him everything which he does, and greater works than these shall he show him in order that you may marvel. 21. For just as the **father raises the dead and makes alive, likewise also the son makes alive whosoever he wishes**. 22. For the father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the son, 23 so that all may honor the son just as they honor the father. One who does not honor the son does not honor the father who sent him. 24. Truly, truly, I say to you that **the one who hears my word and believes in him who sent me has eternal life and shall not come into condemnation but has passed from death to life**. 25. Truly truly I say to you that the hour is coming and now is when **the dead shall hear the voice of the son of God and the one hearing shall live**. 26 **For just as the father has life in himself, likewise also has he given the son to have life in himself**. 27. And he has given him authority to judge, because he is the son of man. 28. Do not marvel at this, for the

hour is coming when all who are in the tomb shall hear his voice 29. And shall come out, the ones who do good into resurrection of life but the ones who practiced evil into the resurrection of condemnation.

Comments

The idea that God can kill and make alive is well known in Hebrew scriptures (Deut 32:39; Job 12: 10), for example also, Joseph in his prayer for Asenath, his wife, addressed God as the one who makes alive the ones that are dead.⁵⁴⁹ Therefore, to Jesus' interlocutors, the statement that God raises the dead and makes alive is nothing new. What is new, if not sacrilegious, to them is that Jesus shares this prerogative with God. That the son has the power to make alive is later literally fulfilled in the raising of the dead Lazarus in chapter 11. The metaphoric sense of making alive those who are dead is also alluded to for those 'who hear his voice and believe have passed from death to life' (v. 24). Jesus, the λόγος has life in himself just as the father does.

6.7. Conclusion

The gift of 'life' remains the prerogative of God and his sent one, Jesus, as a *beneficium* provided by the patron through the broker. As the author of life he is interested in its preservation. However, the concept of life is not univocal in the fourth gospel, there is life ζωή which is the true or God kind of life that enables the receiver to participate in the world to come, and there is life ψυχή which is the natural, physical life that depicts earthly existence. In human experience, the concerns of ψυχή is in the fore of our daily life experiences. This is also a concern for the Jesus of the fourth gospel, so he feeds the hungry, heals the sick, and raises the dead. In the fourth gospel, however, there is no ambiguity in these two terms (ζωή and ψυχή), they are both distinct, separable and yet interrelated.⁵⁵⁰ All of life issues from God and

⁵⁴⁹ Joseph and Asenath 8:10 "(God calls) from the death to the life", see James H. Charlesworth (ed), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* vol 2, (London: Darton Longman & Todd Ltd, 1985), p. 213.

⁵⁵⁰ This seems contrary to the view held by Tasker, who says "those who are really 'His own' listen to His voice. They recognize that He has been sent from God, and are ready to follow him as the good Shepherd, who by his sacrificial love rescues His flock from evil and death,

all must be done to protect, sustain, and affirm life in all its entirety. However, where ψυχή stands in opposition to the possession or offer of ζωή, the interests of ψυχή must be put on hold in order to affirm and possess ζωή. For ζωή is powerful enough to bring about the retrieval of ψυχή either in this world or in the world to come. Ζωή is the antidote of death and loss of any kind and therefore must never be compromised. In the corollary, and as the passages under review evince, Jesus' offer of ζωή may sometimes never be understood or accepted until the needs of the ψυχή are met. The term 'abundant life' is the same as the term for ζωή 'life', it has only made explicit the implicit, that ζωή 'life' for all its worth cannot be had except in an abundant measure. Jesus, as the fourth gospel clearly demonstrates is the only broker that dispenses ζωή for he is the only one who has seen and been with the father, no one else can take his place. As the sole broker that can dispense the gift of ζωή, any one that leads people away from him is no better than the hirelings, thieves, robbers and wolves that destroy for such leads people away from life. The thieves and robbers of the fourth gospel were leaders who drove people away from the synagogue and sought to turn them away from believing in Jesus.

In the next chapter, we shall bring our exegesis of John 10:10 and its concept of "life" into "conversation with" the Yoruba context by exploring the understanding of some Yoruba prosperity preachers of the term 'abundant life'. This represents the third pole of the Tri-Polar theoretical framework of Draper's hermeneutic as discussed in chapter 2.

and leads them into the best of all pasturage where they can enjoy a richer and a fuller life (9,10). He does not offer them an extension of physical life nor an increase of material possessions, but the possibility, nay the certainty, of a life lived at a higher level in obedience to God's will and reflecting His glory." See R.V.G Tasker, *John. An introduction and commentary*, (London: The Tyndale Press, 1960), p. 130. See also William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary. Exposition of the gospel according to John vol 2*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953), p. 110.

CHAPTER 7 - INTERPRETATION OF JOHN 10:10 BY YORUBA PROSPERITY PREACHERS

7.0. Introduction

This chapter is divided into two basic sections. In the first section, we shall define what prosperity gospel is and identify some of the Yoruba preachers of the gospel. We shall note their broad and nuanced understanding of the prosperity gospel by noting the similarities and differences in their emphases. In addition, the preachers' interpretation of John 10:10 as gleaned from their writings and the interviews this researcher had with them shall be examined.⁵⁵¹ In the second section, we shall employ Relevance Theory (RT) as an analytical tool to ferret out the inner logic behind the praxis of prosperity gospel preachers.⁵⁵² We shall also ask the question of its relation to patron-client relations and brokerage.

In a very general sense every Yoruba gospel preacher preaches prosperity, for embedded in the Yoruba understanding of what constitutes good news is a form of prosperity or better stated, a desire for well being. The story of the advent and growth of Christianity among the Yoruba, as described in chapter 4, has shown that without the twin notions of progress and well being that characterized the religion, Christianity might never have gained a foothold in the society. However, the prosperity gospel as it is understood today is beyond what the missionaries brought or anticipated and far beyond what the Yoruba culture and tradition hoped for. For one, the missionaries never considered prosperity as part of the atonement, if for anything; they disparaged the this-world-centeredness of Yoruba religion and sought to

⁵⁵¹ The researcher had interviews with ministers of the gospel across the denominational boundaries like the Anglican, the Methodist, the Baptist, the Neo-Pentecostals. Focused interview was held with Bishop Oyedepo of Winners' Chapel; Bishop Wale Oke of Christ Life Church; and Pastor Olu Obanure of RCCG representing the General Overseer, Pastor E.A. Adeboye. Interview with the three leaders was held in the month of January in 2010.

⁵⁵² Relevance Theory was introduced in the chapter two of this work and some of the concepts discussed there shall be applied in this section.

make the people more other-worldly-centered.⁵⁵³ The Yoruba culture that honored the wealthy did so within a context where one has an obligation towards one's extended family members and affinal relationships. In such a context it was quite difficult to make an excessive accumulation of wealth. Moreover, where land remained the greatest resource, the localization of such wealth within a particular geographical location implies the limitedness of such wealth. It is, therefore in light of globalization and its implications that the prosperity gospel must be discussed as a phenomenon that far outstrips its predecessors in terms of its impetus, its scope and its implications.

We shall understand prosperity preachers, therefore, as preachers within the Pentecostal circle⁵⁵⁴ that consider themselves as preaching prosperity gospel (like Bishop Wale Oke), or have a definite emphasis on prosperity preaching or teaching as a key component of their ministry (as in the case of Bishop Oyedepo), or preachers who are known to have deliberately incorporated teaching or preaching on prosperity in contrast to the old paths of the ministry in yester years (like Pastor E.A. Adeboye). These three Yoruba preachers in these ways are attested by my respondents as preaching prosperity. While there are other Yoruba preachers that now preach prosperity, none, perhaps, rival these three.⁵⁵⁵ The term 'prosperity preacher/preaching' is not used in this work in any derogatory sense, but as a

⁵⁵³ See Peel, *Religious encounter*, p. 91, "Mission Christianity's emphasis (was) on 'eternal life,' salvation in the world to come."

⁵⁵⁴ Incidentally, all these ministries are headed by males with their wives often in a secondary role. For this reason, the three preachers interviewed are all men.

⁵⁵⁵ Bishop Oyedepo is the most prominent, flamboyant and popular Yoruba preacher of prosperity, while Pastor Adeboye is still perceived in many quarters as a holiness preacher mainly because 'prosperity preaching' is sometimes viewed in a derogatory sense. However, all note that RCCG, under his leadership, has an added emphasis on prosperity. His writings attest also to the same. Bishop Wale Oke is an avowed preacher of the prosperity gospel. Another prominent Yoruba preacher is Pastor W.F. Kumuyi of the Deeper Life Bible Church, he is the most notable holiness preacher. Observers like Ruth Marshall have noted that he has imbibed some bit of prosperity preaching also, but this emphasis in no way compares with the three aforementioned preachers. In addition, he is still perceived by many as a holiness preacher. Furthermore, the popularity which his church once enjoyed has dwindled, perhaps, on account of the fact that he shuns publicity and is therefore less visible. This point is particularly pertinent, for prosperity preachers must be seen to be prosperous as an evidence of the veracity of their message.

descriptive term to heuristically explain an observed notion in the Pentecostal landscape.

The findings of this researcher in the course of interviews with the preachers shall be supplemented with their writings to give the preachers' views of prosperity and their interpretation of John 10:10. These preachers share the same general Yoruba traditional context and are all graduates. Bishop Wale Oke and Bishop David Oyedepo were leaders of Christian Union in their institutions in their time while Pastor Adeboye got saved outside of his days as a student. However, having been a lecturer at one of the country's institutions of learning, he was not impervious to the 'Christian revolution' of the 70s. The discussion of each preacher will include a general introduction of the preacher in terms of conversion experience, ministerial and secular training/ education, emphasis of ministry, understanding of prosperity as a Christian heritage, and interpretation of John 10:10.

7.1. Bishop Wale Oke

Wale Oke, a graduate in Environmental Engineering, from the University of Lagos,⁵⁵⁶ got converted in 1975 under the auspices of Scripture Union (SU). He later went on to become the President of Lagos Varsity Christian Union (LVCU). Of Anglican background, he went back to the Anglican church with the Pentecostal experience but was met with a stiff opposition from the church's authorities and in his own words "they kicked us out".⁵⁵⁷ He started an inter-denominational ministry called Sword of the Spirit Ministries in 1983. In 1989, the church arm of the ministry named Christ Life Church was inaugurated. Presently, the ministry is working hard at the establishment of a university called Precious Cornerstone University (PCU). The ministry's headquarters is in Ibadan, in the South Western part of Nigeria.

⁵⁵⁶ See Matthews Ojo, *The end-time army*, p. 163

⁵⁵⁷ Personal interview with Wale Oke on 21/01/2010, in Ibadan.

7.1.1. Views on Prosperity

Concerning his views on prosperity, Bishop Oke believes that it is part of the atonement. He concedes that it is an understanding that is new for it was not known in the 70s. For him, revelation is progressive and one has to walk in the light one has, so they walked in the light that they had in the 70s but now that they now have new revelation concerning prosperity, he is walking in it now, teaches it and “it works”. While not disputing the influence of American tele-evangelists or the fact that there was poverty in the land as part of the context of the prosperity gospel, he insists that the primary reason for embracing the prosperity emphasis was that they/he found it in the word of God. He differentiates between what he calls materialism and prosperity. For him, materialism is selfish, is about greed and about accumulation but prosperity is a tool for mission work. He differentiates between acquiring money for one’s own personal use only and using such resources for kingdom work. On the question of the popularity of the message only in urban settings, he insists that he establishes churches also in rural or poor sections of town but such mission outposts cannot thrive unless there are churches in the elite sections of town funding them. So part of mission strategy, he opines, is to establish churches first in elite areas and for one church in an elite area can support two mission churches in rural areas. On mission agencies that seem to have a dearth of volunteers for mission work, he recommends that they drop the “old missionary method” that sees poverty as a given for those who serve God. He, however, concedes that there is “wilderness experience” for those who serve God, when the Lord would test the heart of the fellow to ascertain that it is not minded towards financial gain, by permitting suffering of some kind.

7.1.2. Interpretation of John 10:10⁵⁵⁸

The thief cometh not but to steal, to kill and to destroy. Whether you are born again or not you will live for ever, but we are talking of eternal life, the emphasis is not much on the length of days but on the quality, we are talking of ζωή the very life of God, the essence of God, not βίος biological life. Ζωή means to enjoy glorious eternity in the presence of God, you will live for ever. The redemption that Jesus paid for on the cross of Calvary is redemption of the spirit, redemption from the curses of the law, redemption from poverty. But you see your understanding rules your life, there is nobody that can live above the level of his/her understanding, "with all your getting get understanding." you may be sick in your body you need good health, you may be poor at that level of your understanding.. that level you can enjoy your wealth... to enjoy the best of everything that God has provided for you..... be it unto you according to your faith.because he is the king of glory..In a nutshell abundant life, the life of God.. it goes way beyond ... that they may have life he won't love me any more when I get to heaven than he did when I was on earth... I ride high...I fly like father Abraham, riding in the high places of... I got born again in 1975 so I can tell you something about...

Bishop Oke differentiates between βίος and ζωή, that the former is biological life while the latter is the life of God, it is the essence of God. The emphasis of ζωή is not on the length of days but on quality, which is joy, righteousness, peace, it begins right here on earth but does not end here. The righteous are those who have received this life and they will never die. There are differences between life, abundant life and more abundant life. *Life* talks of going to heaven, having one's sins forgiven. In his book, *The Precious Blood of Jesus*, Wale Oke clearly states his understanding of abundant life as a component of the atonement of Jesus. According to him, the blood of Jesus was shed from five major points of his body: his back, his head, his hands, his feet and his side. Blood flowed from Jesus' hands when nails pierced them as he was nailed to the cross. The significance of the blood shed from Jesus' hands lies in the symbolic role of hands as the means of acquiring wealth:

⁵⁵⁸ Excerpts of the interview with Bishop Wale Oke on his interpretation of John 10:10 are indicated in italics and indented. Excerpts of interview with other preachers are also presented in italics and indented.

Your hands are the symbol of your economic capability and strength. Your hands are used to labour and to gather wealth. You receive and give money with your hands. The bible always talks of the **'the work of your hands'** or **'that which you set your hands upon to do'** (Deuteronomy 28:8,12)...You handle money with your hands. Your hands have to do with your prosperity. This is why a man who is lazy or idle shall come to poverty; but the diligent shall be made rich.⁵⁵⁹

Adam lost the abundance of provision he had when he fell, for the ground was cursed because of him. For this reason it would no longer give the man its full yield on cultivation, rather thorns and thistles would grow:

One crucial area where the curse that came in the fall affected man was his economy. Prior to the fall man was living in God's abundance. All he needed was freely available in the garden. He did not need to sweat in order to eat. Abundance was at his finger tips. As a matter of fact, God provided before He made man. Eden means abundance; pleasure; paradise; bliss; or delight. At the fall, man was driven out of Eden, from thenceforth to live 'out of the sweat' of his face. Prior to the fall, his land yielded superabundantly. Now, following the fall, the land 'shall no longer yield its strength'. Poverty, hardship, insufficiency and debt were direct products of the curse. The work of man's hands was cursed and his economic capability diminished. Poverty now replaced abundance.⁵⁶⁰

Jesus, as the second Adam through whom God was making a new creation, 'though rich became poor for your sakes of so that through his poverty, you might be rich'.⁵⁶¹ Oke argues that unlike what other interpreters have said, the poverty in view here is physical and not spiritual, for Jesus can on no account be considered to be spiritually poor. Therefore, "the abundant life that Jesus has brought for us includes financial and material prosperity". He purchased this for believers "by shedding that precious blood through his hands" by virtue of this "Jesus released the covenant blessing of wealth upon your hands - the power to get and create wealth".⁵⁶²

⁵⁵⁹ Francis Wale Oke, *The precious blood of Jesus*, (Surrey: Eagle, 1999), pp. 125-6. Bold is his.

⁵⁶⁰ Wale Oke, *The precious blood*, p. 127

⁵⁶¹ II Corinthians 8:9 cited by Oke on page 130 of *The precious blood*

⁵⁶² Wale Oke, *The precious blood*, p. 130

Oke observes that objections to health and wealth as God's will for believers sometimes come from those living in affluent societies. He counters the objections by noting that those living in affluent societies enjoy and take for granted a comfortable lifestyle which other people in developing countries can only dream about. As he says:

they have never tasted the pangs of poverty and homelessness, hence, they do not know by experience what it is to be liberated from poverty. They are already enjoying abundant life, because of the gospel.⁵⁶³

In addition, Wale Oke believes that Satan sends demons of poverty to attack "individuals, families, homes, institutions, companies, nations, churches and Christian ministries".⁵⁶⁴ The thief of John 10:10 is understood to be Satan: "there is an enemy that does not want you to enjoy life in its fullness. This enemy has come to steal, to kill and to destroy. Every human being is under his attack. You are a prime target."⁵⁶⁵ Furthermore, poverty could also be as a result of disobedience while prosperity comes as result of obedience, Africa today is poor "as a result of centuries of idolatry, superstition, and witchcraft".⁵⁶⁶ Russia is also poor today because it forsook God and embraced communism and ungodliness. In conclusion he asserts, "poverty is an enemy that Jesus conquered on the cross by allowing his hands to be pierced to free you from its grips....His hands were pierced that your hands may be blessed".⁵⁶⁷

One of the practices recommended for prosperity is the giving of one's first fruits. First fruits are understood in these times as:

Your salary in a new employment, the first profit in a new business venture, the first produce of your farm, the difference in your old and new salaries when you were promoted, the first money you earn in a new year. These are examples of the first fruit. You are to bring it to the man of God in the house of God. He will receive it from your hand and command the blessing of the Lord to rest upon you and all your works.

⁵⁶³ Wale Oke, *The precious blood*, p. 131

⁵⁶⁴ Wale Oke, *The precious blood*, p. 132

⁵⁶⁵ Francis Wale Oke, *Changed from glory to glory. A daily devotional*, (Ibadan: His Kingdom House, 2009), p. 378.

⁵⁶⁶ Wale Oke, *The precious blood*, p. 133

⁵⁶⁷ Wale Oke, *The precious blood*, pp. 133-134.

