

RELIGION AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Yahya Oyewole Imam, PhD,
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By

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Religion and Contemporary Issues
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CONTRIBUTORS

- Abejide, M. E. is a scholar from Cherubim and Seraphim College, Ilorin.
- Abioje, Pius Oyeniran is a Professor in the Department of Religions, University of Ilorin.
- Adesina, Julius is a Lecturer at the Department of Religions, History, and Heritage Studies, Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria.
- Adetunmbi, Moses Adebolu, is a Lecturer at Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, Oyo State.
- Adeyeye, Agnes Omotayo is a Lecturer in the Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.
- Akande, Lydia Bosede is a Lecturer in the Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.
- Akinola, Segun Gabriel is a Lecturer from the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.
- Arikewuyo, 'Abdus-Sami' Imam is a Lecturer at Kwara State University, Malete, Ilorin, Nigeria. His research interests include Islamic Studies and religious education.
- Atuluku, John is a Lecturer at FCT College of Education, Zuba, Abuja.
- Bello, Ally Hammed is a Lecturer in the Department of Islamic Studies at Kwara State College of Education, Oro.
- Boyi, Joshua Bagudu is a scholar at UMCA Theological College, Ilorin, with expertise in Theology and Christian Studies.
- Daniel, Mary Taiye is a Lecturer in the Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.
- David, Ojo Oludare is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Arts Education, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin.
- Funsho-Oyinloye, E. Funmi is a Ph.D. student at the Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.
- Husayn, Sulyman Kehinde is a dedicated educator at Ero-Omo Secondary School in Ero-Omo, Kwara State.
- Ibitola, Oluwadare Vincent Elizabeth is a Lecturer at UMCA Theological College, Ilorin, affiliated with the University of Ibadan.
- Lewu, Mary A. Y. is an Adjunct Senior Lecturer in the Department of History and International Studies at the University of Ilorin, Nigeria.
- Meleki, Adeniyi Oluwole is a Lecturer from the Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.
- Muhammadu Mukhtar, Muhammadu Thani is a Doctoral Candidate at the Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.
- Muritala, Yahya Toyin is a Lecturer in the Arabic Unit, Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria.
- Obaniyi, Samuel Olugbenga, is a Senior Lecturer at LIFE Theological Seminary, Ikorodu (Ilorin Study Center), specializing in Christian theology and leadership with a focus on pastoral training and spiritual development.
- Odeigah, Theresa Nfam is a Lecturer in the Department of History and International Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, with expertise in historical and international studies.
- Ogunkunle, C. O. is a Reader in the Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.
- Oladosu, Olusegun Peter is a Lecturer in the Department of Christian Religious Studies, Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo.

Oladosu, Samson Bisi is a Lecturer in the Department of Religions, History and Heritage Studies, Kwara State University, Malete.

Olorunnimbe, Michael Oladele is a Lecturer at the Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.

Oludare, Olusegun Olurotimi Theophilus is a Lecturer in the Department of Christian Religious Studies, Federal College of Education, Abeokuta.

Omotoye, Rotimi Williams is a Professor in the Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.

Opara Eucharia U. is a Lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies at Veritas University, Abuja.

Osaji, Jacob is a Lecturer in the Department of Religions at the University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

Osamolu, Titilayo Fehintolu is a Lecturer in the Christian Religious Studies Department, FCT College of Education, Zuba, Abuja.

Oyeku, Samson Kolawole is a faculty member at U.M.C.A. Theological College, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

Raji, Abdussalam Ishaq is a Lecturer at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Nigeria, in the Department of Arts and Social Sciences, Igbaja Campus.

Sahban, Masud Jibril is a Lecturer at the Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin, School of Languages, in the Department of Arabic Medium.

Salubuyi, Janet Iko is a Lecturer in the Christian Religious Studies Department, School of Art and Social Science, Niger State College of Education, Minna.

Ukandu, Ikechukwu Maxwell is a Lecturer at the Department of Religious Studies and Centre for Peace and Development, Veritas University, Abuja.

Yusuph, Dauda Gambari is a Lecturer in the Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.

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MOSES' LEADERSHIP STYLES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY CHURCH LEADERS IN NIGERIA.

