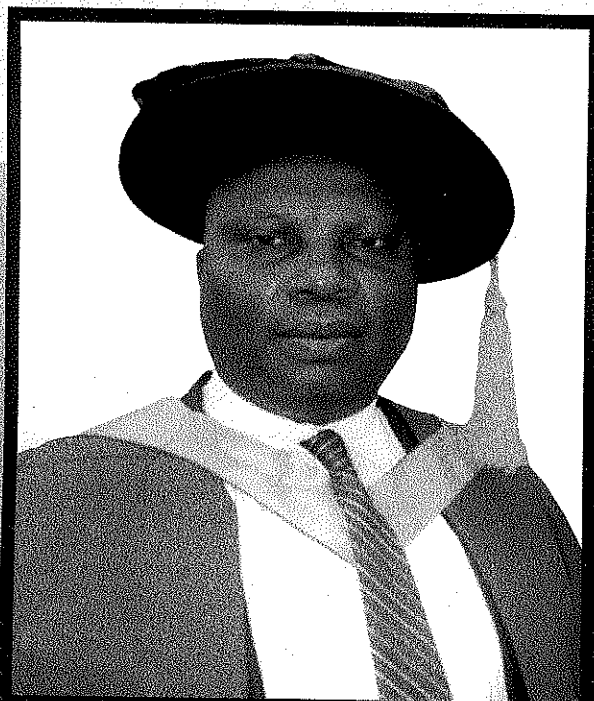


CHRISTIANITY AS A CATALYST FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CHANGE IN NIGERIA



**A Festschrift in Honour of
Prof. Rotimi Williams OMOTOYE
AT 60**



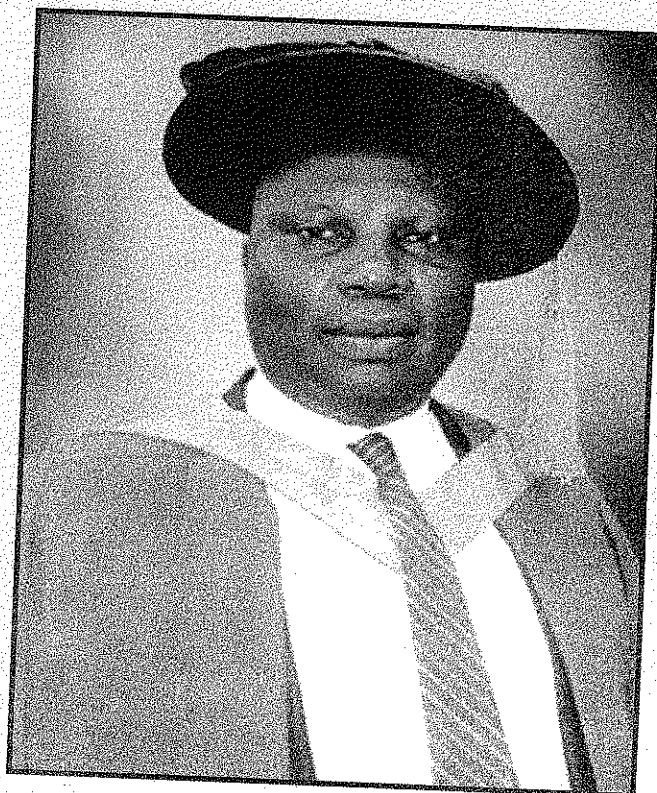
Editors:
Prof. Ibígbolade Simon Aderibigbe, PhD
Job Oluremi Okunoye, PhD

CHRISTIANITY AS A CATALYST FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CHANGE IN NIGERIA

A Festschrift in Honour of
Prof. Rotimi Williams OMOTOYE

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PROFESSOR ROTIMI WILLIAMS OMOTOYE

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PROFESSOR OF CHURCH HISTORY

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FOREWORD

I have a great delight in writing this foreword to a festschrift in honour of Professor Rotimi Williams Omotoye, a Professor of Religion (Christian Studies). One reason for my joy is that Professor Omotoye is a good friend of mine whose dealings with me over the years have produced many fruitful and mutual benefits, not only to each of us individually, but also to people and institutions of concern to both of us. The latest of such benevolent engagements between us relates to his current status as a visiting scholar due to his sabbatical appointment in Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, where I am currently serving, to the glory of God, as the Vice Chancellor. Not only has Professor Omotoye been an energizing boost to the academic and administrative functions of the Department of Religious Studies where he serves as the Head, he has also been an animating catalyst towards achieving positive results in many activities of the Faculty of Humanities and that of the University in general. A specific case in point is his assiduous efforts in facilitating institutional academic collaboration between our great University, Ajayi Crowther University and University of Georgia, Athens, USA. This has come to lustrous fruition, and the University management deeply appreciate him for his central role in the success.