It is this blessing of the Lord that will make you rich and will add no sorrow to it (Proverbs 10:22).⁵⁶⁸

7.1.3. Appraisal of Bishop Wale Oke's interpretation of John 10:10

Bishop Oke is not out to do an exegesis of the text, in terms of its literary or socio-cultural context. However, he has taken heed of the semantic and theological meaning of the word 'life'. He rightly notes the difference between βίος and ζωή, a commendable feat for someone who has had no theological training, he does acknowledge, however, that he reads bible commentaries. His understanding that abundant life has to do with prosperity or wealth is contextual and is really not new. A number of Christian agencies engaged in social work have always used the term 'abundant life' as a motivation for their work.⁵⁶⁹ Of note is that in the 70s, as he claims, the term 'abundant life' would not have been interpreted as having anything to do with prosperity. His view that 'life' and 'abundant life' are different concepts shall be treated later. The local context of economic deprivation and the global context of the 'faith movement' undoubtedly contribute to his rereading/reinterpretation of John 10:10. He, however, does not give these factors as much credit as the fact that he found prosperity in the word of God. For him, it was God's act of 'revelation' that caused him to understand the same passage in a new light. However, the way he uses the "we/them" categories in the interview shows that his rereading did not take place in isolation, it appears that there seems to be a group of fellow readers who have come to the same conclusion as he. He inadvertently mentioned one of them during the interview when he said that he was believing God for his own jet like Adeboye who has an airplane. The 'other' for him is what he calls 'the old school' or 'the missionary method'; these are those who believe that one must suffer as a true servant of God. He wonders how they hope to reach the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ if

⁵⁶⁸ Wale Oke, *From glory to glory*, p. 23.

⁵⁶⁹ Stuart J. Kingman, the director of the Christian Medical Commission of the W.C.C. alludes to this view in his article 'Mere survival or a more abundant life', *Ecumenical Review* 33:3 (July 1981), pp. 257-271; Frederick J. Gaiser's editorial comment, 'abundant life: here and hereafter', *Word and World* 21:4 (Fall, 2001), pp. 331-332.

they still hold on to their old method, for using a boat would take them a long time to reach the world with the Gospel! Another group of 'the other' that he identified are those who are materialistic, their intention in preaching the gospel is the accumulation of wealth, "to collect tithes, eat and be fat". For him, prosperity is a tool for world mission.

Oke's understanding of one's hands as the means of wealth acquisition stems from the fact that it is the part of human body that is used actively to work. This insight, perhaps, cuts across many cultures. It is noteworthy that all the scripture passages cited to support his idea of what hands connote all come from the Old Testament. The Hebrew word translated hand is yad and is often used in a figurative sense to mean strength and power, Oke's interpretation of 'hand' as depicting economic capability is therefore, an extension of this nuance.⁵⁷⁰ However, to say that Jesus' hands were pierced so that the believer's hands may be blessed seems quite unnecessary in his interpretative bid for it does not really build up his argument. For his story of how poverty came into the world was the cursing of the ground at the fall of Adam, it had nothing to do with Adam's hands *per se*. So if Jesus' suffering and death was to be a recovery of the paradise lost, does it really matter from which part of Jesus' body the blood flowed? Second, if Jesus' death did not abolish physical death for believers in the present world, one of the effects of the curse, to what extent can one take the view that Jesus' death abolished poverty? We shall turn to this question of prosperity as part of atonement later on in the study.

However, in light of our exegetical analysis of John 10:10 in the previous chapter, the concern and provision of the good shepherd for the wellbeing of the sheep does lend credence, though in an attenuated manner, to Bishop Oke's assertion that the sphere of God's concern is not only spiritual but

⁵⁷⁰ See yad in Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon, (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc, 1906), p. 390b

physical as well. For in the fourth gospel the physical and spiritual are intertwined. Though the fourth gospel expresses the spatial duality between 'above' /heaven and 'below' /earth, moral and cosmic duality between light and darkness, the thrust of the Gospel is that Jesus has come as a bridge between the two, those who are in darkness can through him come to light, those who are earth-minded can through him become heaven-minded.⁵⁷¹ In addition, the fourth gospel affirms that both the material and the spiritual should be held together in dialogical tension except where the material ψυχή threatens the spiritual ζωή. In light of this, Bishop Oke's understanding that the spiritual and the material that had been seen as antithetical polarities in the 70s are now being seen as allies. For example, the tripartite being: spirit, soul and body is being viewed as a whole and not as parts anymore. That is, prosperity in one's soul or spirit does not have to be at the expense of material prosperity. However, it appears that a thorough fusion of the parts is not being advocated by Oke and others, for fasting is still a recommended practice among all Nigerian Pentecostals today.⁵⁷² This is more so the case because as Bishop Oke opines, poverty could be inflicted by demons and is hence a spiritual matter to be dealt with. However, we shall now turn to another view that sees prosperity as a phenomenon that does not respond to prayer or fasting.

On Wale Oke's teaching on the first fruits, Kenneth Hagin's general observation that the main justification for teachings on first fruits comes from the Old Testament where food crops were brought to the priests is noteworthy:

Making a New Testament application of Old Testament technicalities violates every principle of Bible interpretation, especially when there isn't a single New Testament usage of the word "firstfruits" in the context in which it is being preached by some ministers. The concept of

⁵⁷¹ See this discussion in chapter 5.

⁵⁷² See Wale Oke, *From glory to glory*, p. 396 'the power of fasting'. In RCCG, an annual fasting for 40 days is recommended for the members of the church in the month of February, while in Winners' Chapel, an annual three-week fasting period in the beginning of the month of January is recommended.

firstfruits is not used in the New Testament in reference to financial giving. There is not even the vaguest hint of it by any New Testament writer in reference to money or support of ministers.⁵⁷³

7.2. Bishop David Oyedepo

Born on 27 September 1954, Bishop David Olaniyi Oyedepo is the founder of David Oyedepo Ministries international (DOMI), a renaming of the Faith Liberation Hour Ministries, which he began in 1981. Bishop Oyedepo is also the presiding Bishop of Living Faith Church Worldwide, better known as Winners' Chapel, which was inaugurated in 1983 as the church arm of the ministry. In addition, he is the Senior Pastor of Faith Tabernacle, Canaanland, a 560-acre land facility, in Ota, South Western Nigeria. The church seats 50,000 worshippers at a time. The David Oyedepo Ministries International (DOMI), is a formidable phenomenon boasting a modern University known as Covenant University, secondary and primary schools, several business outfits, church branches all over Africa and overseas and another university in the founder's home state (Kwara) that will soon open in the course of the year.⁵⁷⁴

Born Again in 1969, Bishop Oyedepo received the Holy Spirit baptism in 1975.⁵⁷⁵ Always careful to date his experiences and the benchmarks of his ministries, Oyedepo recounts that his call to ministry was on May 1, 1981 when he received what he calls the liberation mandate. This was his launching pad into ministry. On August 26, 1987, he received the prosperity mandate while attending a conference in the US. Talking more about this mandate to the researcher, Oyedepo recalls that he was to speak at Fred K.C. Price that morning when in the course of having his morning devotion he received the mandate "Arise, go home and make my people rich". As a result of this message, and with heavy heart at having to disappoint Fred Price, a

⁵⁷³ Kenneth Hagin, *The Midas touch*, pp. 167-168. This critique, coming from the father of the faith movement, is noteworthy.

⁵⁷⁴ See Kuponu, 'The Living Faith Church', pp. 39ff.

⁵⁷⁵ Kuponu, Selome Igbekere, 'The Living Faith Church, pp18f, 26.

bosom brother, he cancelled his speaking engagements and went back home as commanded. On getting home (Nigeria) he began conducting *Breakthrough Business Seminars* in hotels, the aim of which was to “address business people on biblical principles for breakthrough in their businesses”. This was later renamed *Breakthrough Seminars* and expanded to include all categories of people not just business people “to open the eyes of understanding of the people to the covenant of blessings so that they can engage it in their own lives and see God’s hand at work in their lives”.⁵⁷⁶ Today, Bishop Oyedepo is well-known as a prosperity gospel preacher, an accolade that he rejects.⁵⁷⁷

Bishop Oyedepo’s prosperity mandate in 1987 follows on the heels of the understanding of prosperity that he received while reading Gloria Copeland’s book *God’s Will Is Prosperity* with his Bible in hand back in March 1981 during a three-day search.⁵⁷⁸ Since then Oyedepo has written extensively and articulately on the subject matter.

7.2.1. Views on Prosperity

There are about two basic working premises on which Bishop Oyedepo’s teaching on prosperity hangs. One is that prosperity is part of the atonement, the major text for this is 2 Corinthians 8:9 “For ye know the grace of our lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” Explaining his understanding of this verse Oyedepo says:

Jesus descended from His throne, to take us into glory, thereby making wealth a part of our redemption package. Jesus did not only come to save us from sin, He also came to rescue us from the consequences of sin, prominent among which is poverty....So, one of the principal consequences of sin is poverty. No wonder, the Son of God came, He made it part of His business to restore the dignity of wealth back to humanity.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁶ Interview with Bishop Oyedepo on 25/01/10 at Canaanland in Ota.

⁵⁷⁷ David Oyedepo, *Understanding financial prosperity*, (Ota: Dominion Publishing House, 2005), p. 14

⁵⁷⁸ Oyedepo, *Understanding financial prosperity*, p. 145, 155

⁵⁷⁹ Oyedepo, *Covenant wealth*, (Ota: Dominion Publishing House, 1992), p. 36

In another book, Oyedepo says:

I am redeemed to be enriched! So I will be an abuse to redemption if I don't actualize that dimension of my redemption....I'd like you to say and believe this: "I am saved to display His wealth! I am on the right side! I am not a goat! So wealth is my heritage, abundance is my birthright" Friend you are saved to display His wealth on the earth! To clothe the naked, feed the hungry and attend to the sick! That's what you are sent to do! (Matt.25:34-40)...Prosperity is our identity. If you don't demonstrate it, then you are a misfit in the kingdom.⁵⁸⁰

The second working premise is that possession of wealth is covenantal. This is two-pronged. The first prong is linked to redemption. Belief in Jesus has made the believer a partaker in the covenant blessing of Abraham. This covenant is expressed in Genesis 12:2 "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing". This covenant was the reason for God's desire to give the children of Israel the 'power to get wealth' as expressed in Deut 8:18 "but thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day." Gentiles now have access to this Abrahamic covenant through Jesus Christ as found in Galatians 3:14 "He redeemed us in order that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Jesus Christ... ." Oyedepo explains thus:

Wealth is in the Church, so that God's covenant can be proved...Jesus came to link humanity with that covenant, so that everybody who believes in Him is now linked up with the covenant of greatness....Jesus came and renewed it by bringing all humanity into it, so that we who are Gentiles have become partakers of the blessings of Abraham, through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.⁵⁸¹

The second prong of prosperity as covenantal is found in Genesis 8:22 "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease". These words that were originally spoken by God to Noah after the event of the flood are understood

⁵⁸⁰ Oyedepo, *Understanding financial prosperity*, pp.16, 17.

⁵⁸¹ Oyedepo, *Covenant wealth*, pp. 38-9.

as laying bare an immutable principle that there could never be a harvest without planting or sowing. This verse is behind the understanding that considers giving as sowing and receiving as harvesting. Therefore, for Oyedepo, the covenant of the Abrahamic blessing does not guarantee prosperity on its own without the complementary acts of sowing/giving. The covenant is infallible, it will always prevail for it is not subject to the economy of any nation or the kind of job one does or one's family background.⁵⁸² Oyedepo insists that prosperity does not come by fasting and prayer but by observing the covenant, for it is not a promise but a contract. He says: "prosperity in the kingdom doesn't answer to fasting, nor does it answer to prayer or prayer of agreement! It only answers to your understanding and practice of covenant details.⁵⁸³ For Oyedepo, giving, which is sowing, is crucial to receiving God's prosperity, but this is only a necessary but not a sufficient condition. The attitude and motive of the giver is paramount in determining if the giving will attract a blessing. The attitude must be joyful and cheerful while the motive must be kingdom-driven:

The reason many givers give today is that they are seeking for money. They give their tithe only so they can have more money, but not so that God's kingdom can be expanded. They give, not so that God can fulfil His purpose of reaching the nations of the earth with the gospel, but they cast their offering into the basket so that they can get more money. God is saying, "*Run after Me, then I will supernaturally add those things to you*". That is the only way to lay up gold as dust...it is your attitude for giving that determines whether it has returns or not. Many prosperity preachers have missed this point. They tell you that if you give, God will in turn increase your purse. It is not true.⁵⁸⁴

The act of giving includes paying tithes, giving offerings, kingdom-promotion giving, giving to the poor and giving to the prophets.⁵⁸⁵ In addition to these one must fulfil one's obligations to one's parents and family.

⁵⁸² Oyedepo, *Understanding financial prosperity*, p. 11, 28ff;

⁵⁸³ Oyedepo, *Understanding financial prosperity*, p.23; *Covenant wealth*, p.52;

⁵⁸⁴ Oyedepo, *Covenant wealth*, pp. 85-87 (italics is his); See also *Understanding financial prosperity*, p. 220-221.

⁵⁸⁵ Oyedepo, *Understanding financial prosperity*, p. 185ff, p.

For Oyedepo, God is bound to bless the end-time church because huge funds are needed for missions-outreach to the nations and it is only when the whole world has been reached that Jesus will return (Matthew 24:14). At another level, the prosperity of believers is meant to attract people to the church as prophesied by Micah 4:1-2 and Isaiah 2:1-3:

In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, "come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths...

The type of prosperity in view here is not the ability to feed self and family, or to have enough just to get by as Oyedepo says:

The end-time Church is a prosperous Church. So it's important for you to understand how to prosper in the kingdom, how to enjoy true prosperity. It's not, "God just give me something to eat and to drink." No! He wants to make you a blessing, and all the people of the earth shall see it ...God is going to raise commanders of such terrific wealth in the body of Christ! People who will change the destiny of multitudes!...Plenty is your heritage....God takes pleasure in your plenty.⁵⁸⁶

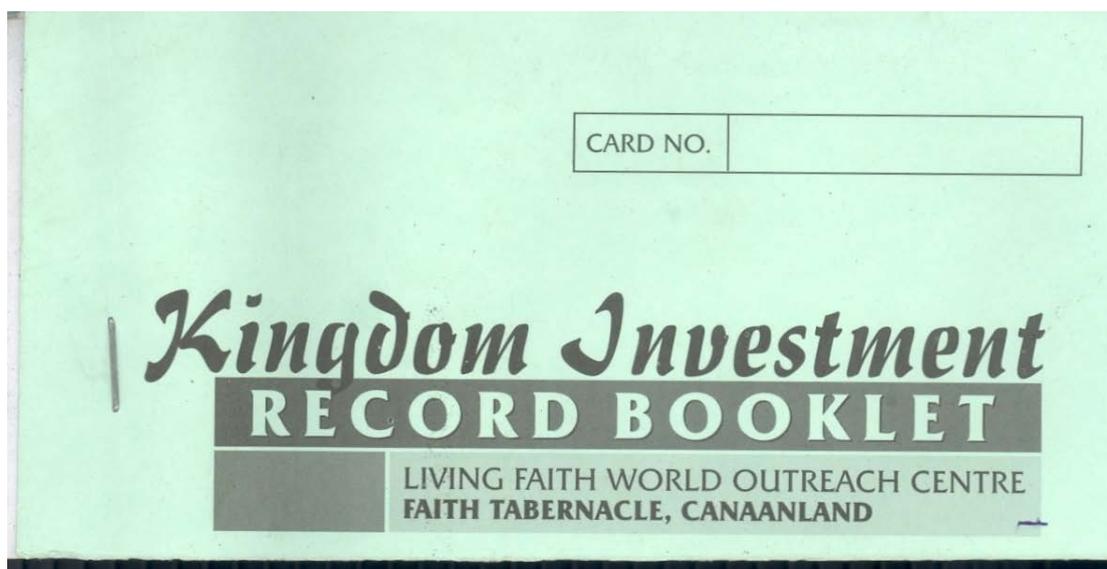
The testimonies of people who have received one blessing or another in the ministry as recorded in some of the writings of Oyedepo present us with the practices of the members of the church with respect to giving. One common form of giving is 'sacrificial giving'. Sacrificial giving takes its cue from Abraham who was ready to sacrifice his son at God's command and from David who would not offer God a sacrifice that cost him nothing. Sacrificial giving, then, is the giving of something one considers precious. Oyedepo, therefore, admonishes people, "When a call for sacrifice is made, don't say, 'I don't have'. The clothes on your body can be given as a sacrifice. If you let the opportunity pass you by, you may end up in the pit."⁵⁸⁷ Other testimonies show various acts of giving such as prophet offering, kingdom investment,

⁵⁸⁶ Oyedepo, *Understanding financial prosperity*, pp. 10, 11; see also his *All you need to have all your needs met*, pp. 5-6.

⁵⁸⁷ Oyedepo, *Understanding financial prosperity*, p.305.

vows, Aircraft seed, Foreign Missions subscription, Canaanland subscription, Tithes, AGIP (African Gospel Invasion Program).⁵⁸⁸ See plate 7.1. below that depicts the record booklet of a member's giving in form of a bank's cheque-booklet. This graphically imprints on the mind of the giver that he/she is writing out a cheque that will enable him/her withdraw cash from an account.

Plate 6.



7.2.2. Bishop Oyedepo's Interpretation of John 10:10⁵⁸⁹

According to Bishop Oyedepo, 'abundant life' in John 10:10 is the restoration of all that Adam lost in the garden of Eden at the Fall:

I believe John 10:10 is saying that Jesus is giving whole scale life back to man after the order that existed before the fall and that is why he calls it abundant life, that we may have it more abundantly. My understanding is that it is life at its best, "you were properly dead but I came to give you life at its best, as it was, before the fall": divine health, soundness, mental prowess, intelligence, all of that, everything that reflects God that Adam had before the Fall, Jesus said "I have come to restore everything." Abundant life is actually

⁵⁸⁸ David Oyedepo, *Signs and wonders today. A catalogue of the amazing acts of God among men*, (Ota: Dominion Publishing House, 2006), pp. 173-217.

⁵⁸⁹ Based on an interview with Bishop Oyedepo on 25/01/10 at his Office in Ota, Ogun State, South Western Nigeria, excerpts from the interview are presented in italics.

eternal life, God-kind of life, so my understanding of this is that it is talking of restoration of all that was lost before the fall in man.

He acknowledges that prosperity as part of the atonement is a new understanding that he attributes to the general increase in knowledge, which has been experienced in all areas of human endeavor:

Knowledge is an ever-growing virtue whether in the spiritual or in the physical. Communication used to be by radio, then it developed into analog then to digital and now we have GSM. I got saved in 1969, preached my first message in 70, so I have followed through on the developments. Some people just refuse to grow, they are grieving, they are grieving that knowledge is growing because knowledge grows,...you see there is a statement that Paul the Apostle made, he says there are these things that are hidden for ages but are now revealed to his holy Apostles and prophets, so there are now-revelations, every generation has it, the now-revelations, the now-revelations, so we can't see far and say this is how it was in 1970, in 1980s but how is it now. Because back in the 1970s no church would think of having a university, no there was no capacity for it. There has to be some revelation that would back it up. Now there are more than 18 church-based universities in Nigeria, if there was no growth in revelation, we would never have arrived at such a position, so for me, I don't think that what was happening in 1970 is any superior to what is happening now... for we are the same people that were there. What is happening now is superior, there are things that were not known in 1970s that are known now without losing what we knew then. Sin is still sin today. ...You don't lose where you are coming from to arrive at the new one, you build on where you are coming from to arrive at the new one. In 1970, we talk of sickness as a blessing, .."thank God for so and so is sick whatever God wants to teach him in the course of this sickness O Lord teach him." I was part of such prayer (laughs) but now we know that sickness is an oppression of the devil, knowledge is growing and with that authority is now imbued in us to rebuke it, "you foul spirit of infirmity lose your grip," we didn't know that demon possession and sickness were linked, so the issue is, there is a growth in insight by God's own choice, ..he reveals those things to his holy Apostles and prophets. In 1983,... in 1980 if you talk about prosperity you are an outcast, an out---cast, I mean out, that is you are cast out! One of my brothers in town, warned his congregation when we came to Lagos from Kaduna, "they have arrived here in Lagos having corrupted the Gospel in the North, they have come here, stay off the place". That same brother of mine writes today on prosperity, things change. I didn't have any quarrel with him, that was his own

opinion and he had right to it, but today he teaches and writes on prosperity.