Daniel Mary Taiye (Ph.D)
Department of Religions
University of Ilorin, Ilorin.
danielmarytaiye@gmail.com

Abstract

Leadership occupies a very crucial position in every organization, community, or society. Good leadership is patterned by its goals and vision, which help achieve positive results; the foundation of any faulty leadership is prone to collapse, so leadership remains a fundamental process in every organization in which such an organization builds a style of operation. It must be borne in mind that different leadership styles abound, and each style operates based on the principles required within the setting; on this basis, the primary focus of this paper is church leadership styles, with particular reference to the leadership styles of Moses and its implications on contemporary church leaders in Nigeria. Some leadership styles that are being utilized in some Nigerian churches are causing disaffection among members, which is unhealthy for the church. Scholars' opinions were sought on how Moses achieved success as a leader. Positive and negative lessons that can help the church leaders in contemporary Nigeria were identified. The historical method was utilized to know more about Moses' experiences, his call, and his leadership techniques. All these constitute high standards of leadership styles to be emulated by contemporary church leaders. It is discovered that leadership in the church goes a long with a high level of responsibility, and for any church to achieve its primary aim (which is the determinant force), cooperation from the followers must be encouraged by the leader through perseverance, humility, long-suffering servant-leader styles among others.

Keywords: Leader, Leadership, Leadership-Styles, Church Leaders.

Introduction

One of the major crises facing the church in contemporary Nigeria is the area of good leadership, the church is being led astray, and society is becoming more and more chaotic in spite of the proliferation of Churches. It is observed that the phenomenal numerical growth of the church today only compounds the problem of leadership. Leadership in the church goes along with the high level of responsibility, and for any church to achieve its primary aim, its followers' cooperation must be encouraged. Namdu opines that "leadership has a great challenge both positive and negative which depends on the style of its operations".¹ There have been many individuals who could be considered leaders, but some stand out among others. An example of such a leader is Moses. Moses is viewed as a righteous man in God's judgement and is chosen to lead the Israelites out of oppression in Egypt. Many examples of Moses' sacrifices and the hardships he endured while freeing the Israelites are recorded in the exodus story. Moses' faith was tested several times throughout the story, and in some instances, it seemed that Moses had lost faith; however, being the "righteous" man that he was, he struck it out until the end. Thus,

it is interesting to point out that Moses' Leadership Styles and their implication for the Nigerian church are the crux of this paper.

Conceptualization of Leadership.

Many people have given various definitions of leadership. According to Bennis and Nanus, "decades of academic analysis have given more than 850 definitions of leadership".² In simple terms, leadership can be described as the ability to lead, encourage, direct, and inspire positively to achieve a goal. Leadership is an essential aspect of every organization; every human organization requires leadership; otherwise, confusion and lawlessness will set in, and nothing positive can be achieved. A leader directs and controls an organization's activities towards accomplishing its goals. So, leadership involves the use of power, authority, and influence in the process of managing human and material resources at work to produce results.

McFarland opines that "a leader makes things happen that would not happen otherwise. If the leader causes changes that he did not intend or want, he has exercised influence, but not power."³ According to Igunnu, leadership is a dynamic process at work in a group whereby one individual over a particular organizational context influences the other group members to commit themselves freely to the achievement of group tasks or goals."⁴ Hickey thinks that "leadership is causing people to take effective action. It is the ability to lead."⁵ He argues that you are not a leader by your position but by your performance. This implies that a leader can create ideas that would influence the lives of the people he is leading. He sets his goals well and would do everything possible to realize them.

Engstrom agrees with Hickey's opinion that "one is not a leader by position but by performance. One may not have titles but may be the most significant leader."⁶ A leader does two things: he knows where he is going and has clear-cut objectives. He can persuade others to follow him. Based on this, Anthony views leadership as "an act of causing people to take effective action."⁷

Arther Schlesinger Jr. states, "Leadership is the capacity to move, inspire, and mobilize masses of people."⁸ Gardner, in his opinion, sees "leadership as the process of persuasion and example by which an individual or leadership team induces a group to take action that is in accord with the leader's purposes or the shared purpose of all."⁹ The above quotation fits the story of Moses as he led the Isrealites out of Egypt. The Isrealites desired to be free from the Egyptians but had no plan to effect it until Moses came to lead them out. Based on the story of Moses, the Isrealites desired to be free, but the task could not be implemented until a leader in the person of Moses, appeared in the scene. It is worth noting that Moses did not impose himself on the people because he provided evidence about how he was called and equipped by God for the task.