Another reason I am glad to write this piece is that Professor Omotoye is well deserving of being accorded the honour of having a festschrift on his name, having dedicated himself generously towards charting a path to achieving national development and social cohesion through his rich and numerous scholarly interventions. The two desirable themes of national development and social cohesion resonate in his thoroughly researched books and journal articles that have been published nationally and internationally in reputable outlets, such as Routledge, Elsevier, Palgrave, National Association for the Study of Religions, among others. Also, considering the high academic pedigree of the editors of this festschrift, there is no doubting the fact that the papers assembled therein are appropriate to roundly establish the place of Christianity in Nigeria's socio-economic and political developments.

Contributions to Christianity as a Catalyst for Socio-Economic Change in Nigeria—A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Rotimi Williams Omotoye at 60 have been made by both renowned and budding scholars who are experts in interdisciplinary areas in the fields of Religious Studies, History, Political Science, Communication Studies, Discourse Analysis, among others. The contributors have adopted both diachronic and synchronic approaches to treating the macro-theme of the festschrift, which is to establish the centrality of Christianity towards achieving meaningful socio-economic and political change in Nigeria. The contributors have subscribed to micro-foci which are from different perspectives according to their research orientations. All these multiple scholarly dimensions are problem-solving. They are also affordances and insights for further research.

These rich features of the festschrift make it an invaluable treasure for both students and scholars who have interests in the themes of the festschrift. Also, the book will serve as a good companion to policy makers, lawmakers, educators, and the general readers, who are concerned with achieving peace and progress in a plural society. I, therefore, strongly recommend it as a right tool and an appropriate handbook for its readers.

Professor Timothy Abiodun Adebayo
Vice Chancellor, Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo

This festschrift in honour of Professor Rotimi Williams Omotoye is a tribute to his contributions to society and scholarship in the fields of history and religion. It is a low key but significant achievement. Consequently, it has received favourable Church administration and has been carefully selected for publication.

Our appreciation goes to the honouree, Professor Rotimi Williams Omotoye, for his provision of all the glory, in making this festschrift possible, especially his supporting role.

We are grateful to J. O. Okunola for his book. Similarly, we are grateful to the book. Without his review, it would not have been possible. In review, we hereby appreciate him respectively.

Prof. Dapo Fajana, Olu Alana, Prof. K. Ayantayo

Final approval of the book out of the beginning to the end is appreciated.

**The Most Reverend
The Editor-in-Chief**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This festschrift was born out of the desire of the academic associates of Prof. Rotimi Williams Omotoye to commemorate his 60th birthday for his immense contributions to the academic society and for the numerous lives he had impacted. Prof. Omotoye, an erudite and versatile scholar of Religion (Christian Studies) has contributed immensely to the study of Church history and Ecumenism in academic sphere. Surprisingly, his intention to observe his birthday in a low key met with the conception of this book from his associates and loved ones. Consequent of that, the call for paper for this task was made and numerous abstracts were received from various erudite scholars in academic institutions, postgraduate students and Church administrators. In the processing of various abstracts received, about 44 papers were carefully selected to make up this publication.

Our appreciation first goes to the Almighty God who created an avenue for us to celebrate the honouree and for preserving him to witness this great honour. Also, our thanks be to God for his provision needed from the beginning to the completion of the publication process, to him be all the glory, honour and adoration. Prof Williams is well appreciated for his cooperation so far in making this project a reality. Much gratitude goes to the entire family of the celebrants, especially his amiable wife, Mrs. Esther Iyabo Omotoye and his wonderful children, for supporting this project.

We specially express our profound gratitude to the editors, Prof. I. S. Aderibigbe and Dr. J. O. Okunoye for their invaluable dedications and painstaking insightful final editing of this book. Similarly, we acknowledge and appreciate all the authors who contributed articles to this book. Without their collection of articles, the reality of this publication would not have been possible. In addition, their perseverance during the course of editorial corrections and peer review when the rod was not spared is commendable. Their commitment and sense of purpose is hereby appreciated. We equally appreciate all our editorial board and editorial advisers respectively, Prof. Ibigbolade Aderibigbe, Dr. Job Okunoye, Dr. Moses Adetunmbi, Rt. Rev. Prof. Dapo F. Asaju, Prof. Jacob Kehinde Olupona, Prof. Taiye Aluko, Prof. Joel Ayodabo, Prof. Olu Alana, Prof. Afolorunso Olalekan Dairo, Prof. Martina Oguntinyinbo-Atere and Prof. Jacob K. Ayantayo for your scholarly advice and support.