Bishop Oyedepo has not made very serious comments on John 10:10 in his writings. Below are just the few citations of the verse in one of his books:

No one has an inheritance in a family to which he does not belong. In the same way being born again is a prerequisite for you to be an inheritor of the rich heritage made available by covenant through the shed blood of Jesus. It is our heritage to be fruitful, prosperous, healthy and to enjoy long life among other things because Jesus came to give the believer an abundantly good life (Jn. 10:10).⁵⁹⁰

We shall note that Oyedepo has added the adjective 'good' to modify 'life' in the verse in order to show what type of 'life' he has in mind. The phrase 'the good life' expresses the traditional Yoruba sense of well-being *alafia* as expressed in the saying: *Ire owo, ire omo ire aiku baale oro*, 'the blessing of money, the blessing of children and the blessing of long life the chief of wealth'. This sums up what the prosperity gospel is all about and its resonance with Yoruba traditional thought. The use of John 10:10 above also demonstrates how scripture texts are used; usually to support a view as long as there are correspondences between the wording of the text and the topic being discussed. The literary or social contexts are often not considered. Secondly, this use of John 10:10 in a piece of writing as compared with an interview, which is oral, also demonstrates the difference observable when a preacher comments on a text for its own sake and when a text is employed in the service of a particular topic or theme as corroborative evidence.

The next two citations and use of John 10:10 are more about the activities of the 'thief' in the text. The 'thief' is usually identified as Satan as noted below:

The devil is very furious and violent, looking for any careless person who will not run to the Saviour, to humiliate, devastate and destroy. Jesus described the devil's three-fold mission of wickedness in John 10:10:⁵⁹¹

⁵⁹⁰ Oyedepo, *Possessing your possession*, p.9

⁵⁹¹ Oyedepo, *Possessing your possession*, p. 25

God sent Jesus to the world to counter-attack the works of the devil. His mission is to restore, replace and return whatever the enemy has killed, stolen or destroyed in your marriage and home.⁵⁹²

7.2.3. Appraisal of Bishop Oyedepo's view of the Prosperity Gospel and Interpretation of John 10:10

For Bishop Oyedepo the hinge on which prosperity rests is the covenant. The covenant, as he explains, is contractual with each party having obligations to fulfil in order to keep the covenant valid. What he refers to as the covenant are really two different utterances of blessing. The first one was uttered by God to Noah, after the flood, Noah had made burnt sacrifice to God out of the animals that had come out with him from the ark and this act provoked the following thoughts from the Lord:

The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done. As long as the earth endures,

seedtime and harvest,
cold and heat,
summer and winter, day and night
will never cease."⁵⁹³ (Genesis 8: 21-22, NIV)

This is what Bishop Oyedepo refers to as covenant, but this is not, strictly speaking, a covenant, rather it is an expression of God's commitment to uphold creation and the cycles that sustain it. However, the fact that the statement is not a covenant does not make it any less reliable, but the covenant that God made with Noah is found in Genesis 9: 9-16:

I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you – the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you – every living creature on earth. I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth." And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every

⁵⁹² Oyedepo, *Possessing your possession*, p. 105

⁵⁹³ Bold mine and this is the portion quoted by the preachers as the covenant.

living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all the living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth. (NIV)

This is a general covenant made with all of creation and not peculiar to any group. It affirms the statement in Genesis 8:21-22 that God would preserve his creation. This aligns with Dumbrell's assertion that covenants do not establish relationships, rather they confirm existing relationship "by further quasi-legal arrangements".⁵⁹⁴ Paul's use of the term 'sowing' to depict 'giving' in 2 Corinthians 9:6 has popularized Genesis 8:22 "as long as earth endures..." and Bishop Oyedepo has elevated God's utterance of blessing on all creation to the status of a covenant and made it the prerogative of Christians.

The second 'covenant' to which Bishop Oyedepo refers and which he calls the "covenant God swore to Abraham",⁵⁹⁵ is alluded to in Deuteronomy 8:18:

But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today. (Deut 8:18, NIV)

Oyedepo links this verse with Galatians 3:14, "...wealth is in the Church, so that God's covenant can be proved. In Galatians 3:13-14..."⁵⁹⁶

He redeemed us in order **that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus**, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. (NIV, bold mine)

We must note that Oyedepo has made a shift from talking of the covenant of Abraham as found in Deuteronomy 8:18 to the blessing of Abraham as found in Galatians 3:14. These are presented as being the same but they are not.

⁵⁹⁴ W.J. Dumbrell, 'Covenant' in David J. Atkinson and David H. Field (eds), *New dictionary of Christian ethics and pastoral theology*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1995), p. 266..

⁵⁹⁵ Oyedepo, *Covenant wealth*, p. 38

⁵⁹⁶ Oyedepo, *Covenant wealth*, p. 39, the part in bold is the one quoted in the book.

What is the covenant to which Deuteronomy 8:18 refers and what is the blessing that Galatians 3:14 refers? The covenant that the Lord made with Abraham is found in Genesis 15:18-21. Prior to this narration, Abram had complained about his childlessness to God and expressed fear that his slave would inherit his properties. The Lord told him that he would have a son of his own who would inherit his properties. He also told Abram that he was giving him the land where he was staying. Abram sought confirmation that he would really possess the land. The Lord then told Abram to bring him some animals and birds. Abram killed these animals and presented them before the Lord. God then made a covenant with Abram:

On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, “to your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates -- the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites”. Genesis 15:18ff (NIV).

So the covenant that God made with Abram was that his descendants would inherit a particular geographical space as specified in the covenant. However, in Galatians 3:13-14, the blessing of Abraham that the Gentiles are a part of on account of Jesus is not the inheritance of a particular geographical space. Rather, the blessing of Abraham to which Galatians alludes is found in Genesis 12:1-3, with particular emphasis on verse 3 “all nations will be blessed through you” (Gal 3: 8 - NIV):

The Lord had said to Abram, “leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; **and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you**”.⁵⁹⁷ (NIV, bold mine)

For Paul in this passage, the blessing of Abraham on the Gentiles is their reception of the promised Holy Spirit. Coming back to Deuteronomy 8:18, the text that Oyedepo links with Galatians 3:14,

⁵⁹⁷ The verse in bold is the section in focus (bold mine).

But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today. (Deut 8:18, NIV)

The word 'wealth' in this text is notably the attraction for prosperity preaching, however in what context was this said? The entire passage was a warning to the children of Israel to obey the Lord when they would experience a time of plenty and prosperity in the land that the Lord was giving them. They had endured hardship in the wilderness, would they survive prosperity? When the temptation to be arrogant and boastful of their wealth would arise, they should call to mind that their prosperity was not as a result of their resourcefulness. Rather, it was because the Lord had given them the power to acquire wealth. The reason for their wealth was to enable them to function in the land and in this way God fulfils the oath/covenant he had sworn with their father Abraham.

Therefore, there is confusion of terms in Oyedepo's use of covenant as the basis for prosperity. The Abrahamic covenant is different from the Abrahamic blessing, and the Noachic covenant is quite different from the restoration of the seasons, though one may argue that the restoration of the seasons is a subset of the Noachic covenant. However, it must be noted that what is in view is a universal restoration or blessing that is not peculiar to Christians. In addition, God does not need to enter a covenant before his word or promise should be considered reliable. If he chooses to enter a covenant, that is good, but his word whether in the form of covenant or not is equally reliable.⁵⁹⁸

That prosperity is part of the atonement is a view that is supported by all the preachers we are looking at and Bishop Oyedepo, perhaps, best articulates this position. The traditional understanding of atonement is that it: "...signifies a making of amends and rendering of satisfaction for

⁵⁹⁸ That Bishop Oyedepo makes much of covenant is obvious, his university is also known as Covenant University.

wrong done that brings an end to alienation and restores good relations".⁵⁹⁹ Jesus accomplished this by his death on the cross thereby making peace between humans and God. The relationship between God and humans had become estranged at the Fall but Jesus, the one sent by the Father and who came from the bosom of the Father came to restore the fellowship. This has been the traditional understanding of atonement. Some preachers have asserted that in addition to the atonement of Jesus procuring salvation for humans, the atonement of Jesus also procures healing and wealth for humans, for as many as would believe in him. As Adeboye says, "if you receive His salvation that His death bought for you, it follows that you must receive His wealth that His poverty purchased for you",⁶⁰⁰ the text to which he alludes is 2 Corinthians 8: 9:

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. (NIV)

While atonement strictly refers to Jesus' death on the cross for salvation of all who believe, among the prosperity preachers, atonement is not so strictly defined. Atonement is extended to cover works that Christ did on the behalf of humans. The understanding of prosperity preachers, according to the text above, is that the poverty that Jesus experienced while on earth was vicarious. Just as Jesus died on our behalf so did Jesus become poor on our behalf, however, while one needs to confess one's sins and accept Christ's sacrifice in order to be saved, the principal thing a believer needs to do to enjoy prosperity is to be a giver. As Oyedepo says:

Riches is also part of our seven-fold redemptive heritage. Jesus also received for us riches. That's why the Bible says in 2 Corinthians

⁵⁹⁹ J.I. Packer, 'Atonement' in David J. Atkinson and David H. Field (eds), *New dictionary of Christian ethics and pastoral theology*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1995), p. 174. The Hebrew word כפר is translated 'atonement' in the OT. It has the nuance of ransom and redemption in Exodus 30:11-16; to appease in Numbers 25:13 and the verbal form has the sense of "to cover over, to pacify, to make propitiation, see Brown-Driver-Briggs, *Hebrew and English lexicon*, p. 497.

⁶⁰⁰ Adeboye, *How to turn your austerity*, p. 3

8:9...Redemption is a cure for poverty, as it gives you access to the cure for poverty. When you were saved, you were redeemed from the plague of poverty, because your Father is very wealthy... Jesus said, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you" (Jn 14:2). There are no houses in heaven, only mansions. There are no boys' quarters or bungalows either, only mansions. That gives you an idea of the kind of riches you inherited from your Father. They were earlier stolen from you, but Jesus restored them back to you by His death and resurrection! But what must I do to be enriched? Covenant practice is the answer! Riches answer only to covenant practice. It is covenant practice that entitles you to economic empowerment. Deuteronomy 8:18....If you are not a covenant practitioner, you may live and die in church, yet your economic status will not change.⁶⁰¹

Just as salvation is not automatically one's possession until one accepts the sacrifice of Christ on one's behalf, so one does not experience prosperity until one learns to be a "covenant practitioner". Being a covenant practitioner is being a giver as Oyedepo elaborates:

Solomon loved the Lord, he gave to the Lord. As a result, when the covenant was established, he was supernaturally empowered for inexplicable wealth. He gave, and then the heavens opened. If you are not a giver, the heaven over you won't open, your "connections' notwithstanding....Job was also a giver, and he became the greatest of all the men in the east. Being a covenant practitioner is the only way to enduring wealth....⁶⁰²

However, noting that the condition on which one receives salvation is not the same condition on which one walks in prosperity suggests that

⁶⁰¹ Oyedepo, *Possessing your possession*, pp. 76-7. Italics in the original.

⁶⁰² Oyedepo, *Possessing your possession*, pp. 78

different issues are in focus here. For if prosperity were part of the atonement, once a person gets saved, then he/she should automatically prosper. Also pertinent is the question of whether Paul shares this understanding of riches/wealth as part of the atonement.⁶⁰³ In the eighth chapter of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, Paul sought to encourage the church to participate in a collection for the believers in Jerusalem who were undergoing hardship caused by famine. He was mobilizing the effort in all the churches that he was acquainted with such as the Macedonian churches. He wanted the Corinthian church to give willingly and generously as an expression of their love and in 'competition' with other churches that are equally participating in the same effort (v. 8). Paul now makes recourse to what appears to be common knowledge as a motivating factor for generous giving: "for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich." The general understanding is that the pre-incarnate Jesus was rich but became poor by virtue of incarnation and also in actuality by being of humble parentage. The Gospels are replete with references to this "isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son....."⁶⁰⁴ In addition, there are accounts in the Gospels that Jesus experienced lack and hunger. Paul's statement that Jesus' poverty was meant to obtain riches for believers raises a lot of questions. What kind of riches is in view here? Is it material wealth or non-material wealth? The suggestion that believers were made rich materially by virtue of the atonement begs the question of the need to raise funds for needy saints in Jerusalem in the first place. Secondly, Paul's own personal experience does not lend credence to the idea that prosperity is part of the atonement for as he says: "to this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags...." (1 Corinthians 4:11); "...sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making

⁶⁰³ The following discussion on 2 Corinthians 8:9 is a sort of digression from our main text of John. But this seems to me to be quite necessary in light of the fact that the verse is the sole justification for the assertion that prosperity is part of the atonement.

⁶⁰⁴ Mark 6:3 (NIV)

many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything (2 Corinthians 6:10). On the other hand, what is the relevance of riches that have no material connotation in motivating people to give materially? Or could Paul be unaware of the implications of his statement, so that as Oyedepo says “these things were hidden in times past and have now been revealed to God’s Apostles and Prophets.”⁶⁰⁵

Some commentators have seen Jesus’ poverty in physical terms but the riches which it (the poverty) gives in spiritual terms: “riches of salvation”⁶⁰⁶ The problem with this is how do the spiritual riches obtained through the material poverty of Jesus translate into giving material funds for the collection? This may suggest that there is enough ambiguity in the text that could yield different possible understanding for people in different contexts. The argument of Furnish that Paul’s mode of argumentation here is an example of how the imperative follows after the indicative in his letters is not really convincing, if the riches of the Corinthians are only viewed in spiritual terms. For his conclusion “do what is appropriate to your status as those who have been enriched by the grace of Christ” suggests that the grace they received ensures some provision of some kind from which the Corinthians could now make some sort of withdrawal. Moreover, the indicative-imperative argumentation presupposes that the imperative logically derives from the indicative. This then makes the prosperity preachers’ claim somehow valid.

On the other hand, if Paul’s understanding is that the poverty of Jesus ensures the material riches of the Corinthians in the sense that there is a guarantee of provision for all by virtue of fictive kinship relationship. So,

⁶⁰⁵ Oyedepo makes reference to Ephesians 3: 2-5 to explain that God reveals secret things to present day Apostles and Prophets who would now declare it to the Church. In this sense revelation is still unfolding so what was, perhaps, hidden to Paul is now being revealed to present day Apostles and Prophets.

⁶⁰⁶ Victor Paul Furnish, *The Anchor Bible. II Corinthians a new translation with introduction and commentary*, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1984), p. 405.

when there is lack among a section of the people, there are enough resources with others to satisfy that lack. This view may seem to be more in accord with the tenor of the text, which says:

Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality... ." (2 Corinthians 8:13-14, NIV).

In this case then, the strength (wealth) of the Church is in its sense of community. The preachers of prosperity in a sense have been able to harness this idea of wealth in people and by bringing resources of many together have been able to build gargantuan edifices in 'poor' Third World countries. The grace of Jesus is well known, for his poverty by virtue of his incarnation and in actual fact has enriched believers, he is the door through which the sheep have access to pasture. The thrust of wealth is not so much in an individual's accumulation of wealth but in the communal obligation it places on the possessor. This makes giving for the well-being of the community both a privilege and its true purpose. So, does 2 Corinthians 8:9 suggest that prosperity is part of the atonement? This understanding was definitely not in the mind of Paul, and it is strictly not part of the atonement, where atonement refers to the death of Jesus on the cross to reconcile humans to God. God has already made provision for the means by which humans and all of creation may be sustained by the restoration of the seasons and their related cycles in the book of Genesis. People like Abraham, Job, Solomon and others have been wealthy since ages past. There was, therefore, no need for Jesus to die in order to accomplish the same. Therefore, the law of seedtime and harvest time, which the prosperity gospel preachers subscribe to, makes prosperity as part of the atonement quite unnecessary.

From other passages of scripture, for example Matthew 6:25ff, God's provision for his creatures is not only assured but his provision for his children is doubly guaranteed by virtue of creation and the new birth. Poverty among believers, since this is the supposed focus of prosperity preachers, is systemic. Lack of education, lack of adequate medical facilities, among others, cripple the potentials of people and prevent them from being their best and giving of their best to the development of the nation. If the preachers addressed issues like these there will be less emphasis on miracles that puts the entire onus on God as if he had deprived humans of the ability to critically engage their world.

Bishop Oyedepo's comment on John 14:2 below merits some comments:

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you" (Jn 14:2). There are no houses in heaven, only mansions. There are no boys' quarters or bungalows either, only mansions. That gives you an idea of the kind of riches you inherited from your Father.⁶⁰⁷

This verse is based on the King James' Version (KJV) and the absurdity of the understanding reflected above is obvious at a glance, that a house should have mansions (in the sense Oyedepo has understood it). Perhaps as a corrective on this, both the Revised Standard Version (RSV) and the New International Version (NIV) read: "In my father's house are many rooms." The Greek noun *μονή* is related to the verbal form *μένειν* 'to remain, abide, stay'.⁶⁰⁸ So the sense of *μονή* is as a place to stay, the focus is not on how big or magnificent the place is, but on the fact that "there is accommodation for everyone."⁶⁰⁹ As Brown explains further,

The standard English rendition "many mansions" stems from Tyndale, but in Old English 'mansion' meant dwelling place, and not necessarily a palatial dwelling.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁷ This was quoted above on page 235, from Oyedepo, *Possessing your possession*, pp. 76

⁶⁰⁸ See F. Hauck, 'μονή', TDNT vol. IV, pp. 579ff. Also see, Craig S. Keener, *The gospel of John. A commentary*, vol II, (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), pp. 932-936

⁶⁰⁹ Barnabas, *The new century bible*, p. 470

⁶¹⁰ Brown, *The anchor bible*, vol II, p. 619.

A similar word (μονήν) is also used in verse 23 of the same chapter to read: “Jesus and said to him, if anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my father will love him and we shall come to him and we shall make a home (μονήν) with him”.⁶¹¹ So the reading of μονή as a huge edifice is not the intent of the text.