Manz opines that "a good leader is the one who has feelings of empathy towards colleagues, employees and followers."¹⁰ Empathy is the ability to understand other people's feelings and their needs. Effective leaders, according to him, are those who can take tough decisions when situations warrant, but they also have the heart to communicate with their followers on a personal level and understand what is going on inside of them.

According to Akpanni, "leadership is influence; (that is, the ability of one person to influence others). One may lead others only to the extent that he can influence them to follow his leads. A leader is one who relate well with people, he builds into the lives of others, and is deeply infested with concepts and ideas to lead."¹¹ There is an agreement between the definitions given by Manz and Akpanni. There is the need for a leader to have a suitable relationship with his followers if he or she must influence them towards achieving organizational goals.

Arogbonlo opines that leadership is not in born nor generic, but an act of getting things done. "A good leader must know where he is going and should have the ability to carry his followers along, and should lead by example."¹² Wong also says, "a leader is the one who goes first and leads by example so the others will be motivated to follow him freely."¹³ He is a person who influences a group of people towards the achievement of a goal. Truman defines a leader "as a person who has the ability to get others to do what they don't want to do and like to do."¹⁴ implying that personality is the prime factor in natural leadership. The degree of influence will depend on personality.

The definitions of Arogbonlo, Wong, and Truman concur when they say that a leader must know himself and can lead his followers and that he can only do this by laying a good example for his followers to emulate. Leadership is a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs the organization in a way that is more cohesive and coherent. This definition is similar to that of AmadiKwa who says that "a leader is a person who manages or directs others. Leadership according to him entails guidance and direction to people for the achievement of their ambitions".¹⁵

In Monroe's opinion, leaders are people who dare to be themselves and are able to express them fully."¹⁶ This implies that they know who they are, know their strengths and weaknesses and know how to develop their strengths and how to compensate for their weaknesses. They are focused and know how to make others understand them.

AmadiKwa in his own view describe leadership as a responsibility and not a title. A leader, according to him is "one who carries others to a desired destination. He is the one at the fore-front, who sees the danger that lies ahead and find solution to it, even before the led knows about it."¹⁷ Moroe and AmadiKwa agree that leadership is the

ability to influence others to follow for the purpose of achieving a common goal. They said, a good leader is one who puts his follower's interest above his own.

In sum, the above definitions, point to the simple fact that leadership is influence, that is, the ability of one being able to influence others in order to achieve set goals.

Church Leadership Concept.

The definitions of leadership by various scholars as discussed above point to the fact that leadership is influence, that is, the ability of one person to influence and inspire others to achieve goals. A Christian leader influences others because his personality is being influenced and empowered by the Holy Spirit. A Christian leader is able to influence others spiritually just because the Holy Spirit is able to work in and through him to a greater degree than in those whom he leads.

The New Testament uses different names or titles to refer to church leaders. They are called elders (Acts 20:17) which refers to maturity in the faith. At other times, they are called overseer (1 Tim. 3:1, 2) which refers to their function of superintending the church (In Titus 1:5, 7 and Acts 20:17, 28, the two terms are used of the same office). They are called pastors (Eph. 4:11) which means shepherds. Peter uses all three of these terms (1 Per. 5:1, 2).

Another word for church leaders is the Greek verb *prohistemi* (which literally means "to stand before"), which is translated "have charge over" (1 Thessalonians 5:12). It refers to the function of elders "who rule well" (1 Timothy 5:17). It also refers to a man's responsibility to "manage" his own household (1 Tim. 3:4, 5, 12). Nevertheless, leaders should lead. Leadership is primarily influence and the way that church leaders influence others is by their godly example and by their teaching of God's word. Because elders in the church must lead by example most of the qualifications for that office in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 are godly character qualities.