Finally, we heartily appreciate Prof. Timothy Abiodun Adebayo, the Vice-Chancellor of Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo who found out time and space to write the foreword of this book out of his tight schedule. Other contributors who worked behind the scene from the beginning to the end of the production deserve our commendations; their efforts are well appreciated. Thank you and God bless you all.

The Most Rev. Prof. G. L. Lasebikan
The Editor-in-Chief

PREFACE/EDITORIAL SYNOPSIS

This book titled "Christianity as a Catalyst for Socio-Economic and Political Change in Nigeria" in honour of Prof. Rotimi Williams Omotoye is a collection of articles from different scholars, arranged into four sections. The first section includes thirteen articles on *Christianity as a Catalyst for Change in Nigeria*, while the second section comprises of thirteen chapters arranged under the title *Christianity, Ecumenism and Social Change in Nation Building*. Section four is a combination of eight articles wrapped around *Christian Ethics and Moral Values as a Catalyst for Societal Change*, while nine articles on *Christian Indigenisation; a Catalyst for Socio-Economic and Political Change* concluded the sections.

The article of the honouree, Prof. R.W. Omotoye on *Christianity as a Catalyst for Socio-Economic and Political Change in Yorubaland and Nigeria: An Account of a Church Historian* laid the foundation upon which other articles are premised on in the first section. He deliberately focuses his attention on Christianity as a catalyst for political and socio-economic change in Yorubaland as a result of his many researches on the introduction, growth and development of Christianity in the nooks and crannies of Nigeria and the religious, political and socio-economic impacts of Christianity. Chapter two contains the article of Ayodeji Ogidiolu on *Christianity as a Catalyst to Socio-Economic/Political Development in Nigeria, A Foundational Nourishment from The Old Testament Perspectives*. He posits that Old Testament is the foundational nourishment for both the New Testament and our current dispositions. By implication, the Old Testament as the foundational nourishment is therefore the catalyst for the socio-political development of Christianity in Nigeria.

In discussing *Philosophical Discourse on Christianity as a Catalyst to Socio-Economic and Political Development in Nigeria*, Josephine Olatomi Soboyejo in chapter three opines that the integral principles of Christianity used by the early Christian Missionaries remain vital to realistic developments. She adopts philosophical, phenomenological, and historical approaches to discuss the roles Christianity played in promoting integral development through social interaction, which cuts across the south, and later spreads to the north. The development covers literacy, education, healthcare, agriculture, and news media. She concludes that Christianity jumpstarted development in Nigeria. Sunday Awoniyi and Saheed Oladimeji Olasunkanmi in their paper titled *Christianity as a Catalyst for Socioeconomic and Political Development in Nigeria: A Sociological Enquiry* explicate the concepts of religion, development, governance as well identify and emphasise on the biblical ethical principles inclined towards the survival of the country. They use both descriptive and theological approaches in establishing their argument.

The article of Samuel Zubairu Josiah in chapter five is *Christianity as a Catalyst for the Development of Western Education in Nupeland*. This paper explains that the current development witnessed in Nupeland is a product of Western Education which was a brain-child of the Christian mission in Nupeland. As a result, Christian missions have successfully enlisted the interest of both Christian and non-Christian of Nupe people in western education. In discussing *African Traditional Religion (ATR) In the Religion, Political and Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria* in chapter six, Adedeji Benjamin Sunday adopting functional theory of religion, demonstrates that ATR is essentially a religion of character for achieving meaningful and enduring religious, political and socio-economic development in Nigeria. He therefore, recommends that ATR should become the official religion of Nigeria and should be taught at all levels of education in Nigerian schools and politicians should be subjected to divination and made to take oath of office with the symbols of the gods.

Afolabi Abiodun and Omotoye Oluwole George in chapter seven posit in their article *The Role of Christianity in Socio-Economic and Political Development in Southern Nigeria, 1854-1960* that the introduction of Christianity contributed to socioeconomic development of Southern Nigeria in the areas of human capital development, new cultural identity, social mobility and modernisation. They conclude that Christianity did not only impact the people's relationship with God, it had far reaching impacts on the people's day to day activities. In chapter eight, Alexander Ndubuisi Abonyi does *An Appraisal of African Pentecostalism as a Catalyst for Transformational Development in South West Nigeria* Alexander. He discusses the impact that African Pentecostalism has made on the South West region of Nigeria. He opines that the developmental antecedent is premised on two key presuppositions; African Pentecostalism places a keen emphasis on transformation and African Pentecostal theology is a theology of empowerment (development). He therefore recommends that other Christian bodies, governmental and non governmental agencies should key into these developmental strategies that has been the hallmark of this segment of the Christian church.