Bishop Oyedepo calls the present generation the end-time generation that will usher in Jesus at his second coming. The end-time Church, therefore, must prosper for it must display the splendor of the Lord, which in turn will attract the lost to the kingdom. So for him, a wealthy Church is one primary means by which the unsaved shall be attracted to find salvation in the Lord. The wealth of the church also enables it to prosecute evangelistic outreaches and church planting that will garner souls to the kingdom⁶¹²:

The end-time Church is programmed to prosper exceedingly!...So if we 're the generation that will preach the gospel to all nations, then we are the prosperous generation I'm talking about!⁶¹³

Right from the time of the writing of the New Testament every generation believes itself to be the end-time generation and this has led to different emphases in praxis and teaching in the Church over time. This belief has made some lay emphasis on holiness “without which no one shall see the Lord”; some have placed emphasis on reaching the unreached peoples of the world through missions effort and bible translation projects. It is noteworthy that Bishop Oyedepo believes that the location of wealth in the Church would be of such stupendous magnitude that peoples would rush to the Church for salvation because they have seen the splendor of the Lord in the Church. The passages that Oyedepo interprets to get to this

⁶¹¹ My translation is from the Aland-Nestle GNT, 1979 edition.

⁶¹² In an interview with Bishop Thomas Aremu, the bishop of the Johannesburg branch of the Church, who is also in charge of the Southern Africa Region of Winners' Chapel, on 29th December, 2009 in his office in Johannesburg. He told this researcher that the church had recently purchased a former Dutch Reformed Church building at R4.7 million and all the money for the purchase came from Nigeria. If God had not prospered the church how could this have been done, he wondered?

⁶¹³ Oyedepo, *Understanding financial prosperity*, pp.8, 9.

conclusion are: Micah 4:1-2, Isaiah 2: 1-3, Zechariah 8: 20-23 and Zechariah 1:17

In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. (Micah 4:1-2, NIV).⁶¹⁴

This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Many peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will yet come, and the inhabitants of one city will go to another and say, 'Let us go at once to entreat the Lord and seek the Lord Almighty. I myself am going.' And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the Lord Almighty and to entreat him." This is what the Lord Almighty says: "In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.'" (Zechariah 8: 20-23. NIV)

"Proclaim further: This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'My towns will again overflow with prosperity, and the Lord will again comfort Zion and choose Jerusalem.' " (Zechariah 1:17, NIV)

The context for the first eight chapters of Zechariah is the return of the exiles from Babylon.⁶¹⁵ The Zechariah passages cited above reflect a message of hope, full restoration and comfort in the midst of despair. The exiles on their return had found their cities desolate and were just embarking on the rebuilding of the temple. In addition, the experience of an exile is never pleasant. In such a context, a promise of prosperity and of their city becoming a center of attraction for other nations would be quite comforting. References to Jerusalem or mountain of the Lord's temple are understood by Bishop Oyedepo to refer to the Church. Since the coming of Christ a re-reading of scriptures has taken place but Paul has never equated the Church with Israel. From Paul's teachings in Romans 9-11, it is obvious

⁶¹⁴ The Isaiah passage (Is 2:1-3) is virtually the same as Micah 4: 1-2.

⁶¹⁵ Ralph L. Smith, *Word biblical commentary. Micah-Malachi*, (Texas: Word Books Publisher, 1984), p. 182

that God has plans for Israel as well as for the Church. However, Bishop Oyedepo's direct application of these passages to the Church seems to blur this distinction, thereby suggesting that the Church has replaced Israel. Oyedepo has not demonstrated the manner in which the situation of the Church corresponds with that of the text and how the Church is identifiable with the mountain of the Lord's temple. Therefore, hinging the prosperity of the Church on these passages is not convincing.

Also important for our consideration is Bishop Oyedepo's constant reference to the role of Apostles and Prophets in present times in bringing new insights and illumination to the Church. As he says:

If you look at scripture in Ephesians 3:2-5, Paul says "surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets." Jesus blessed the bread and gave it to the disciples who distributed them to the people, so there are bread breakers, they are the apostles and prophets, they lead every generation into God's agenda for that generation. This is what the present church has not recognized and everybody presents himself as an expert, creating all kinds of confusion.⁶¹⁶

The apostles and prophets are the custodians of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven in every generation. Certain things were not known before, but through apostles and prophets they are made known. The nearer we are to the end, the more of those mysteries will be unfolded and the purpose is to disarm opposition and establish your position in the kingdom.⁶¹⁷

Therefore, for Bishop Oyedepo, 'revelation' is a continuous process today. However, what is considered 'revelation' is really illumination. God's acts of revealing himself to humans are primarily through his word and his son that became human. All other forms of God's leading, guiding and

⁶¹⁶ Interview with Bishop Oyedepo on 25 January, 2010 at Ota.

⁶¹⁷ David O. Oyedepo, *The Miracle meal*, (Lagos: Dominion Publishing House, 2002), p. 7

speaking to humans within the Christian faith are primarily through these means.⁶¹⁸ There is no new 'revelation' that will constitute a rewriting of Scriptures or that will tell us something entirely new about the nature or person of God. It is in light of this understanding that Bishop Oyedepo's view of the role of Apostles and Prophets today should be seen. 'Revelation' is loosely used in Pentecostal circles to depict an encounter with God, the intent is, perhaps, to emphasize the divine source of the information or knowledge gained and minimize the human agency involved. This unfortunately places the 'revelation' at par with the bible and the human agent as a demi-god. In such a frame of mind, congregants suspend all critical judgment or analysis of such 'revelation', for "God's ways are past finding out." This is the bane of Neo-Pentecostalism, that apostles and prophets have assumed a great authority that were never enjoyed by the original apostles. Neither Peter nor Paul, for instance, was accorded such deference that others uncritically accepted their visions or words. For example, Paul for all the visions he reported that he had was conscious of the possibility of error and was ready to lay his gospel to the scrutiny of others: "I set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain" (Galatians 2:2). Another instance is Prophet Agabus's prophecy that Paul would be tied in Jerusalem, this did not deter Paul from proceeding to Jerusalem. If Bishop Oyedepo were asked if he considered the new 'revelations' as scripture for the church, he would most likely dissent, but this is exactly the implication of his views, it suggests that the canon is still open.⁶¹⁹

With regard to Bishop Oyedepo's interpretation of John 10:10 during the interview, below are excerpts of the interview:

⁶¹⁸ Some other Christian traditions may emphasize in addition to these two leading of the Holy Spirit, while some make reference to church traditions.

⁶¹⁹ See John F. MacArthur, *Charismatic chaos*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), pp. 54-77.

So I believe John 10:10 is saying that Jesus is giving whole scale life back to man after the order that existed before the fall and that is why he calls it abundant life, that we may have it more abundantly. My understanding is that it is life at its best, you were properly dead but I came to give you life at its best, as it was, before the fall, divine health, soundness, mental prowess, intelligence, all of that, everything that reflects God that Adam had before the Fall, Jesus said I have come to restore everything. .. abundant life is actually eternal life, God-kind of life, so my understanding of this is that it is talking of restoration of all that was lost before the fall in man in the image of God, in his very likeness, and when Jesus came, he was said to be the express image of God, express image, express and Jesus said as my father has sent me so have I sent you so we are called to be express image of the Father-God. So whatever is not found in God should not be found in us, and whatever things are found in God they are in force by redemption and the reason why we are not enjoying them is because they have not been revealed to us, "my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" of who they are, what they are worth, what they carry and so they lose them because they don't know they have them, so that is my scriptural interpretation of that scripture.⁶²⁰

The most significant statement he made is equating abundant life with eternal life. By this, he does not see 'abundant life' as a different variant of life (contra Wale Oke), he considers it God-kind of life. His understanding of 'abundant life' as restoration is in agreement with the basic thesis of our exegesis of this passage. However, he goes further than our exegesis to submit that full restoration takes place in this present world. He argues for a full identification with Christ and God: "whatever is not found in God should not be found in us... ." This teaching of believers' full identification with Christ, and therefore, of the full restoration of all things that Adam lost in the garden suggests the full attainment of God's purpose** in this world. This goes beyond the realized eschatology of the fourth gospel. This is because this thinking believes that the full benefit of the atonement is realizable in the present world, so a believer should not experience sickness, or lack. However, the fact that both believers and non-believers experience physical death should, perhaps, signal to the adherents of this

⁶²⁰ Excerpts of interview with Bishop Oyedepo in his office at Ota on 25 January 2010.

view its inadequacy. However, believers seem to be discouraged from facing up to reality, or to confessing or thinking negatively. The preachers, therefore, hardly preach on death or heaven as a subject.

On a general note, some of these teachings of Bishop Oyedepo are only modified forms of Kenneth Hagin's. For example: Hagin in his discussion entitled 'Poverty: a blessing or a curse?' quotes Galatians 3:13-14 to establish that "the curse of the law includes spiritual death, sickness, and poverty".⁶²¹ He continues, "a lot of folks understand that in Christ, they 've been redeemed from spiritual death and sickness and disease. But they don't realize that they 've been redeemed from poverty".⁶²² On one's attitude to giving, he says: "I know of people who thought God was going to prosper them in their giving (and they gave for that very purpose -- just to get something in return). But they weren't living right. In fact they got their money by being crooks! They were givers, all right, but God didn't honor their giving".⁶²³ He clarifies that the giving he proposes is not really altruistic, "Don't misunderstand me, there is a sense in which we do give to get. But we don't give just to get. The "getting" is not our main motive. We need to maintain balance in this area".⁶²⁴ About praying to get money he says: "the Lord said to me, 'Don't pray about money like you have been. Whatever you need, claim it in Jesus' Name...this was way back in 1950 and from that day to this, I 've not prayed about money".⁶²⁵

7.3. Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye

Pastor E.A. Adeboye is the General Overseer (GO) of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG). He was formerly a lecturer of Mathematics in one of Nigeria's universities. Pastor E.A. Adeboye is a most-sought after preacher in

⁶²¹ Kenneth Hagin, *Biblical keys to financial prosperity*, (Tulsa: Rhema Bible Church, 1995).

p. 1

⁶²² Hagin, *Biblical keys*, p. 9

⁶²³ Hagin, *Biblical keys*, p. 159, see also p. 23.

⁶²⁴ Hagin, *Biblical keys*, p. 161

⁶²⁵ Hagin, *Biblical keys*, p. 58.

Nigeria. His church, RCCG, grew under his leadership from just 39 parishes in the whole country in 1980⁶²⁶ to 4000 branches in Lagos State only and the church is found in 109 nations by 2008.⁶²⁷ Pastor Adeboye is not the founder of RCCG in contradistinction to the other two that we have studied. He was attracted to the church by the reputation of the then founder, Reverend Akindayomi, as a powerful minister of God, it was at a time of a personal crisis in his family in 1973.⁶²⁸ RCCG, as discussed in chapter 4 of this work, grew out of Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S), an Aladura church, where Reverend Akindayomi was a notable seer, *Woli*. The emphasis of the church was prayer, holiness and prophecy. Pastor Adeboye got saved on 29 July 1973 and became a Pastor in 1975. He served in the church as the interpreter of Reverend Akindayomi, translating his message to English. At the death of the founder in 1980, Pastor Adeboye became the head of a Church with meager resources. As he recounts: the monthly income of the church was 6000 Naira, which hardly paid the salaries of the 40 people on the staff of the church. Adeboye, concerned for the growth of the church traveled to Korea and the USA to meet with successful ministers and glean from their experience. ⁶²⁹ The turn around of the church came about in the 90s with the influx of educated people in the church through an arm of the church called Christ the Redeemer's Friends Universal, the slogan of which is "Reaching the High and Mighty for Jesus Christ".⁶³⁰ Today, RCCG is a colossus of an empire with interests in economic empowerment through its many arms such as Christ the Redeemer's Ministry (CRM), an outfit that initially started as an evangelistic arm of the church but which now manages the business interests of the church.⁶³¹ With business interests spanning sectors such as education,

⁶²⁶ That was when the founder of RCCG, Revd. Akindayomi died.

⁶²⁷ Adeboye, *Time of favor*, (Lagos: ERA Communications, 2008), p. 38

⁶²⁸ I rely on Ukah Asonzeh's work for biographic information on Pastor E.A. Adeboye, see *A new paradigm of Pentecostal power. A study of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria*, (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc., 2008).

⁶²⁹ Adeboye's sermon at the Holy Ghost Night of 8 January, 2010.

⁶³⁰ There is a big bill board bearing this slogan at the Redemption Camp, the International headquarters of the church. See Ukah, *A new paradigm*, p. 125ff

⁶³¹ Asonzeh, *A new paradigm*, p. 123

banking, media, confectionary and so on, RCCG has transcended the dreams of its founder, who shunned wealth and never collected offertory from church members.⁶³²

Pastor E.A. Adeboye is highly respected in Nigeria; he has endeared himself to many who view him as a humble man of God. He refuses to be called Doctor Adeboye, though he has a Ph.D in Mathematics. Secondly, while the founder of the church took the title of a Reverend, Adeboye prefers to simply be called a Pastor like all other Pastors in the church. In addition, he is known for his simple dressing, usually a safari suit or a French cut, in a context where Nigerian Pastors often adorn themselves gorgeously with flowing *agbada*.⁶³³

7.3.1. Views on Prosperity

Pastor Adeboye has written on prosperity and often makes allusion to it in his other writings that are not particularly on prosperity. Adeboye often recounts his very humble background, where he never got to wear shoes until he was 18 years old. He has experienced poverty firsthand and considers it a curse. Given his background in a strictly holiness RCCG, Pastor Adeboye's first writing on prosperity is partly an apologetic for prosperity *How to turn your austerity into prosperity*. Most of his writings on prosperity are usually character studies of some Bible personalities from whom he distils principles that should be applied in the contemporary. Adeboye's discourse of prosperity is not as well articulated and argued as Oyedepo but he is concise and clear about his rejection of poverty. He notes that people (Christians) reject prosperity because of fear of robbers and assassins, some reject prosperity by not following God's condition for prosperity. He pleads that

⁶³² See Asonzeh, *A new paradigm*, p. 152 for the position that money has assumed in the new RCCG.

⁶³³ Agbada is a clothing worn mainly by Yoruba males and male Northerners, (though other Nigerian groups now wear it too). It is a free flowing robe usually. It is usually worn on grand occasions by older males or respected men in the society. Samuel Johnson describes it thus: "it reaches as far as the ankles, much embroidered at the neck and breast, open at the sides, and quite covers the arms", *The history*, p. 111.

none should reject prosperity.⁶³⁴ On the positive side, he affirms that God is rich for the whole earth belongs to him including all the gold and silver (Ps 24:1, Haggai 2:8). In addition, God's friends (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) are like him, they are also rich:

God is the God of the rich, and his closest friends are very wealthy. Therefore, if you become one of the closest friends of God, you become very rich. If it is evil to be rich, it follows that God must be evil, but God is NOT evil. ...Birds of the same feathers flock together. The rich are friends of the rich, the poor are friends of the poor. Therefore, God decided to befriend the rich.⁶³⁵

Furthermore, in his discussion of 2 Corinthian 8:9 "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich", Adeboye refers to the vicarious nature of Jesus' death and suffering while on earth. If one accepts one, he/she should accept the other as well:

He died so that we can live. He was beaten, so that we might be healed...He went to Hell, that we may not go there. He thirsted, so that we may not thirst. If you do not want the wealth that the poverty of Jesus has purchased for you, then you must refuse his salvation that His death has also purchased for you. You must refuse His health, that His stripes have purchased for you. If you receive His salvation that His death bought for you, it follows that you must receive His wealth that His poverty purchased for you.⁶³⁶

Adeboye, by copious references to scripture, asserts that prosperity as God's will for His people is an incontestable fact. It is the believers' rejection of wealth that has given room to unbelievers to have wealth. If believers would arise to claim what is rightfully their father's then "they shall eat the riches of the Gentiles".

According to Adeboye, poverty is a curse and God, humans or Satan can inflict it.⁶³⁷ There are signs that would show if one was cursed. However, for

⁶³⁴ Adeboye, *How to turn your austerity*, p. 1.

⁶³⁵ Adeboye, *How to turn your austerity*, pp.2-3

⁶³⁶ Adeboye, *How to turn your austerity*, p. 4

⁶³⁷ Adeboye, *How to turn your austerity*, p. 15

every curse whether from God or others, there is a way out. God's curse on people may come as a result of non payment of tithes, for this reason, repentance followed by restituting what one had failed to pay would guarantee a release from such a curse. Giving, known as sowing, is a sure way to prosperity and the best time to sow is the time of famine, which in Nigerian terms means in the time of austerity.⁶³⁸ Adeboye, using this metaphor of sowing, comes up with different laws of sowing that result in different yields. There is a law of harvest whereby one reaps what one sows; there is a law of total returns, whereby one gives one's all to the Lord and He in turn gives one His all; there is law of unlimited returns whereby if one pays one's tithe, one would reap abundant harvest. There is also the law of diligence that works in combination with the law of harvest. The law of diligence says "if you want God to make someone who lends to nations, you have to be diligent in obeying" the Lord's commandments and diligent in one's work.⁶³⁹ However, for Adeboye, the "surest and shortest way to prosperity" is to do "something special that will move God and cause him to bless you more than he intended". This type of action goes beyond "ordinary giving of offerings and paying of tithes".⁶⁴⁰ A good example of someone who gave what "moved God to His being" was Abraham who was ready to offer his son to God and the compound blessing he was promised is in Genesis 22:15-18. The type of blessing in view here is, according to Adeboye, mind-boggling:

The type of blessing we are talking about is not getting a thousand here, a thousand there, but the one that will get you to a stage where you do not have to think again before you spend. It will get to a stage that you will realise that whatever amount you spend in a day will not even affect your capital. That whatever amount you spend anytime, you cannot even finish the interest in your lifetime. This is the type of

⁶³⁸ Adeboye, *How to turn your austerity*, p. 18. This refers to the economic downturn of Nigerian economy brought about by the introduction of Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in 1986. It is most likely that the period when the sermon that later resulted into this book was preached coincided with this period in Nigerian history.

⁶³⁹ Adeboye, *How to turn your austerity*, p. 21. Also see Ukah's discussion in *A new paradigm* p.190ff

⁶⁴⁰ Adeboye, *How to turn your austerity*, p.24

riches we are talking about. This type of riches will frighten anyone that is not linked with the supernatural.⁶⁴¹

Prayer, according to Adeboye, is critical to having supernatural wealth, for “real prosperity requires supernatural intervention....you must pray until you move the hand of God”⁶⁴² and to be rich “you will begin to fight until the devil releases your prosperity”.⁶⁴³ Prayer, then, according to Adeboye could be in the form of petition to God ⁶⁴⁴ or could be in form of spiritual warfare against the forces arraigned against the prosperity of the person.