Roberts Clinton asserts that: "Christian leadership is a dynamic process in which a man or woman with God-given capacity influences a specific group of God's people toward His purposes for the group."¹⁸ Remarking about influence, Hams Finzel opines that: "Great leaders inspire us to go places we would never go on our own and to attempt things we never thought we had in us."¹⁹ Clearly, Christian leadership is influence. Anyone who is able to influence someone to do something has definitely led that person. Genuine Church leadership wields influence based upon godly character. It is a fact that sometimes in the Old Testament, God used men to lead; whose characters were quite tarnished, but the New Testament sets a high standard for Church leadership that emphasizes Christ-likeness and godliness. In support of this Fadeyi opines that "a Christian leader is one who leads in accordance with the style of Jesus Christ"²⁰, in other words, a Church leader follows the principles and practice of Jesus Christ and that of the Church or Christian

Organization. The scripture lay emphasis on both spiritual and moral uprightness of a leader, therefore, a Church leader must be a responsible and reliable Christian with unbiased judgment, as discussed by Paul in 1 Tim. 3:2-7.

Under the plan God has ordained for the Church, leadership is a position of humble, loving service. Those whom God designates as leaders are called not to be governing monarchs but humble slaves and laboring servants. Those who would lead God's people must above all exemplify sacrifice, devotion, submission and lowliness. Jesus Himself gave the pattern to his followers when He stooped to wash the feet of His disciples; a task that was customarily done by the lowest of slaves (John 13).

Types of Leaders:

Thornton is of the opinion that all leaders want to change the status quo, but they use different means to achieve their goals. Thus few types of leaders will be examined under the following sub-headings, according to the views of Thornton.

i. Courageous Leaders

This type of leaders pursue a vision bravely even in the face of opposition and risk. They have strong convictions concerning their purpose and vision (either right or wrong). Even when their stand is unpopular, they fight for it and speak up for their core beliefs. Courageous leaders motivate their followers to change by their willingness to take risk. Baniyat is of the view that "a contemporary leader must be courageous enough (just like Moses) to withstand the contemporary challenges facing the Church.

ii. Relational Leaders

Relational leaders build relationships in order to influence others. People want to follow them because of who they are, not what they know. They develop mutual respect with others and work well with them. Although, people want to follow them they have not developed specialized knowledge. Their weakness is not making the necessary sacrifices to develop their competency. They value people more than the position.

iii. Motivational Leaders

A motivational leader seeks mutual benefit for himself and others. The words of a motivational leader stir up the spirits of his followers and strengthen their convictions and move them to action. A motivational leader has positive attitudes that create strong emotional connections with people. They are trusted and deliver results for themselves and their teams.

iv. **Inspirational Leader**

Inspirational leaders promote change by the power of their passionate commitment to ideas, they look into future possibilities. Their speech is enlivened with words such as justice, freedom, respect, love and honor. Kore opines that his "can-do" attitude keeps hope alive during hard times"²¹. Inspirational leader attract follower and motivate people to change by the power of his passion and his strong convictions.

v. **Servant – Leader**

As viewed by Thornton, servant leaders care deeply about people. They seek to remove barriers and obstacles that hold others back from achieving their full potentials. They strive to create an environment where their followers can do their best work. Servant leaders frequently ask "How can I help you". They focus on identifying and meeting the needs of others rather than trying to acquire power, wealth, and fame for themselves. Having discussed a few types of leaders, attention will now be focus on Moses and his leadership styles.

A Brief History of Moses and His Leadership Styles.

Many leaders abound in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible; though not all of them portrayed emulative leadership styles. But for the purpose of this work, Moses leadership styles would be examined.

Moses' Early Life.