Also important for one’s prosperity, according to Adeboye, is the blessing of a man of God. When he pronounces you blessed, then you are blessed.⁶⁴⁵ In sowing, a person must be careful of the soil in which he/she sows as the parable of the sower illustrates. In applying this parable to contemporary times, Adeboye asserts that what one gives a believer attracts a thirty-fold harvest, what one gives a pastor or any minister of the word attracts a sixty-fold returns but what one gives the ‘high priest or the head of the sons of the prophets attracts a hundred-fold returns.⁶⁴⁶ In a context where one wants the utmost returns on one’s investment (sowing), the best investment is obviously on the high priest. This idea of ‘giving’ as investment or trade is deeply entrenched in Adeboye’s teachings as he asserts, “God is a trader” for “He gets involved in what can be described as trade by barter. Whenever He wants to bless somebody, He first gives the person an opportunity to give something to Him”.⁶⁴⁷ This is really an adaptation of a Yoruba saying “*A ki i ba Olorun sowo ka padanu*” “no one who trades with God loses”. The corollary is also true that if someone wants God to bless him/her or meet a particular

⁶⁴¹ Adeboye, *How to turn your austerity*, p. 22.

⁶⁴² Adeboye, *Divine encounter*, p. 72, 73

⁶⁴³ Adeboye, *65 Keys to prosperity and wealth*, (Lagos: CRM, 2003), p. 55

⁶⁴⁴ Examples of this type of prayer are found in his work *Divine Encounter*, pp. 98, 104-107

⁶⁴⁵ Adeboye, *The ultimate financial breakthrough*, p. 92; see also, *You can possess your possession*, p. 29

⁶⁴⁶ Adeboye, *The ultimate financial breakthrough*, pp.16-17. The testimonies that follow this assertion are about those who ministered to the personal needs of Pastor Adeboye and who were blessed as a result.

⁶⁴⁷ Adeboye, *Divine encounter*, p. 44

need, the person should first give to God. Indeed the person should give God a 'violent offering', "an offering you want to take and your hand refuses to move...I do not know how precious are the things you need from God. All you need to do is to give Him a violent offering".⁶⁴⁸ As Ukah has rightly observed, a fundamental understanding of Adeboye is that the human-divine relationship is undergirded by the law of exchange...for "those who trade with God never lose".⁶⁴⁹

Having a 'holy ambition', 'making big plans', 'expanding one's vision'... are all encouraged by Adeboye as the secret of prosperity.⁶⁵⁰ 'Holy ambition' could range from the ambition to being "the richest person in the community or nation within the next two years", to "building one's own private airport", to being "the envy of the nation", and to "building a Christian TV station". One may surmise, however, that without such a penchant for more, there may, perhaps, be no motivation to keep giving according to Adeboye's teaching.

7.3.2. Pastor E.A. Adeboye's interpretation of John 10:10⁶⁵¹

In his book *Divine collision*, under the sub topic 'God gives wealth', Pastor Adeboye says:

Be willing to prosper. God wants you to prosper. God the Father wants you to prosper. God the Son also expresses His interest in your prosperity. When He came to the world He said:

"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and kill, and to destroy; I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." John 10:10

In that verse, Jesus said it is the enemy that wants you to diminish. That is why satan and his agents are always looking for ways of killing, stealing and destroying. But Jesus wants you to have abundance. He wants you to keep on increasing the level of your abundance. You need

⁶⁴⁸ Adeboye, *You can possess your possession*, pp. 27-8.

⁶⁴⁹ Ukah, *A new paradigm*, p.190; Adeboye, *How to turn your austerity*, pp. 24-25

⁶⁵⁰ Adeboye, *Divine encounter*, pp.66, 71, 76, 96ff, 101.

⁶⁵¹ This researcher could not meet personally with Pastor Adeboye, she only met with Pastor Olu Obanure, Special Assistant to the General Overseer. However, Pastor E.A. Adeboye has made some references to John 10:10 in some of his books. We shall have a look at these.

to know that there is no room for standing still. You can be rich even in this world.⁶⁵²

In another book, *Divine encounter* Pastor Adeboye says:

Abraham was extremely rich. You can exceed Abraham's level of wealth. God wants to bless you greatly. In John 10:10, Jesus said;

"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and kill, and to destroy; I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

Jesus is not going to bless you, with ordinary life. He has promised you life more abundantly. You can ask God to bless you indeed.⁶⁵³

Further on in the same book, Adeboye says:

A lot of people have tried to make do with the barest minimum. They believe that living from hand to mouth, is a normal human experience. Such people are yet to discover the meaning of the words of Jesus:

"10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and kill, and to destroy; I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

In this passage, we discover that there are three categories of 'life':

1. Life
2. Abundant Life
3. More abundant life

Many people live at the first level of life, they just manage to exist. Such people manage to keep paying their rents and eat two or three meals a day. Such people go so far, and no further. Do you know what? God does not expect you to just have life; neither does He want you to have abundant life alone. He wants you to enjoy and experience the more abundant life.⁶⁵⁴

Pastor Adeboye seems to understand 'life' as a mode of mere existence, 'life' without a modifier is an ordinary mode of existence which enables the possessor to function at a minimal level. 'Abundant life' is, therefore, a graduated level above ordinary mode of existence. However, the most desirable state is the 'more abundant life' an overflowing lifestyle where there is no lack:

God will so shower you with abundant financial resources that besides being comfortable, you will begin to finance projects in the church and

⁶⁵² Adeboye, *Divine collision*, (Lagos: CRM, 2004), p. 62

⁶⁵³ Adeboye, *Divine encounter*, p. 52

⁶⁵⁴ Adeboye, *Divine encounter*, p.94-5.

in your community. You will move from the level of those who manage meager resources to the class of those who eat what they want, buy what they want, live comfortably and meet the needs of others⁶⁵⁵

7.3.3. Appraisal of Pastor E.A. Adeboye's views on Prosperity and John 10:10

One of the controversial aspects of the discussion of Pastor Adeboye is his reinterpretation of some aspects of the parable of the sower, where the good seed according to the bible account yields 30-fold, 60-fold and 100-fold returns. Preachers have often wondered at what could possibly account for the difference in the returns on the same good soil. Pastor Adeboye's interpretation, which could be considered allegorical, is that there are different categories of good soil.⁶⁵⁶ This goes against the grain of the passage of scripture, the focus of which is the differences in different types of soil where the seed, according to Jesus' interpretation, is the word of God and the harvest is the growth of the kingdom. It is the same good soil that has different yields, possibly at different times. Confronting Pastor Obanure on the possibility of the GO's (General Overseer) interpretation as having the effect of discouraging people from giving to fellow believers with its meager 30-fold yield when compared to giving to the GO himself who is the high priest in view here. He agrees that the teaching may lead to such a conclusion, but countered: "how justifiable before God is someone who sees a fellow believer in need but insists on making his/her gift available only to the GO?" Hagin, however, does not so quickly exonerate a preacher whose message hints at such possible conclusions:

It grieves my spirit to hear that there are some ministers teaching ----- or at least giving the impression ----- that giving to them *personally* will bring a greater blessing to the donor than giving to the poor or supporting the local church's ministry to the poor. Again, these individuals imply that because they have a "special anointing" like

⁶⁵⁵ Adeboye, *The ultimate financial breakthrough*, pp. 9-10

⁶⁵⁶ Oyedepo offers a different interpretation: "The seeds that produced all fell on good grounds, they were all honest people, but their understanding varied. So, it is the depth of your understanding of the truths of scriptures that determines the height of your triumph in life", *All you need to have all your needs met*, (Ota-Lagos: Dominion Publishing House, 2004), p.10; also see Kenneth Hagin, *Midas touch*, who quotes Jesus as saying to him: "no one has ever received a hundredfold return on all their giving", p. 152.

Jesus, they have a gift ----- a Midas touch ----- to multiply money back to the donor and impart great blessings.⁶⁵⁷

Pastor Adeboye's interpretation of John 10:10 in his writings is, perhaps, not intended to be a well-thought out exegesis of the text, nonetheless it reflects his understanding of the text. Granted the fact that the King James' Version (KJV), the favorite of Nigerian Pentecostals, has the comparative 'more abundantly' instead of the adverb 'abundantly',⁶⁵⁸ to make a gradation of life in the order: life, abundant life and more abundant life is quite unwarranted by the text. The KJV just has, if we might say, the two terms: 'life' and 'more abundantly', there is no suggestion in the text that the term *life* is being compared with the term *more abundant life*. As mentioned in the exegesis of this text, 'life' in the fourth gospel is presented as the ultimate to seek and the ultimate for which Jesus died. There is nothing better, greater or higher than life ζωή, or else then what would have given it, for it would not cost him more than his life ψυχή.

Pastor Adeboye's plea for prosperity that centers on God being a friend of the rich like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is worth giving more attention. One question to ask is when did this friendship start? Was it after Abraham had become rich or before? While chapter 12 of Genesis gives an account of the call of Abram and God's promise to make him great, we do get the impression that he was a man of some means at the time of his call. Would this then suggest that God became his friend because he was rich? Not quite, for the narrative account further goes on in chapter 13 to say that Abram increased in wealth (Gen. 13:2). When the descendants of Abraham became slaves in Egypt, did God cease to be their friend? It is noteworthy that while prosperity preachers take their cue from Abraham, liberation theologians take

⁶⁵⁷ Hagin, *Midas touch*, pp. 158-9 (Italics his)

⁶⁵⁸ See the Revised Standard Version (RSV).

theirs from Abraham's descendants in slavery.⁶⁵⁹ It is no coincidence, that Pastor Adeboye is not known to critique the political or economic situation of the country or of the status quo generally. Rather his church's programs are usually well attended by the politicians as well as the 'high and mighty' in the society. Positing that God is friend to the rich suggests a causal relationship and makes any preaching of holiness hollow in the face of the massive self aggrandizement of many rich office holders. It suggests an uncritical acceptance of riches/wealth that smacks of naiveté as if there were no unrighteous means to getting rich. It also pacifies the conscience of the rich, leaving them no sense of obligation to right the wrongs in the society or to alleviate the sufferings of the masses. Rather the poor people should aspire to be rich like them. One wonders how the poor members of the congregation feel when listening to such sermons? In a Yoruba context where wealth and riches is highly honored, the church is no haven for the poor, rather what they hear is:

If you are willing and obedient you will eat the good of the land. No matter what the politicians are doing, you are going to eat the good of the land. Your success and prosperity is not based on politics. It is based on the word of God.⁶⁶⁰

The practice of the church also demonstrates this privileging of the rich as Asonzeh asserts: "all members of the RCCG are *not* equal, even as Christians".⁶⁶¹ In the many programs of the church, there is always some section of space reserved for 'Very Important Personalities' (VIPs) who attend the program. The VIPs include "politicians, prominent company executives, media personalities, and members of royal households". The seating arrangement reflect their importance in the society, they sit "in front of the preaching stage and next to the pastors of the church."

⁶⁵⁹ See Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing liberation theology*, transl. Paul Burns, (London: Burns and Oates, 1987), p. 44.

⁶⁶⁰ Adeboye, *Divine encounter*, p. 8

⁶⁶¹ Asonzeh, *A new paradigm*, p. 244 (italics is his)

Another notable refrain of Pastor Adeboye is the idea that humans can by their gift *compel* God to more than he had intended to do:

If you want to challenge God with giving, give when it is not convenient and God will be *forced* to bless you in an extraordinary manner.⁶⁶²

In another book, Pastor Adeboye says:

Those who will get blessing from God will have to go beyond ordinary giving of offerings, or paying of tithes. Daily, they look for an opportunity to do something special to God that will *compel* Him to do more than what He wanted to do for them.⁶⁶³

The theological implications of this statement are many. One of which is that humans are in a position to force God to do what he did not intend to do, in a sense then, the will of humans prevail against the will of God. I do not think that Pastor Adeboye would like to drive this point to such a logical conclusion, but such is the room he has given. That Jesus was impressed by the faith of some people he met in his earthly ministry is well documented – “I have not found such great faith even in Israel.”⁶⁶⁴ That God appreciates and rewards thoughts or actions that demonstrate uncommon faith or love for him is also well documented, for example: David’s desire to build God a house and Abraham’s readiness to sacrifice his only son. It would, however, be an overstatement to say that because of these expressions, God blessed these people more than he had intended. If we are talking of a good God who desires the well-being of people, at best, all we can say is that the expression of love of these people for God served as a catalyst to bring to the fore what God could do.⁶⁶⁵ Moreover, how could a human judge that what he/she was giving God was what no one else had ever given him?

⁶⁶² Adeboye, *The ultimate financial breakthrough*, (Lagos: Integrity Press Limited, 2005), p. 13. Italics mine

⁶⁶³ Adeboye, *How to turn your austerity*, p. 24, Italics mine

⁶⁶⁴ Luke 7:9, NIV

⁶⁶⁵ However, one notes that the Old Testament recounts instances where God’s anger or judgement was turned away at the repentance of people, a notable example is the city of Nineveh as recorded in Jonah 3:1-10. Another example is how the death notice given to Hezekiah was repealed after he had prayed to God and some fifteen years were added to his life, Isaiah 38:1-4.

7.4. Similarities and Differences in the views of Pastor Adeboye and Bishop Oyedepo regarding prosperity⁶⁶⁶

Pastor Adeboye and Bishop Oyedepo are very good friends, they attend each other's programs and collaborate in the ministry. Pastor Adeboye was the one that ordained Bishop Oyedepo into ministry in 1981.⁶⁶⁷ However, the two are also quite different in a number of ways. Bishop Oyedepo is a product of the Campus Christianity described in chapter 4 of this work while Pastor Adeboye became a born-again Christian outside of the Campus Christianity milieu. The main implication of this difference is that Bishop Oyedepo's teachings on prosperity follow closely after the word of faith movement of Kenneth Hagin⁶⁶⁸ while Pastor Adeboye's ministry follows more closely after the *Aladura* movement with its emphasis on prayer. One main difference that evolves from this is Bishop Oyedepo's emphatic insistence that prosperity does not come by prayer, it comes through covenantal practice and Pastor Adeboye's insistence that one must 'pray big' in order to have supernatural prosperity.⁶⁶⁹

Another major difference is in their understanding of the function of giving in bringing about prosperity. Both are agreed about the fundamental nature of giving to ensure one's prosperity but they differ in what should motivate a giver to sow. Bishop Oyedepo insists that one's act(s) of giving should proceed from a heart of love that does not look to the reward (though reward will surely follow such acts), for "we are not serving a heavenly banker, but a heavenly father",⁶⁷⁰ and moreover "love is the covenant key to your

⁶⁶⁶ Only these two preachers are being compared for they have written more on the subject of prosperity than Bishop Wale Oke, so there is sufficient data for comparison.

⁶⁶⁷ David Oyedepo, *Exploits in ministry*, (Ota: Dominion Publishing House, 2006), p. 268.

⁶⁶⁸ The similarities in the teachings of Oyedepo on prosperity with Kenneth Hagin's have already been mentioned earlier.

⁶⁶⁹ This difference is quite significant given the fact that both of them were personally acquainted with Kenneth Hagin, the acclaimed father of the faith movement. About the need for prayer in order to prosper, see, Adeboye, *Divine encounter*, p. 73;

⁶⁷⁰ Oyedepo, *Understanding financial prosperity*, pp. 64-5

prosperity, because without love your giving profits you nothing”⁶⁷¹ and “but if the only reason you are giving is so that you can have it back, then you are laboring to be rich. And because, ‘by strength shall no man prevail’, you may never see riches”.⁶⁷² Pastor Adeboye espouses the law of exchange as the governing principle for giving (though not the exclusive principle). This difference is borne out in their different interpretations of the same bible texts. An example is Solomon, one of the epitomes of prosperity in the bible, these two preachers have preached about his wealth and the reasons for his wealth. For Pastor Adeboye, after reading the story of Solomon’s offer of a thousand burnt offerings to the Lord and God’s request that Solomon should ask for whatever he wanted, he came to the following conclusion:

Whenever I read this scripture, I used to think that Solomon had a generous spirit. But I later discovered that it was not all about generosity but the boy wanted something....So, Solomon must have thought that he was a King and as a King, he needed wisdom. To get that he had to give God something nobody had ever given Him. So that he could get what nobody had never (sic) got. He gave good (sic) a violent offering because it takes violence to slaughter one thousand animals. This singular act compelled God to pay him a visit and asked (sic) him what he wanted.⁶⁷³

Oyedepo, in an obvious reference to the same story has this to say:

Your affection for God is crucial in your Christian adventure.

And Solomon loved the Lord ...1 Kings 3:3

That love was what opened him up to the realm of supernatural plenty that he enjoyed. “*Solomon loved the Lord*”, not “*Solomon gave to the Lord.*” Love drove him to offer to the Lord a thousand burnt offerings. He wasn’t giving to get, his giving was just an expression of his affection for God.⁶⁷⁴

This difference in the motivation for giving is also observable in their accounts of their experience of prosperity in the course of their walk with God. While this observation does not suggest that one preacher loves God more than the other, it only brings to the fore the areas of differences in

⁶⁷¹ Oyedepo, *All you need to have your needs met*, (Ota: Dominion Publishing House, 2004), p. 56

⁶⁷² Oyedepo, *Covenant wealth*, p.90

⁶⁷³ Adeboye, *You can possess your possession*, (Lagos: CRM, 2006), pp. 25-6.

⁶⁷⁴ Oyedepo, *Understanding financial prosperity*, pp. 82-3; see also *Covenant wealth*, p. 91

interpretation and preaching, so that we may note the different nuances of the prosperity gospel. The two apparently different positions actually reflect one aspect of the nature of God – his justice. As a just God, he would reward acts done in honor or fear of his name. Bishop Oyedepo’s position does not preclude the suggestion that God rewards the people who serve, love or give to His cause, indeed, there would be no testimony at all, if all the people did was give and have no returns or reward or blessing. However, his position saves him or the people from disappointment if the reward does not come on the tails of the act of giving. Pastor Adeboye’s emphasis on ‘giving’ as an exchange between human and the divine is a little problematic for the onus is not on the human to determine when the returns or harvest shall come. For someone who has given his/her all (law of total returns), such a person may have nothing to fall back on should the harvest time be delayed for any reason. While harvest time for agricultural products is relatively predictable,⁶⁷⁵ such predictableness of time is not the prerogative of ‘giving’ as sowing. The prosperity gospel has been brought into much disrepute on the account of some that gave their all and having nothing to fall back on got nothing back in return. Oyedepo seems to be sensitive to this and says:

Don’t give out of a corrupt heart either. Don’t seek only what you can get back, don’t be a trader...Don’t give an offering that will make it difficult for you to fulfil your financial responsibilities to your family. Whatever you won’t do willing-heartedly, don’t do it; because it will not be accepted, and you will end up in anger, and from anger to bitterness and bitterness to any other grievous offense.⁶⁷⁶

The law of exchange is a subtle move away from the law of reciprocity that derives from the justice and righteousness of God. Accounts of reciprocity in giving between the divine and human litter the bible:

“God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11: 6)

“Those who honor me will I honor” (I Samuel 2:30)

“They will be mine, says the Lord Almighty, “ in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares

⁶⁷⁵ The idea here is that all things being equal, every crop has a gestation period, the time it will take to grow and be ready for harvest.