The parents of Moses came from the tribe of Levi. Moses was born at a period when a law was passed by the king of Egypt to kill all male children born by the Hebrews. Moses' parents could hide him no longer at the age of three months; they therefore hid him among the reeds at the bank of River Nile in a basket. The daughter of Pharaoh picked him and by providence, Moses was given to his mother to nurse. So, Moses was raised in the palace of Pharaoh and was therefore a "prince" of Egypt. Later in his life, Moses killed an Egyptian who fought an Israelite. He had to go into hiding in Midian when the secret blew open in order to avoid being killed. He married Zipporah while in Midian and became a shepherd courtesy of his father-in-law; Jethro. God called Moses through a burning but not consumed bush to go and deliver His people from bondage in Egypt. The burning bush incident becomes the setting of God's commissioning service for Moses. The event became the main turning point in his life and he never remained the same again. Moses became the leader whom God used to bring Israelites out of Egypt after ten plagues against Egypt. Despite all these, Pharaoh's heart was hardened that he pursued Israel; in an attempt to cross the parted Red Sea, he, and all his chariots were drowned.

Moses Leadership Styles.

A Patriot

Moses was Patriotic as demonstrated by the sympathy he showed to his kinsman by killing the Egyptian who was fighting him. Moses needed to challenge slavery; he needed to take a new stand against injustice. This can be seen as the first major test of his leadership. On the other hand, Moses wouldn't have taken laws into his hands; by killing somebody. He displayed the traits of a murderer who cannot be a good leader to emulate in the real sense of it. But then, it can be argued that Moses was willing to risk his life to save another Jew who was being cheated. Similarly, while in Midian, seeing the daughters of Jethro being denied the ability to water their father's sheep, Moses, who just had to flee for his life should not have been involved. But being true to his character, he risked his life again in order to help them (Exodus 2:16-17). When a person exhibits such concern for others with total disregard for his own safety and less concern for his personal gain, such a person can be seen as a good candidate to lead and should be emulated.

A Nationalist

Moses was a nationalist who would rather die, risk his life just to save and deliver his people. Just like Jesus did by laying down his life for redemption of mankind, Moses followed His example and therefore Church leaders should be ready to lay down their lives for the sake of their followers. Good leaders should love their brethren to the point of dying for them.

Moses Believed and Trusted God's Omnipotency

When Moses first confronted Pharaoh and told him "Let my people go", Pharaoh laughed and brushed him off. Moses kept on asking for the release of his people. He could have given up easily, but he persisted because he trusted God and had faith in Him that he was on a mission from God. Concerning this attribute of Moses, Gangel opines that "Moses had singleness of purpose to lead the Jews out of Egypt to the promised Land."²³ He states further that: "Moses demonstrated organizational ability to make things happen; faith in God, obedience to God's commands and faithfulness in service."²⁴

Transparency.

Certain conversations took place between Moses and God only, yet, Moses shared with His people. He was transparent as best evidenced during the construction of the portable tabernacle. The Bible says Moses kept meticulous records of all the contributions to build the tabernacle and glorified God. His transparency gave the people greater confidence in his leadership. Church leaders should emulate this quality. They should be transparent in their dealings with the church members both

financially and other areas. Monies contributed for the use of the church should not be diverted; this being one of the reasons for leadership tussel in the modern church. Non-transparency can cause wrangling in the church and can result to decline in the numerical growth of the church. It can even degenerate to physical confrontation among members thus paving way for wrong persons getting to leadership position.

Delegation of Responsibility.

Moses entrusted task to the care of others. Prior to this, he was overwhelmed by all the disputes he was forced to adjudicate so he lacked the time and energy to focus on the important tasks. Jethro, his father in-law advised him to deal only with the problems that no one else can solve (Exodus 18:25-26), Moses worked on Jethro's advice and became more effective. Delegation of authority is a skill which effective church leaders use well. It is the entrusting of a task to the care of others. Moses appointment of officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens" to serve as judges for the people at all times probably made him more effective and better rested"²⁵. Many church leaders fail to delegate because they guard their authority jealousy or because they feel that others cannot perform certain tasks very well. Leaders who fail to delegate are committing what Bower describes as "administrative sins".²⁶ Probably they might be depriving others of becoming future church leaders. Delegation of responsibility is a good quality that should be emulated by all church leaders. Leaders should give their followers chance to function responsibly in a given task. When a leader thinks he can do it all by himself, definitely such a leader cannot achieve excellence in leadership. It should be noted that a good leader need not employ an authoritarian measures in getting work done. Like Moses every leader must know that he is neither omnipotent nor omniscient, but must learn to depend on others in order to achieve goals.