⁶⁷⁶ Oyedepo, *Understanding financial prosperity*, p. 219

his son who serves him and you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not." (Malachi 3:17-18, NIV)

"To the pure you show yourself pure, but to the crooked you show yourself shrewd". (Ps 18: 26)

Seedtime and harvest time shall not cease...(Genesis 8:22)

Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously (2 Corinthians 9:6)

The law of reciprocity suggests a reward for a particular lifestyle, while the law of exchange turns the table round and works on the assumption that the law of reciprocity is a given. As a result, because a person desires to reap, then he/she sows; one may argue that this is what farmers do. However, when the act of giving is motivated by the desire for gain, then it becomes a pure business transaction. While Pastor Adeboye may, perhaps, not intend that such be the case, there is a strong possibility that it occurs. However, this law of exchange is not really original with Pastor Adeboye, it is traceable to Oral Roberts and his seed faith teaching.⁶⁷⁷ When Pastor Obanure was asked for his comments on the possibility of members viewing 'giving' as business transaction, he says it was all a matter of maturity. According to him, a new believer might easily view 'giving' as a business transaction but as he/she matures in his/her understanding of God and His ways, he/she will find such a description of his/her acts of giving to God rather inadequate.

It is in light of above that Adeboye does not discourage non-believers from giving to his church, according to Pastor Obanure giving:

[I]s a principle that transcends your religious affiliation, ...what a man sows, he will reap...whether he is a Christian or Muslim, it's a universal law... whether a Buddhist, Muslim, or Christian, whatever you belong to. If you give it will come back to you, if you don't give you will never get, no matter whether you were born under GO's bed and pour anointing oil everyday, nothing will happen.⁶⁷⁸

But for Oyedepo:

⁶⁷⁷ See Oral Roberts, *The miracle of seed faith*, (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1977).

⁶⁷⁸ Interview with Pastor Olu Obanure on 29 January 2010 at his office in Redemption Camp.

Until you step out of sin, you cannot step into plenty. This is the sure foundation for every kingdom benefit. It hasn't changed and it will never change; because God never changes. Kingdom prosperity answers to iniquity-free candidates...only when he has purged you can you then give offerings in righteousness. Then and only then will He accept it.⁶⁷⁹

In spite of these differences, however, similarities also abound in the two preachers' understanding of prosperity and its role in today's world. Prosperity as part of the atonement is an understanding shared by both preachers. Both preachers refer to 2 Corinthians 8: 9 as the text for their understanding that prosperity is part of the redemptive work of Christ.⁶⁸⁰ Also there is agreement between the two preachers about the great measure of wealth/prosperity that is in view. Both Bishop Oyedepo and Pastor Adeboye have personal aircrafts, so that they obviously testify to what they preach. Both of them preach that holiness and prosperity are not antithetical. Adeboye says :

Some prosperity preachers have drawn a line of demarcation between prosperity and holiness. They are wrong. You can not become rich in the strictest sense of the word without holiness. Holiness is the nature of God. God is the source of wealth. Lasting wealth can only be acquired when you possess the nature of the source of prosperity.⁶⁸¹

These differences and similarities are hereby presented in a tabular form for ease of reference.

Table 1. Differences in the views of Bishop Oyedepo and Pastor E.A. Adeboye on prosperity based on the discussion above.

Bishop David Oyedepo	Pastor E.A. Adeboye
1. Prosperity is covenantal and, therefore, relational.	1. Prosperity as law of exchange and, therefore, basically transactional.
2. There is no need for prayers and	2. There is need for big prayers in

⁶⁷⁹ Oyedepo, *Understanding financial prosperity*, p. 44

⁶⁸⁰ See Oyedepo, *Covenant wealth*, pp. 35-6, also see Adeboye, *How to turn your austerity*, p. 4

⁶⁸¹ Adeboye, *Divine collision*, p. 53

<p>fasting in order to prosper.</p>	<p>order to have supernatural prosperity.</p>
<p>3. “You must learn to be content in order to enjoy kingdom prosperity. Many in the body of Christ today are far from being contented, and so they go in search of more and more, until they begin to mourn...Contentment does not mean settling down with the status quo, but being satisfied that God cannot mismanage your life. Contentment is an expression of absolute trust in God, which is what commits Him to your prosperity”.⁶⁸²</p>	<p>3. To prosper one needs to dream big, plan big and have big ambition. “Isaac was not narrow minded. He had a very tall ambition. He had a very great vision. He was not like some who would go to God saying: ‘O Lord give me a second hand car or bicycle.’ Isaac did not ask God to give him just one aircraft. Nobody will ever envy you, if you have one aeroplane. There are several people in the world who fly about in private jets. However, when you get to a point where you have so many aircraft (<i>sic</i>), and you have to build a private airport, then people will envy you. You must be ambitious. You must make up your mind that before you die, God will take you to a level of prosperity, which will attract the envy of an entire nation.”⁶⁸³</p>
<p>4. “That money in your bank account or in your pocket is not what holds your tomorrow. I don’t trust in it. I’m not putting away money that my children will spend tomorrow. No! They are learning now how to</p>	<p>4. “It will get to a stage that you will realise that whatever amount you spend in a day will not even affect your capital. That whatever amount you spend anytime, you cannot even finish the interest in your lifetime.</p>

⁶⁸² Oyedepo, *Possessing your possession*, pp. 196-7

⁶⁸³ Adeboye, *Divine encounter*, p 10.

<p>possess their possession. I don't trust anybody, including myself, I just trust God. Money is crazy, there's nothing in it."⁶⁸⁴</p>	<p>This is the type of riches we are talking about. This type of riches will frighten anyone that is not linked with the supernatural."⁶⁸⁵</p> <p>"What you need to do, today, is to make up your mind that you are going to stop struggling to survive. Things must change. You need also to make up your mind that you are going to become so blessed financially, that your future generations will also remain wealthy. You must desire that God should bring you to a level of prosperity at which even if your grandchildren do nothing for life, they will remain rich."⁶⁸⁶</p>
<p>5. "Every prosperity is traceable to victory over iniquity. Your giving will never change your position until you return to God in truth and verity."⁶⁸⁷</p>	<p>5. Giving, like sowing seed is, a universal law that works for all irrespective of the person's religious affiliation.</p>

Table 7.2. Similarities in the views of Bishop Oyedepo and Pastor Adeboye on Prosperity

Bishop Oyedepo	Pastor Adeboye
1. Prosperity is part of the atonement.	1. "Jesus' sacrifice on Calvary as it

⁶⁸⁴ Oyedepo, *Understanding financial prosperity*, p. 266

⁶⁸⁵ Adeboye, *How to turn your austerity*, p. 22.

⁶⁸⁶ E.A. Adeboye, *Divine encounter*. p. 97.

⁶⁸⁷ Oyedepo, *Understanding financial prosperity*, p. 63

<p>“Riches is also part of our seven-fold redemptive heritage...Redemption is a cure for poverty... .”⁶⁸⁸</p>	<p>affects your finance must not be in vain.”⁶⁸⁹</p>
<p>2. Prosperity and holiness are not contradictory terms. “The purest place in the whole universe is also the wealthiest place – heaven!”⁶⁹⁰</p>	<p>2. “You cannot become rich in the strictest sense of the word without holiness. Holiness is the nature of God. God is the source of wealth.”⁶⁹¹</p>
<p>3. “Poverty is a curse”⁶⁹²</p>	<p>3. “Poverty is a curse.”⁶⁹³</p>

7.5. General Appraisal of the Prosperity Gospel

The economic context in which the prosperity gospel grew in the mid 80s coincided with the time when the country was in the throes of economic recession with the adoption of IMF-sponsored Structural Adjustment Program. While the American tele-evangelists have been preaching the gospel since 1954,⁶⁹⁴ it is noteworthy that the Nigerian preachers only adopted the teaching when it was most needed in the Nigerian context. The theological training landscape of Pentecostals in Nigeria also makes an ideal setting for the spread of this gospel. The chief protagonist of the gospel in Nigeria was Archbishop Benson Idahosa who had a short-term training at Gordon Lindsay’s Bible School of Christ for the Nations in Dallas, where he earned a diploma in 1971. Most of the other ministers did not attend any theological or bible school, rather many were raised on the staples of the writings of “successful ministers” such as Kenneth E. Hagin, Oral Roberts, T.L. Osborne, Kenneth Copeland and others. As Gordon Fee says “The Pentecostals’ experience has preceded their hermeneutics. In a sense, the Pentecostal tends

⁶⁸⁸ Oyedepo, *Possessing your possession*, p. 76.

⁶⁸⁹ Adeboye, *Divine encounter*, p. iv

⁶⁹⁰ Oyedepo, *Understanding financial prosperity*, p.61

⁶⁹¹ Adeboye, *Divine collision*, p.53

⁶⁹² Oyedepo, *Covenant wealth*, p. 31

⁶⁹³ Adeboye, *How to turn your austerity*, p. 11

⁶⁹⁴ Kenneth Hagin, *Biblical keys to financial prosperity*, (Tulsa: Rhema Bible Church, 1995), p.65

to exegete his experience".⁶⁹⁵ This statement is not necessarily a negative critique of their hermeneutics for such was what the New Testament writers did. They saw the Christ event as epochal and on the basis of that reread and reinterpreted scriptures. The prosperity gospel preachers are apparently doing the same. The question may be, "Does the economic downturn in the country constitute enough catastrophic event as to make a rereading of scriptures necessary?" The response to the economic downturn of the country in the form of prosperity gospel suggests such an assumption. For in a context where there is neither a government-concerted effort nor any social network to fall back on to cushion the effect of grinding poverty, the question of survival assumed immense proportions hitherto unprecedented. If the 1918 influenza epidemic signaled the popularity of the *Aladura* movement, the economic downturn of the country signals the popularity of the prosperity message. So much so that almost every preacher does, in one way or the other, preach the prosperity message. The dominant dimension which issues pertaining to money have assumed is traceable to the fact that money, in Yoruba system of thought, is *Ko se e ma ni* 'that which one cannot do without' or "the indispensable one."⁶⁹⁶ In the overarching worldview of the Yoruba, prosperity, like healing, is the purview of the gods and one's *ori*. Any object of worship that is impervious to the social realities, (for instance famine), of its votaries is quite irrelevant and risks being abandoned. It tasked the ingenuity of the preachers to have an answer to the question of austerity in the land, so that Jesus still remains relevant, and he is still seen as the answer in a contemporary situation.⁶⁹⁷

⁶⁹⁵ Gordon Fee, 'Hermeneutics and historical precedent – a major problem in Pentecostal hermeneutics' in Russell P. Spittler (ed) *Perspectives on the New Pentecostalism*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1976), p. 122.

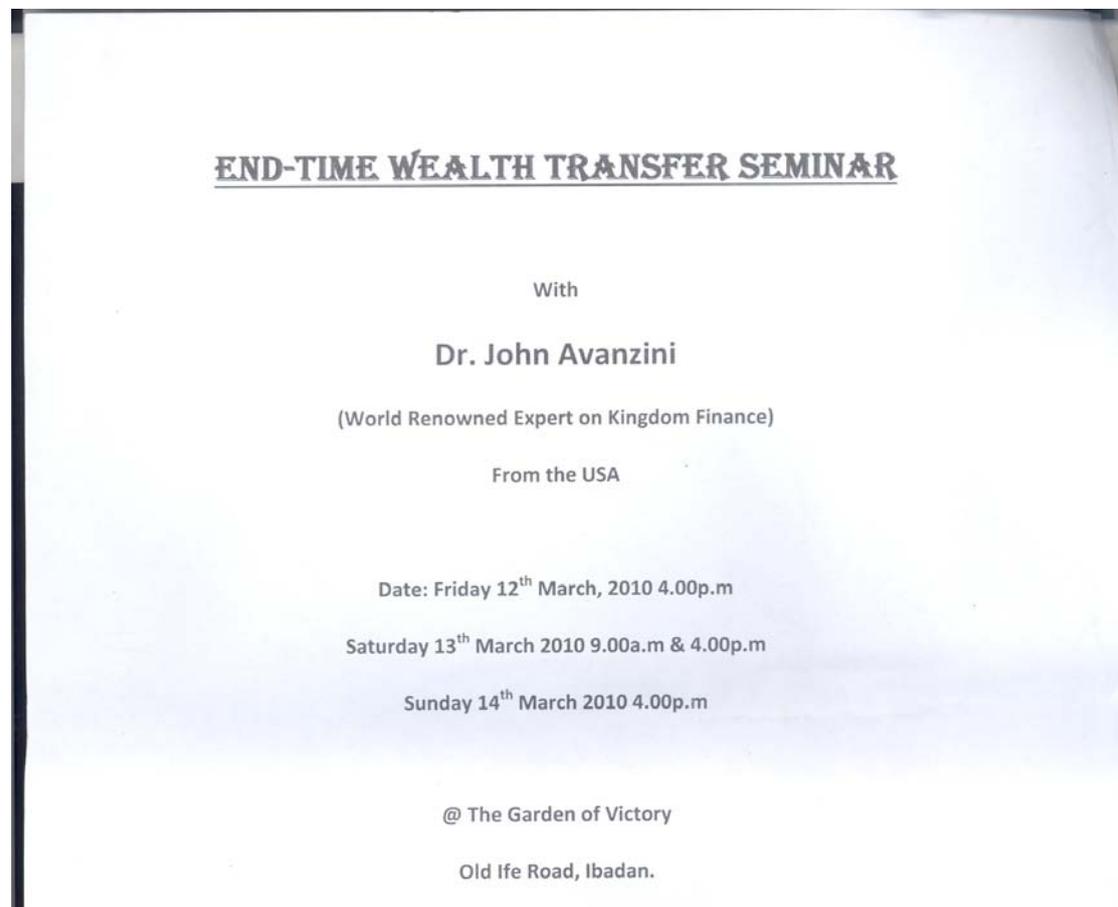
⁶⁹⁶ See Toyin Falola and Akanmu Adebayo, *Culture, politics & money among the Yoruba*, (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2000), p. 51ff.

⁶⁹⁷ Some might argue that there is not much ingenuity involved given the fact that the prosperity preachers merely adopted the messages of American tele-evangelists. While this is true, the ingenuity of the preachers lies in the fact that they had to repackage the message in culturally-relevant mould.

With regard to patronage-clientelism and the prosperity gospel, a pertinent question is how do the preachers help their members attain prosperity? Or what do the preachers see as their role in achieving prosperity for their members? Most of the churches seem to believe that giving their members opportunities to give in the church is one way for them to prosper.

In addition, quite a number of them organize teaching programs that deal with issues of finances and wealth. See table 7.3. below: a program recently organized in Bishop Wale Oke's church.

Plate 7.



The RCCG, perhaps, takes the lead among prosperity-preaching churches in helping its members attain prosperity. It does this in many ways; notable is the setting up of "business schools that are devoted to the training of both

members and non-members in business management".⁶⁹⁸ In addition, was the setting up in 2002 of Jubilee Cooperative Society (JCS) which loans money to "credible brethren." However, from the estimation of Adeboye himself, the program through which "God has raised multi-millionaires" is the Divine Encounter Programme.⁶⁹⁹ Ukah, writing about this program, notes that it began in 2001 out of concern for the "state of poverty among God's children".⁷⁰⁰ To this end, a weekly program that includes prayer and instruction or teaching among others holds at the Redemption Camp. The presupposition behind this strictly spiritual program is that "the spiritual controls the material and physical dimensions of life, and no one becomes truly rich without divine encounter."⁷⁰¹ This is in line with Adeboye's view that without prayer no one can have supernatural wealth.

In addition, these preachers clearly see themselves as brokers who broker God's prosperity to their clients. Again, Pastor Adeboye demonstrates this most clearly. His favourite biblical story in this regard is the story of Elijah and the Zarephath widow as recorded in I Kings 17:8-16 who "sowed when it was practically difficult to do so and who sowed on good ground" by giving to Elijah, the "head of the sons of the prophets."⁷⁰² Examples that follow these principles are of those who ministered personally to him (Pastor Adeboye) in giving or attending to his needs and whom God rewarded bountifully. In the first instance, a man who had given him a house soon had an estate, while a lady who attended to him had the baby in her womb revived after he prayed for her.⁷⁰³ Underlying these illustrations is the understanding that on the basis

⁶⁹⁸ Ukah, *A new paradigm*, pp.158, 160. Bishop Oyedepo organizes a monthly breakthrough seminar to the same effect, interview with the bishop on 25th January, 2010 at Ota. Bishop Wale Oke also organizes seminars such as End-Time wealth transfer held on the 12th of March, 2010.

⁶⁹⁹ Adeboye, *The ultimate financial breakthrough*, p. 8.

⁷⁰⁰ Ukah, *A new paradigm*, p. 251.

⁷⁰¹ Ukah, *A new paradigm*, p. 252

⁷⁰² Adeboye, *The ultimate financial breakthrough*, pp.10, 14, 17.

⁷⁰³ Adeboye, *The ultimate financial breakthrough*, pp.18-20.

of their intimate relationship with God, these preachers are able to broker the benefits of the kingdom to their clients.⁷⁰⁴

While we have appraised the teachings of some of the prosperity preachers on the basis of their interpretation and use of scriptures, we shall, in the following section, analyze the interpretation of John 10:10 by the prosperity preachers using Relevance Theory.

7.6. Relevance Theory and the interpretation of John 10:10 by Yoruba prosperity preachers

7.6.0. Introduction

This section is, essentially, an application of Relevance Theory (RT) described in the chapter two of this work. (RT) is used as an analytical tool to explain the interpretation of John 10:10 by Yoruba prosperity preachers. To this end, we shall remind ourselves of the terms that are in use in Relevance Theory (RT) and that are applicable to the subject matter.

According to RT, the intention to communicate takes place when a speaker brings to the attention of the hearer her desire to communicate to him assumptions or information she wanted him to be aware of.⁷⁰⁵ This, in RT, is known as *ostensive communication* and it signals to the hearer that the assumptions or information being communicated are of *relevance* to him. This in RT terms is known as the communicative principle: “every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance”.⁷⁰⁶ *Relevance* then is the modification of a hearer’s cognitive environment at little processing cost. A hearer’s cognitive environment is a combination of his assumptions of the world, his ability to intuit, perceive and infer the context of the utterance under consideration, his knowledge of the

⁷⁰⁴ See pages 110-112 in chapter 4 for a discussion of patronage in Neo-Pentecostal churches

⁷⁰⁵ RT uses the feminine pronoun to depict the speaker and the masculine pronoun to depict the hearer, this is, of course, untypical of how writers of bible books are conventionally depicted.