An Intercessor.

Moses loved and cared for his followers, and on many occasions, he had to intercede on their behalf. When his followers (the Israelites) rebelled against God and were about to be disowned by Him, Moses demonstrated his love for them by praying to God to forgive them (Numbers 4:19). When the people murmured for lack of food and water, Moses demonstrated this love by pleading on their behalf. Moses chose to have his name removed from the book of life instead of the complete destruction of his followers. His intercessory work became most evident when he interceded for Israel at the time of making the golden calf. This portrays Moses as being both a religious and political leader. Moses exercised a priestly work that climaxed in the service of intercession. This also portrays Moses as a servant-leader. As viewed by Thornton servant-leader care deeply about his people. They seek to remove barriers and obstacles that hold others back from achieving their full potential."²⁷

Endurance: - Moses endured and tolerated his people's ingratitude even unto death. Numbers 12:3 says concerning Moses, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth". When Aaron and Miriam rebelled against the authority of Moses, instead of being offended, his concern was their rebellion against God (by rebelling against God's delegated authority). Moses prayed for their salvation. Miriam was stricken with leprosy, and Moses cried unto God to heal her. This should not be mistaken to mean weakness, but strength that has been brought under the controlling influence of God, this demonstrates submissive to God. Leaders should learn to be tolerant of their followers all the time, as they are bound to provoke their leader unto anger many times. Just like Moses had a selfless love for his people and also had faith in himself as their advocate, willing to lay down his life for them, leaders should emulate this too.

Having discussed a few out of many leadership qualities of Moses, it does not amount to the fact that Moses was good all through. Moses had his shortcomings as a human, and this affected his ministry negatively. For instance, Moses was a murderer who saw an Egyptian maltreating an Israelite slave, he intervened by killing the Egyptian (Ex. 2:12). He buried his victim in the sand to cover his crime. In Moses' defense, Taylor justified this act of Moses because according to him, "Moses was the geol, or nearest of kin and so had right to take revenge".²⁸ Though, his action sprang largely from human sympathy for his people, that pity for his people turned to indignation against their oppressors. This shows a case of ethnicity, which does not encourage fair play in dealing with issues. By so doing Moses failed the test of justice and equity. Moses knew it was illegal for him to kill the Egyptian because he carried out the act when he thought no one was watching. Moses committed murder because he had no permission of any authority for the act. We cannot but agree with Steack who opines that:

At one point in Moses' ministry, he decided to disobey the instructions of God because those he led annoyed him. When he spoke to them, he said, listen you rebels ... (Numbers 20:10b). This was not a term of endearment but rather a statement that showed that Moses had come to a point of exhaustion, he was been frustrated by the actions of the people he led. Every leader is going to have to deal with "rebels" at some time or another, how the leader's response will decide their future. For Moses, his frustration led him to disobey God, and this kept him from entering the promise land. It should be noted that fatigue and frustration can destroy any leader. This can be a learning resource for the church leader.

The Implications of Moses' Leadership Styles for Contemporary Church Leaders in Nigeria.

The discussions above point to the fact that Moses had displayed several leadership styles that can be emulated by modern church leaders. Moses had singleness of purpose, to lead the Israelites out of Egypt to Canaan. He demonstrated faithfulness in service, organizational ability, long suffering and forebearance, courage,