⁷⁰⁶ See Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, *Relevance*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 271

speaker, and all the facts that the hearer can bring to bear to understand the utterance. The cognitive environment may be modified in terms of the strengthening of previously held assumptions; contradiction of previously held assumptions, thereby leading to discarding such assumptions; and the arrival at new conclusions. Any of these changes to one's cognitive environment is known as cognitive effects and it comes at little processing effort.

7.6.1. Some salient Contexts of the Yoruba Prosperity Preachers

The Yoruba context as described in chapters 3 and 4 is shared by the preachers we have briefly discussed, in addition, however, these preachers share a context that is a little more nuanced than the laity. The *success orientation* of the Yoruba society and to a large extent, the Nigerian society as a whole, puts a strong onus on the preachers themselves to succeed. Success is reckoned in terms of the number of people under one's influence as well as the caliber of such people and the amount of wealth one controls. In addition, the concept of *power* is a major issue in the Yoruba society as we have noted. If a preacher claims an association with an all-powerful God, such a claim needs to be continually demonstrated not only in words as much as in deeds in the ministry of that preacher. In a context where there are many who claim the same association with the Almighty, competition, no matter how thinly veiled is practically inevitable.

The world denying Christianity of the 70s that emphasized personal holiness also informs the context of the Yoruba prosperity preachers. This type of Christianity, which leaves its adherents marginalized in the world, risked further marginalization in the context of hard economic conditions thus pushing it to the periphery of the society. This may make it more world-denying and perhaps make it develop apocalyptic tendencies. Such tendencies may eventually lead to its demise, as it becomes more inward looking and emphasizes separation from the rest of the populace. However,

another option would be a re-invention and redefinition of the purposes of such a group, this might be brought about by a reinterpretation of its charter. In the case at hand, a redefinition and reinvention did take place facilitated by a rereading of the scriptures of the church, in view of the massive and crunching economic recession that faced the country as a whole. The turn around in the fortunes of the church as a result of the re-invention was phenomenal so that in the midst of worsening economic conditions some of the few sectors that have experienced growth are churches⁷⁰⁷, banks and schools in the country.

Of all the churches in Nigeria that lay claim to affiliation with international bodies such as the mission churches and classical Pentecostals, none has demonstrated a propensity for change as much as the Neo-Pentecostals. The factors responsible for this have been discussed in chapter 4, yet, the point still needs to be reiterated that part of the context of the Neo-Pentecostal preachers is their sense of fraternity with their global colleagues. The Yoruba Neo-Pentecostals are not just in 'competition' with preachers in their region or country, but seeing "the world as their parish", they are in 'competition' with the mega preachers of the world.⁷⁰⁸ This is, however, not considered as 'competition' but a seeking of the replication of what God did in other ministries. This global tendency has partly encouraged the use of English language in the ministry of these preachers.⁷⁰⁹ Therefore, where the Yoruba translation of the bible would have shed light on the possible meaning of a

⁷⁰⁷ Ruth Marshall, *Political spiritualities*, pp. 84-85. See Robert Mbe Akoko for a similar experience of redefinition in Cameroon in his "Ask and you shall be given". *Pentecostalism and the economic crisis in Cameroon*, (Leiden: African Studies Centre, 2007).

⁷⁰⁸ Oyedepo makes mention of how he craved the serenity that characterized the ministry of Kenneth Hagin, see Oyedepo's *Exploits in ministry*, (Ota: Dominion Publishing House, 2006), p. 269. Adeboye recounts how he travelled to meet with other ministers in Korea and the US as he sought means for the church (RCCG) to grow, illustration given at the Holy Ghost Night of 8 January, 2010 in Redemption Camp.

⁷⁰⁹ Nigeria has about 400 ethnic groups speaking about 250 languages, the only common language that cuts across all the groups is English, which is also the official language of the country.

text, this benefit is lost to the preachers and their audience.⁷¹⁰ It is in light of the above that we can now situate the prosperity preachers and analyse their interpretation of John 10:10.

The main attraction of John 10:10 to prosperity preachers is the word *abundance*, just as 3 John 2 appeals to them because of the word *prosper*. This attraction is grounded in the principle of *relevance*, for the context of the prosperity preachers much like that of other Nigerians was one of austerity and depressing economic situation. This partly explains the emergence of the prosperity preaching in the late 80s and early 90s, a time of economic crunch for the country. The context of the preachers also includes the success stories of US television preachers with glossy magazines depicting their empires.⁷¹¹ In a honor-shame culture, it was a challenge then to them, for if they served the same God as these successful preachers, their success could and should be replicated in any other context, no matter the state of the economy. We may then note that the poor state of the Nigerian economy coupled with the success of American preachers led to a re-reading of scriptures especially of John 10:10 with its mention of *abundance*. This re-reading led to the contradiction of long-held assumption that poverty was synonymous with holiness/godliness. This re-reading of scriptures in light of the new context of poverty brought about a new conclusion or contextual implication⁷¹² - God's will is prosperity.

7.6.2. Issues of Translations and Versions

Part of the context of the prosperity preachers that has aided their interpretation of John 10:10 in particular is their preference for the King James' Version (KJV). The old Jacobean English seems to hold a fascination

⁷¹⁰ For instance, John 10:10 in Yoruba translates ζωή as *iye* and ψυχή as *emi*, this difference is lost in the English translations and to the Yoruba preachers.

⁷¹¹ Oyedepo confirms as much when he says "having been a student of Kenneth E. Hagin for over 20 years, and excitedly follow his ministry through his books...", see Oyedepo, *Exploits in ministry*, p. 269

⁷¹² Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*, p. 107-108.

for the preachers with its 'thou'/'thine'/'thy' phrases that seem to make it sound as the language in which the original words were uttered, sometimes at the risk of intelligibility. Being an urban affair, Neo-Pentecostalism privileges English translations. In a multi-lingual society as Nigeria, it is understandable that English, which is the official language of the nation would be preferred by preachers who want to make their messages accessible to people beyond their ethnic group. However, with the use of English as the medium of communication in the church, comes the confusion characteristic of homonyms. Our exegesis has already pointed out that two different Greek words (ψυχή, ζωή) are translated 'life' in English translations. In addition to this is a common expression among the Nigerian populace depicting 'life' in statements such as "enjoying life". Therefore in the statement in bold below, where 'life' has been modified /qualified with the phrase 'abundantly good', it has assumed a nuance that is distinctly different from the text. For it betrays an understanding or interpretation of 'life' that is more after the Nigerian expression of 'life' as pleasurable enjoyment or more aptly as *conspicuous consumption*.

No one has an inheritance in a family to which he does not belong. In the same way being born again is a prerequisite for you to be an inheritor of the rich heritage made available by covenant through the shed blood of Jesus. It is our heritage to be fruitful, prosperous, healthy and to enjoy long life among other things **because Jesus came to give the believer an abundantly good life** (Jn. 10:10).⁷¹³

This understanding of John 10:10 as demonstrated in the quote above is part of the larger Yoruba quest, desire and expectation for *alafia* and is part of the assumption of how the world runs and therefore constitutes part of the context of the preachers and the congregation.

⁷¹³ David O. Oyedepo, *Possessing your possession*, (Lagos: Dominion Publishing House, 2006), p. 9, bold mine.

7.6.3. The Role of the Holy Spirit in Interpretation

New teachings among the Neo-Pentecostals are usually attributed to the Holy Spirit, apparently in consonance with the promise of Jesus that the Holy Spirit, whom the father will send will “teach you all things” (Jn 14:26). This blanket promise has been used as a justification for understandings that are not the conventional/traditional understanding of scriptures. However, the word that, perhaps, guards against arbitrary interpretations of events or scriptures is the pronoun ‘you’ in that verse, (which is in the plural form in the Greek). As demonstrated in Acts of Apostles 15 and Galatians 2:10, there seemed to be the practice that new teachings or emphases were subjected to discussion by the parties involved and a collective decision taken.⁷¹⁴ This distinction between second person plural and singular forms is blurred in English translations so it is possible for a leader to run with some new teachings attributing it to the leading of the Holy Spirit. In a context where everyone wants to have a distinctive mark in the midst of plurality of churches and fellow ‘competitors’, one can only imagine what possibilities of teachings could occur. The corollary of this is the view prevalent among the early Pentecostals that theological studies is antithetical to the Holy Spirit.⁷¹⁵ As mentioned earlier, all the three ministers we have reviewed are not graduates of any theological college. Since the emphasis of ministry, among the Yoruba especially, is the demonstration of God’s power through miracles and this power is not acquired in conventional schools, theological studies are not really encouraged. However, this position is at best self-contradictory and self-defeating, for if scripture, as Pentecostals believe, is written at the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the dichotomy between the working of miracles by the same Spirit and studies pertaining to the writings which he inspired is only apparent.

⁷¹⁴ See Acts of Apostles 15 and Galatians 2:1-10.

⁷¹⁵ This view might not be unjustified in light of historical critical studies that seemed to be more interested in proving what is possibly not right in the bible than anything else.

The issue of reader competence on the part of the preachers is allied to the issue raised above and it is also linked to the expectation of *relevance* on the part of the laity. While quite a number of the populace could boast of having a secondary school level of education, this is necessary to appreciate sermons preached in English, the expectation of many who attend Neo-Pentecostal churches (including the highly educated ones) is for miracles and the enhancement of living conditions. Therefore, their expectation of *relevance* is in such light, and it is in this light that messages from preachers are evaluated. It is therefore, a bit ironical that there are well-trained doctors, lawyers, and other professionals, who in turning to ministry to become pastors, do not consider it necessary to attain some level of academic proficiency in their new career. But then this only demonstrates their understanding of what their ministry is all about.

7.6.4. Mode of Biblical Interpretation among Prosperity Preachers

From our analysis of how bible passages are being interpreted by the prosperity preachers, it seems obvious, that catch phrases or concordance-like mode of interpretation is in vogue. That is, a word or phrase of interest that occurs in a particular passage is linked to the same word that occurs in other passages of scripture. The context of occurrence of this word in each different passage is not discussed or explored. This practice, betrays a view that the locus of meaning is in a word and not in the discourse. Applying this insight to John 10:10, we find that the popularity of the verse is in the word “abundantly” or as KJV has it “more abundantly” no attempt is made to situate the word or phrase in the larger discourse known as the shepherd discourse of John 10: 1-18. For this reason, the verse is not seen in light of its rebuke of the leadership of the time and by extension seen as a possible critique of contemporary leadership. It is in light of this that justice is not done to the whole witness of scripture, rather what we have are narrow interpretations focusing on some item of interest leaving some other aspects untouched.

7.6.5. Underdeterminacy in John 10:10

In RT, implicatures are the filling out of gaps that exist in any form of communication, this could be in the form of reference assignment or drawing out the implications of an argument. Among all prosperity preachers, the 'thief' referred to in John 10:10 is none other than the devil/Satan,⁷¹⁶ however, there is no explicit mention of the devil in the context of the discourse. The inference supplied by these preachers does not, therefore, logically arise from the text, but arises from their interpretation of other passages of scripture and their general assumption of how the world runs. While this interpretation may not be necessarily wrong in a general analysis, it has muzzled the text from speaking within its own context and denied it the ability to critique its readers. Their identification of the 'thief' with the devil is also possible because their aim was not to read the verse in light of its context. For this reason also these preachers do not usually discuss the earlier reference in verse 8 to 'thieves and robbers', who came before Jesus and attempted to serve as brokers

7.6.6. Prosperity Preaching a Metarepresentation of John 10:10?

As mentioned earlier, the word 'abundance' in John 10:10 serves as the main attraction of prosperity preachers in using this verse to justify their preaching. Our analysis of the text has shown that 'abundant life' is the same as 'eternal life', which in the fourth gospel begins in the present world but by no means ends there. So to equate 'eternal/abundant life' with the possession of wealth and property is to magnify the material above all else and to blur the distinction between ζωή and ψυχή. Such an act will be a disservice to the text for we are no longer hearing it on its own terms as the pole of distantiation advocates.

⁷¹⁶ See Oyedepo, *Possessing your possession*, p. 25, 105; Adeboye, *Divine Collision*, p. 62; Wale Oke, *Changed from glory to glory*, p. 378. See also Okwori, *Godliness for gain*, p. 87

7.6.7. Prosperity Preaching a Metarepresentation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

The preaching of prosperity or the prosperity gospel is anchored on the belief that prosperity or redemption from poverty is part of the atonement. The only scriptural evidence for this is 2 Corinthians 8:9 “for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich”. We have discussed this passage at some length and have come to the conclusion that this verse does not lend itself to such a belief. This conclusion was reached by considering the following:

- The fact that Paul had to ask for collection on behalf of the saints in Jerusalem shows that prosperity, as part of the atonement, was not in the understanding of Paul.
- The experience of Paul does not attest to prosperity as part of the atonement as a truth.⁷¹⁷

However, is it possible that a reader will access some truth that was not conceived by the author, especially when the author did not consider that he was writing what would later be termed scripture? Then, perhaps, the question to posit is how much the new understanding is in line with God’s acts in previous times. The Old Testament presents different views of poverty and wealth. Possession of wealth is often portrayed as evidence of God’s favor and a righteous person as a generous person. Therefore, poverty, famine and lack are presented as evidence that a person had sinned against God; a notable exception to this is the story of Job. There is an assumption that there will always be poor people in the community and the rich should care for them. The New Testament is not so univocal in considering poverty to arise as a result of sin. From the New Testament we can glean the following:

- That the NT church had poor and rich members is evident.⁷¹⁸

⁷¹⁷ See I Corinthians 4:9-13, especially verse 11: “to this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless...”; See also McConnell *A different gospel*, p. 177ff.

- That the NT church practiced pooling of resources at a point in time is also demonstrated in scriptures (See Acts of the Apostles 2: 45; 4:32ff)
- That God cares for all the needs of his people is clearly taught also (See Matthew 6:25ff)

But what can we infer that II Corinthians 8:9 mean?

- Jesus was rich (materially) in his pre-incarnate state. His incarnation suggests the poverty, in terms of material things, that he took on. Believers (plural) through Jesus' (material) poverty are made (materially) rich. The key words in this verse are the verb 'to be poor', ἐπτώχευσε (he was poor) and the noun πλούσιος (being rich/wealthy). While both words can be used in a metaphoric sense, they are most often used in the literal sense of being poor or rich in material terms. So when Jesus is said to have been rich in his pre-incarnate state, it strictly means that by our earthly standard he was materially rich. While some commentators have interpreted the riches of believers in spiritual terms, it is not enough to be spiritually rich when a person has material needs unless there is a means to show that spiritual riches translate into material riches. Secondly, the focus of the text is an exhortation by Paul to the congregation to make material/financial contribution not a 'spiritual' one.
- The important question then is, by what means did Jesus' poverty translate into riches for us? Jesus' coming into the world has already made rich as many as receive him, for it has bound all the believers into one family where each cares for the other. One can recall Jesus' statement in Mark 10: 29-30 that anyone who left homes, brothers, or sisters or mother or father because of him shall receive a hundred times more of such in this world with persecutions. This was the fuel on which itinerant preachers ran to preach the gospel in unknown areas.

⁷¹⁸ Acts 4: 34 "there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need".

In light of all these, to what extent does prosperity preaching metarepresent the gospel in our context? But before then, we need to recognize that things have changed, economic concerns seem to dominate our living conditions in the contemporary world, perhaps, mainly because as societies have moved away from agrarian societies and thence a subsistence form of food production, money concerns are more real in our world as a ready form of exchange. Therefore, we shall not be naïve as to conjecture that times have remained the same since the writing of the NT. On the other hand, basic human needs have virtually remained the same and the attendant anxieties that follow the fear of unmet needs are still as acute. This is the significance of our text in the fourth gospel, that the good shepherd anticipates the needs and cares for his own up to the point of death. And he has brought his sheep into relationship with his other sheep both of whom form a fictive kinship relationship that care for one another for they are linked to the same one who brokers the kingdom benefits to them and links them up with the great patron. Therefore, the individualistic flavor of the prosperity gospel/teaching is at variance with the witness of the New Testament and especially of the fourth gospel. Secondly, prosperity is not part of the atonement and therefore is not a metarepresentation of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

7.7. Conclusion

The interpretation of John 10:10 by the Yoruba prosperity preachers is informed by their socio-economic context rather than the context of the text, for they are more skilled in their context than the text. In RT terms, a reader/hearer interprets a text /utterance in light of his context and cognitive abilities to attain *relevance*. Once *relevance* is attained by means of the modification of the hearer's cognitive environment, he stops further processing, claiming he has found the meaning of the text/utterance. This is what has happened with the reading of John 10:10 by Yoruba prosperity preachers who live in a context of economic depression and are in dialogue

with prospering US ministers. Having a cognitive environment that claims sensitivity to spiritual realities with limited or no theological training, a teaching that emphasizes abundance and plenty in the midst of austerity is highly *relevant*. Old assumptions that poverty is a badge of godliness give way to new conclusions or contextual implications that prosperity is the lot of the righteous. The new conclusion has spawned a host of praxis that primarily revolves around 'giving' in different forms. These acts of giving are acts of piety and are confined to the private domain. To this end, for all the influence and wealth in the possession of these ministers, there is no commensurate change in the public arena either in terms of demand for social justice or in terms of being the voice of the poor in the society.

In the next chapter, we shall look at the new conclusions or contextual implications that we shall arrive at by taking the Yoruba context seriously and engaging it in a dialogue with the text in its context. To this end we shall look at the praxis that such a dialogue will facilitate.

CHAPTER 8 - APPROPRIATION AND CONCLUSION

8.0. Introduction

This chapter brings to a conclusion all our analyses of the context of the reader and the text. 'Appropriation', the third pole in Draper's model, we shall recall from our discussion in chapter two, is the culmination of the interaction between the reader and the text, resulting in praxis that transforms the reader. In RT terms, then, 'appropriation' consists of the changes brought to the cognitive environment of the reader. We have noted earlier that the prosperity gospel as practiced by the prosperity preachers is an 'appropriation' in a sense. For it is the outcome of the conversation between their context and the text. We do surmise, however, that due to their limited training in biblical and theological studies, their appropriation is more a product of their context and less of the text and its context. In light of our exegetical analysis of the text within the context of a Yoruba reader, what new 'appropriation' can we now advocate? Discussion of the pole of appropriation fittingly brings this study to a conclusion as we look at the various concepts or issues that the Yoruba grapple with in light of our text. Relevance Theory has shed light on how the presuppositions, assumptions and cognitive abilities of the prosperity preachers have led them to some conclusions and appropriation. The same theory shall be applied to my reading of the text and the appropriation that follows shall be noted.