delegation of responsibility among others. Whatever other leadership qualities Moses had, he had the ability to make things happen. This has significant implications for modern church leaders in Nigeria. Every leader must be able to possess such ability. It may be difficult to suggest that one type of leadership style is more important than the others but in the case of Moses' style of leadership, delegation of responsibility is very crucial. Delegation of responsibility is indispensable in any leadership. A leader must not see himself as the alpha and omega that can do all things by himself and fail to delegate. Such a leader, apart from exhausting himself unnecessarily, he will also be depriving others in the body of Christ from exercising other gifts and responsibilities in the church. The expected role of the church leader is getting things done through other people by entrusting a measure of responsibility into their care. By so doing, the leader helps the present and future leaders for the growth of the church. By assigning responsibilities to his followers, the leader equipped every follower to function in a particular way. So, no one is allowed to dominate the other rather they will be helping the church to grow, and the training of both the present and future leaders is brought to view. Many modern church leaders, minimize their responsibility of teaching God's word and focus rather on being CEO of the church. As church entrepreneurs, they envision and implement growth plans. They view the church as a product to be marketed to the consumer. As in the retail business, you have to give the customers what they are looking for. Many church leaders are very successful, building impressive churches that cater for thousands of weekly "customers". They write "how-to" books that share their proven principles for building the church. Most times, out of an attempt to please everyone, church leaders dodge difficult problems. They don't want to confront an influential church member who is in sin. They don't confront someone who is teaching error for fear of conflict. They don't want to get involved in resolving relational conflicts in the church or in church families. But to dodge such difficult matters is to fail to lead the church aright. Church leaders must actively teach the truth, and help others to do same. Just like Moses who seek to remove barriers and obstacles that would have held back the Israelites from achieving their goals, church leaders should do same. Helping their followers to achieve their full potentials instead of turning the church into a money-making venture. Church leaders should also learn from Moses' mistakes, in order to make the church a healthy place of solace.

In conclusion, leadership implies managing of people and materials in an establishment both in private and public sectors, and church leadership is that which equips the church to be what it should be. Leadership is equally the guidance provided by church leaders to use every of its resources both spiritual and physical in order to move the church toward reaching its goals. Leaders are in position because they believe they have been chosen by God to lead, therefore, a leader must possess a clear sense from the Lord that he/she was chosen by God. A leader must discover himself in order to enhance leadership of the church effectively. The demands of the contemporary church is not about anointing only but in the area of quality organization and dynamic leadership as well. Therefore, the church needs to apply

the strategies of some successful biblical heroes in the way they display basic resources and creative power of God to lead and guide their followers. The church should make it mandatory to every church leader to follow the constitutional provisions regulating the style of leadership in the church for unity and stability. By doing so, unhealthy competition will cease, and it will help the church to reduce the incessant problems associated with bad leadership in the contemporary church.

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About the Book

Religion and Contemporary Issues is a thought-provoking exploration of religion's role in addressing contemporary Nigerian society's pressing issues. Emerging from the proceedings of the 1st Biennial Conference of the Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, the book delves into various themes, including corruption, insecurity, human rights, leadership, and interfaith conflicts. The thirty-two chapters are authored by esteemed scholars and researchers in Christian, Islamic, and Comparative Studies, each providing a unique perspective on how religious values intersect with social, political, and cultural dynamics in Nigeria today.

The book is a crucial resource for understanding the complexities of religious influence in Nigeria's socio-political landscape. Its multidisciplinary approach offers valuable insights into how religion can contribute positively to the nation's development and peacebuilding efforts. It also presents practical suggestions for utilising religious frameworks to mitigate societal problems, making it an essential read for scholars, policymakers, and anyone interested in Nigeria's intersection of religion and public life.

About the Editors

Yahya Oyewole Imam, PhD is a Professor with expertise in Islamic Studies at the University of Ilorin, Nigeria. His research focuses on the intersection of Islamic Law, Islam in the Modern World, and Religion and Science.

Oyeronke Olademo, PhD, is a Professor of Comparative Religious Studies at the University of Ilorin. Her work centres on gender issues and the role of religion in societal development.

Rotimi Williams Omotoye, PhD is a Professor in Church History. He is a faculty member at the Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, and has published widely on interreligious dynamics in Nigeria.

AbdulGafar Olawale Fahm, PhD, is a Reader in Islamic Studies at the University of Ilorin. His research focuses on Islamic thought and civilisation, and his interests include ethical frameworks in Islam and their application to contemporary issues.

Agnes Omotayo Adeyeye, PhD, is a Senior Lecturer in Christian Studies at the University of Ilorin. Her research focuses on the role of the Church in peacebuilding and moral education. She has been involved in numerous faith-based initiatives to foster community harmony in Nigeria.



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