8.1. Issues of concern in view of Yoruba Cultural Assumptions

8.1.1. Concept of *Alafia*

The concept of well-being or *alafia* is endemic to the Yoruba culture. It is the prism with which the world is viewed, the criterion by which decisions in life are made and the ultimate sought in relationships. The Yoruba are, however, realistic enough to know that life is not a bed of roses, so they can say in comparison, *ki ale san wa ju owuro lo*, "may our evening time be better than our morning." Evening time of one's life being one's old age where all strength is

gone or at least diminished and hence the ability to cope with serious life challenges is reduced. The Yoruba know the wisdom of deferring immediate pleasure or gratification for a longer lasting benefit. In RT parlance, utterances such as irony, sarcasm and such use of figurative language derive their *relevance* not in the linguistic meaning of the utterance, but in the further processing of the utterance beyond the grammar to yield greater cognitive effects. So there is a place in RT for the exertion of greater effort in order to attain greater benefit. The concept of *alafia* in Yoruba thought was concerned with the issues of this present world, principally because that was the only realm known to them. The dead remain significant in Yoruba worldview not for their own sake but mainly because they are thought to exert some sort of authority and power over the living. So the concept of *alafia* in Yoruba thought which has been said to be this-worldly is mainly so because of their eschatology. Just like the ancient Jews, there is no known world outside or beyond this world, so it makes perfect sense that their prayers, concerns and wishes should be this-worldly.

The concept of *alafia* among the Yoruba is rightly life-affirming, just as ζωή is in the fourth gospel with its emphasis on "abundant life", the only snag is that the Yoruba understanding and definition of life is much narrower than the fourth gospel's understanding. The conception of 'life' among the Yoruba is equivalent to the fourth gospel's ψυχή depicting earthly, physical life and its concerns. The fourth gospel's understanding of ζωή as the true life - a mode of existence that encompasses both this present world and the world to come, therefore, broadens the concept of *alafia* to address the concerns of both worlds. And, where the concerns of ψυχή is antithetical to the concerns of ζωή, one's priority is clear like the good shepherd's: to choose the interests of ζωή above that of ψυχή. Ζωή, as we have discussed, is the true life given to humans at the cost of the physical life of the Son of God, Jesus. Where issues arising from the concerns of earthly living ψυχή threaten one's continual belief in Jesus as the son of God ζωή (cf John 20:31) as evidenced in a lifestyle

or conduct that threaten this belief, then such issues are relatively of no importance. Therefore, in RT terms, the fourth gospel has not contradicted the Yoruba cultural assumption of *alafia*, rather it has affirmed it and extended its scope so that we reach a new contextual implication where material concerns are held in tension with spiritual concerns and giving primacy to ζωή and its concerns where it risks being undermined by ψυχή.

8.1.2. Patronage-Clientelism

Patronage-clientelism has become a well-known feature of both the Yoruba society and the Church along with its attendant obligation of gratitude on the part of the client. Being a diffuse and ambiguous relationship, it is open to exploitation and abuse, for there are no clear rules guarding the relationship. One is never too sure of what one would do or not do to incur the epithet 'ungrateful', for expectations are often unexpressed.

Patronage in African Initiated Churches (AICs), as discussed in chapter 4, often take the form of the minister fasting on behalf of the client for the resolution of one problem or the other. In Neo-Pentecostal circles, clients specially desire the personal prayers of the minister based on the understanding that he is an "anointed man of God." Members try to out do one another in order to gain the attention of the minister.

The fourth gospel clearly shows that anyone could introduce any person to Jesus, however, such a person does not continue as a broker, for he/she soon fades out of the scene leaving the introduced with Jesus – the only broker between humans and God. That church ministers often play the role of facilitating a relationship between people and the savior is quite clear. What has remained unclear is what should constitute the relationship once a person has been brought to the savior. The discussion of the role of a shepherd to the sheep is that of someone who provides nurture and oversight. However, this role of the shepherd is a delegated authority, where the shepherd himself is

an under-shepherd, performing his functions as a representative of the good shepherd, who owns the sheep.

Among the Yoruba, the position of a pastor as assumed a cultural coloring, whereby the pastors are now playing the traditional roles usually played by the elders of the community. For, as gleaned from the discussion of the role of the shepherd in chapter six, it is clear that the sheep has learnt to trust the shepherd. This trust, among the Yoruba, has broadened the scope of the relationship between the members and the pastor to cover a wide-spectrum of issues. The traditional roles erstwhile played by elders such as counseling, settling family disputes, and others are now coupled with the roles of traditional priests such as providing guidance for life-long decisions, prayer of protection from all harm among others. This type of relationship, between the pastor and the people, in Yoruba terms, is also a power relation and easily becomes a patron-client relation. The pastor becomes a broker using his spiritual gifts to broker the benefits of the kingdom to his clients.⁷¹⁹ What is apparent from this scenario is that the shape, which the relationship between the pastor and the individual members of the congregation assumes, is, perhaps, more at the instigation of the people rather than that of the pastor alone.⁷²⁰ It is, 'easier' to have hands laid on one for the resolution of a problem, than work through the problem oneself. In this way, the congregation will always have need of the pastor as a broker and the pastor has his credentials shored up as a 'true man of God.' The situation seems to work beautifully for everyone except that congregation gets less discerning and can easily mistake the voice of the pastor for the voice of the good

⁷¹⁹ The spiritual gifts in this sense could be the prayer of the Man of God to facilitate benefits such as winning contracts, gaining employment, release from generational curses and so on.

⁷²⁰ A Baptist pastor mentions how a lady, for example, could come with names of prospective suitors and ask him to pray over them and let her know whom she should marry out of the names supplied. When such a lady is advised to pray for herself and make up her mind, she gets upset with the Pastor and may visit other ministers for the same service. He says in this way pressure is being put on ministers to 'give a word from the Lord' even if the Lord has not spoken. Interview with Pastor John Olukunle Odejayi of Emmanuel Baptist Church, Odo-Ona, Ibadan, on Tuesday 26/01/10.

shepherd (Jesus). The people, clients, are closer to the new broker and Jesus becomes a more distant patron.

This scenario goes against the grain of our text in the fourth gospel, where Jesus is presented as the sole broker. The situation thus created becomes especially critical in an instance where the pastor no longer adequately represents Jesus. The matter comes to a head in a context where the pastor brooks no dissent, for “God is not a democrat.”⁷²¹ In such a situation there is no restraining voice for in most Neo-Pentecostal churches power is concentrated in one person, who is usually the head of the organization/church. Concentration of power in one person is usually quite dicey. In such a circumstance, the church could be in dire straits. Unfortunately, the political leadership cannot provide an oversight of such organizations because its elites are usually clients of the big pastors.

The discussion of patronage-clientelism in the fourth gospel is compounded, as noted earlier, by the role credited to the *paraclete*, Holy Spirit in the gospel. The Holy Spirit is the only acknowledged broker that “provides access to Jesus after Jesus’ departure”,⁷²² for he is to guide into all truth (John 16:13), remind of the words of Jesus (14:26), testify of Jesus (15:26), and glorify Jesus (16:14). Pentecostals, including Neo-Pentecostals, are generally known to give primacy to the role and gifts of the Holy Spirit in their worship and ministry and this becomes a link between them and the fourth gospel. However, in light of our discussion of the roles being played presently by some of these pastors, it seems apparent, then, that there is a confusion of their roles with that of the Holy Spirit. This confusion, as mentioned earlier, is not without the active collaboration of the laity. Issues revolving around making life decisions should be the discretion of a person and his/her understanding of the

⁷²¹ This is a statement credited to Pastor E.A. Adeboye, see Ruth Marshall, “God is not a democrat”: Pentecostalism and democratisation in Nigeria’, in Paul Gifford (ed), *Christianity and Africa’s democratisation*, (Leiden: Brill Publications, 1995), pp. 239-260. Also see *Political spiritualities*, p. 202.

⁷²² Brown, *Spirit in the writings of John*, p. 61

guidance of the Spirit. This, of course, does not rule out advice from trusted friends and pastors, but that is what they are, advice not decisions. Healings and performance of miracles through pastors are the working of the Spirit and due credit given to him. The roles of pastors are essentially that of coaches and not brokers. At the same time, the discernment of the laity needs to be sharpened so that they do not listen to those whose voice differs from that of the good shepherd. As verse 8 of John 10 says “all who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them”: this was because they were steeped in Israel’s scriptures. Therefore, there is need by the laity to return to reading scriptures for themselves. This is quite pertinent, for the laity is usually quite inundated by messages from the ministers as they listen to their audio tapes, read their books, watch their video tapes, attend their programs all geared towards expounding their own understanding of scriptures. It is difficult then, sometimes, to hear the scriptures on its own terms.

8.1.3. Honor-Shame Culture

An honor-shame society, as mentioned in chapter 3, is a society that grants worth/honor or disgrace/shame to individuals /groups based on some norms and ideals of the society.⁷²³ These norms and ideals are usually well-known to members of the community and acts of shame lay such an individual or group open to ridicule and loss of face in the society, while acts of honor bring praise, acclaim and fame. In this type of culture conformity to the norms is encouraged or else one faces ostracism or ridicule in the community. As Malina opines, honor-shame is a means for a society to sanction the behavior of its members and keep them “from disrupting the group.”⁷²⁴

⁷²³ See Bruce Malina, *The New Testament world*, p. 28.

⁷²⁴ See Bruce Malina and Richard Rohrbaugh, *Social-science commentary*, p. 121.

The honor-shame culture of the Yoruba informs the Yoruba conception of what counts for success and failure, and consequently of what should be affirmed or denounced and rejected. Jesus of the fourth gospel, though coming from a similar culture, refuses to submit to the dictates of this cultural norm. As Malina notes, “when Jesus says in 5:41 (also 12:43) that he does not accept glory from human beings, he is rejecting a core value of Mediterranean societies.”⁷²⁵ Honor-shame culture is an imposition of values deemed noble or proper by a people, and one’s conformity to such values affirms the culture and one’s agreement with such values. Such conformity provides no critique of the assumptions underlying the values, and it, therefore, poses no alternative reading or challenge that can stimulate within the people a self-criticism of the culture and that can generate any necessary transformation.

Jesus of the fourth gospel subverts and redefines the cultural notions of honor/shame. An instance of this is his subversion of the cultural notion of leaders as bosses by his washing the feet of his disciples (John 13). He took the posture of a servant by washing their feet and thereby provided his disciples a model to emulate. It is quite difficult for a Yoruba who is steeped in the notion of *conspicuous leisure* to serve younger people or people of junior rank. The culture abhors such blurring of boundary lines and a person who does such stands to be made jest of in the community. Therefore, anyone daring to go against the grain of society in this regard must brace him/herself up for such consequences

In addition, Jesus redefines the concept of honor-shame by noting that the time of his crucifixion/death is the hour of his glory (John 12:20-24). Death by crucifixion, a painful and disgraceful process, only allows him to fulfill his ‘destiny’ in Yoruba parlance, and hence is not shameful since his “food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work”.⁷²⁶

⁷²⁵ Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social-science commentary*, p. 122.

⁷²⁶ John 4:34

With regard to the prosperity gospel among the Yoruba, it is considered shameful, among the Yoruba, for a person of a certain age not to have built a personal house or own a car. To this end many people try to measure up to the expectation of the society to acquire these or else suffer ignominy at family meetings. Some prosperity preachers fan the embers of this cultural expectation by urging and provoking the members of their congregation to satisfy this expectation.⁷²⁷ Personal testimonies of ministers do reinforce such perspectives also. For example at a Provincial prayer meeting of the Oyo Province 3 of the RCCG Ibadan, the provincial pastor in a sermon titled 'Humility and obedience to divine instruction will bring divine approval' asks the congregation to pray for honor. He notes how he had been an unrecognized person for a while but now things have changed as people who used to avoid meeting with him now seek him out to greet. He used to be the one seeking to greet people but now things have changed and he knows from personal experience the better of the two situations. He notes that it is a disgraceful thing for a married man to stay in the family house of the wife, such a man might be called upon to slash firewood - a shameful task.⁷²⁸ In this way the congregation is being encouraged to seek to be in a position where the community honors them. In no way is the congregation challenged not to look down on people just because they are not influential, rather they are to seek to be what the society expects them to be. In no way are they affirmed that since God has accepted them, they are fine and need not seek the accolades of others.

8.2. The Concept of 'Abundant Life' in John 10:10 and the Prosperity Gospel

An interpretation of the concept of abundant life in John 10:10 cannot be divorced from the literary context of the gospel. A facile understanding of this

⁷²⁷ In an interview, Ven. Adekola of Christ Church Mapo, Ibadan, recounting his experience in Pentecostal circles quotes some ministers as saying to members of the congregation "*Awon omo inu e, ti ko 'le ni Lekki iwo si je tenant ni ile onile*" - "those younger to you have built homes in Lekki (a posh area in Lagos), while you remain a tenant in someone else's house."

⁷²⁸ A sermon preached by Pastor Nat Adejuwon on 14/01/09 at the RCCG parish in Bembo, Apata, Ibadan.

concept interprets it only in light of the tangible possession of resources in the now. 'Life' in the fourth gospel is a present possession even in the context, and not necessarily in the absence of death (John 12:24). The fourth gospel repeatedly uses irony as a rhetorical device: the author of life dies, he who promises water of life thirsts on the cross (John 19:28), thereby demonstrating that not all that is hoped for is fully realized in the immediate. By implication, this shows the importance of faith, a faith, which does not see or realize in full all the promises - "blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29). Yet the gospel also demonstrates the fulfillment of the promises: the feeding of the five thousand - "I am the bread of Life", the healing of the man born blind - "I am the light of the world", the raising of Lazarus - "I am the resurrection and life". Yet we might say that these were never presented as the ultimate, they are only signs that are meant to whet the appetite for the ultimate (John 20:31). The raising of Lazarus serves as a foretaste of the resurrection of believers, the healing of the man born blind as a foretaste of "whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (John 8:12), these are signs the ultimate of which is the possession of life. These suggest that the possession of 'abundant life' is a reality that commences in the present and transcends it to the world beyond the present. Therefore, to understand the possession of 'abundant life' mainly in terms of possession of wealth is quite reductionist of a concept that though captures the material yet is beyond the material. As mentioned earlier, issues of wealth and money make sense in the present world because of the need to exchange goods and services; issues such as this pale to insignificance in the world to come. As a result, an understanding of eternal/abundant life mainly in material terms is quite an insufficient description of the term.

In terms of praxis, the understanding that 'abundant life' encompasses both the material and the spiritual obliges those who profess to have the life to call for and demonstrate in their personal and public lives a just and equitable distribution of wealth, advocate for responsible governments that care for its

citizens in the enactment of a social system that cares for the poor, in conjunction with mission outreach since all life issues from God.

8.3. Views on the Prosperity Gospel

Emphasis on prosperity, in a sense, is a recovery of a forgotten aspect of life in view of the asceticism of the Campus Christianity of the 70s. In light of the relative newness of this teaching, a lot of unwarranted justification is being provided for it so as to remove or minimize the guilt that some may feel for embracing it – hence the need to see it as part of the atonement. This reading of prosperity as part of the atonement is a result of a previous (mis)reading that views prosperity or material well-being as antithetical to faith. There is now a turn around, and the preaching now is that there is enough wealth in our world to be enjoyed by all. However, greed or the fear of not having enough for self or generations after one remains the greatest challenge to equitable distribution of wealth. The prosperity gospel as it stands does not advocate for a fair distribution of wealth, at its best it only encourages giving to the poor without a commensurate obligation placed on the political elite to deliver on their promises for a better society. This is because the sense of community is not really promoted; instead individualistic tendencies are promoted with emphasis on one's faith and one's destiny. For this reason, the prosperity gospel is not an antidote to poverty, for in addition; it does not promote or advocate a detachment from wealth and its trappings to make wealth be viewed only as a tool.

8.4. Concluding Remarks

This study has shown that the prosperity gospel as practiced by the Yoruba preachers is usually motivated more by socio-cultural and economic exigencies than exegesis. Most times scripture texts are only used as a hand-aid for the gospel. It is in this general light that the use of John 10:10 by the prosperity gospel preachers may be viewed. The inclusion of the word 'abundant' in the verse serves as the main attraction for use as a supporting

evidence for the prosperity gospel by its preachers. Surprisingly however, this use of the verse is, in light of our exegesis, quite valid, for Jesus of the fourth gospel is interested in the possession of life in this present world. If the 'life' he gives is only meaningful in the world to come, then it needs to be possessed, perhaps, only at the point of death, for it would be quite irrelevant for the present world. However, the fact that 'life' is a present possession suggests and implies its significance for living in the present. One implication is that it is within the confines of the door, which is Jesus, that the sheep find pasture. Pasture represents the ultimate that the sheep requires for sustenance. For humans, pasture represents the satisfaction of the totality of their needs both physical and spiritual. Therefore, the significance of implications for praxis for a people who see themselves as a people living in this present world with expectations and longing for a world to come cannot just be one-dimensional. As we have already noted, the prosperity preachers did not get to their conclusion that the concept of life has material implications by an exegesis of the text as Pastor Adeboye's interpretation demonstrates.⁷²⁹ Rather it is by the attraction of words that connote ideas related to prosperity, in this case 'abundance'. Secondly, John 10:10 is not the most basic text of prosperity preachers to establish that prosperity is part of the atonement, rather it is 2 Corinthians 8:9. Therefore, John 10:10 is used as a supporting evidence for a conclusion reached while reading other scripture texts. The corrective which John 10:10 would have provided on the readings of these preachers is, however, lost because the verse is not taken in its context. The delicate balancing of the ψυχή and ζωή in the fourth gospel is the needed corrective in any prosperity teaching.

Given that the quest, desire and hope for prosperity is an inalienable part of the greater quest for *alafia* among the Yoruba, prosperity teaching will remain popular in times to come. Some observers only expect that there may be some greater degree of moderation brought about by the disillusionment of some

⁷²⁹ See Adeboye, *Divine encounter*, p.94-5.

givers who did not get any returns on their giving.⁷³⁰ How the Yoruba cope with such disappointment may be a good subject for further research.

⁷³⁰ While preachers and their members usually start a new year with a lot of expectations, as the year draws to an end and there are no obvious blessings received, the preachers are careful to play on the Yoruba desire for life to tell the congregation that they must be grateful to the Lord for the fact that they are alive. Anyway, for those who died, they are not in the church to complain that they had no blessing in the year. So people may not easily get disillusioned because of lack of material blessing. This is one of the blessings inherited from the Yoruba culture that serves the purposes of the preachers well - no one gives up hope while still living.

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Declaration

I, **Abiola Ibifola Mbanzulu**, Ph.D candidate, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Faculty of Humanities, Religion and Social Sciences, School of Religion and Theology, hereby declare that unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, this thesis is my own original work and shall only be submitted for the purpose of the above mentioned degree.

A. Mbanzulu

Abiola Ibifola Mbanzulu

07/03/2011

Date

As the supervisor, I hereby approve this thesis for submission.

[Signature]

08-03-2011

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