The chapter nine of this book is the article written by Adesupo Paul Adedotun titled *Christianity and Development of Print-Media in Nigeria*. Adesupo adopting historical method appraises role of Christianity toward the development of print media industry in Nigeria. He notes that the first newspaper was introduced by the Christian missionaries, which serves as an eye opener to Nigerians especially the first educated ones. He recommends that moral education should be given a place in Nigeria's school curriculum. The contribution of Olaitan Olaoba makes chapter ten. The paper is titled *Christian Missionaries' Contributions to Socio-Economic and Political Change in Nigeria: A Case Study of Archdeacon Lackland Augustus Lennon's Strategies for the Development of Akokoland, Nigeria*. The study unveils both the physical as well as the spiritual development that Archdeacon Lennon brought into various towns and villages in Akokoland which include intensive evangelism, education, vocation, agriculture, polity and provision of primary health services, especially to pregnant and nursing mothers. In the same vein, chapter eleven that contains Ruth Guning's article titled *Christian Missionaries' Contributions to Socio-economic and Political Change in Nigeria* discusses certain success such as conversion, education, medical care, development, enlightenment and agriculture achieved through the coming of missionaries amidst many challenges. She recommends that the church should assist in sustaining this development, encourage Christian discipline and promote Jesus' holistic ministry among the elites and politicians in particular.

Okunoye Job Oluremi, Wambutda Joseph Rotkang and Odei Moses in their contributions toward the discourse through their paper titled *Christianity as a Catalyst to Socio-economic/political Development in Nigeria from Old Testament Perspective* examine the role Christianity played in laying the basis for socio-economic and political development of Nigeria especially from Old Testament perspective. They observe that Christianity has contributed a lot and is still contributing to the socioeconomic development of Nigeria. However, within the last decade, Christianity in Nigeria has suffered accusations from social critics who conceived the economic and infrastructural development, particularly of the Pentecostal churches repulsive and inimical to the collective socioeconomic and political development of the Nigerian society. Therefore they recommend that the church should look into the reality of the accusation and find a means of resolving the problem such that their commitment to ensuring improved and developed society would be achieved.

The article in chapter thirteen of this book concludes the first section. The article's title is *Sermonic Discourse of Change Mantra: From Orthodoxy to Pentecostalism and the Nigerian Experience* written by Prof. G. L. Lasebikan and Lekan Oduola. Lasebikan and Oduola

deploying Subject-oriented variation and Fairclough's social Models of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) investigate the internal mechanisms of the Orthodox and Pentecostal sermons with a view to examining the creative use that accounts for the utilitarian modeling of its discursive elements within the Nigerian polity. Incontrovertibly they establish that though with technical and modal variegations, Orthodox and Pentecostal sermons have their linguistic peculiarities and measures of stylistic predictabilities, providing the platform for the context-driven discursive elements that ideologically mark the English Language as Master and Servant in nation-building process and socio-economic change.

The paper on chapter fourteen focuses on Christianity and socio-economic development of Ijeshaland from 1900 – 1960. The author, Omotoye, O. G. discussed how Christianity has affected all spheres of life among the Ijesha people from historical perspective. He concludes that Christianity had significant impact on the culture, beliefs and norms of the Ijesha people.

The chapter fifteen article of Abraham Oyebamiji Olusola-Niyi titled *The Influence of Ecumenical Bodies on the Growth of Christianity and Social Development in Nigeria* opens the academic discourse of section two. The author adopting a historical approach examines the influence of the ecumenical bodies on the growth of Christianity and social development in Nigeria in order to highlight the trajectory of Christians working together for Kingdom expansion and mutual benefits for the peace and progress of mankind. In chapter sixteen Obiageli Ndulue discusses *The Impact of Pentecostalism on Mainline Churches in Anambra State, Nigeria (1970-2013)*. The study observes that the introduction of Pentecostal Churches had a tremendous impact on the new strategies of evangelism and increased phenomenal growth of Christianity in Anambra State. The research recommends unity of purpose in the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ in Anambra State. In his paper, *Appraisal of Missions and Evangelism in the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)*, Jeremiah Oguiche appraises the missionary and evangelical impact of the Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion since the end of the Slave Trade. The aim is to reveal how much effort the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), has fared in missions and evangelism.

The focus of Obaniyi Samuel Olugbenga in chapter eighteen is to investigate the extent Foursquare Gospel Church (FGC) has been involved in rural development for local economic development and her contribution towards educational development of Nigeria. Adopting descriptive and phenomenological methods in his paper titled *Economic Contribution of the Foursquare Gospel Church to Rural Development in Nigeria*, he concludes that FGC has contributed to national development through provision of educational institutions and facilities that have aided human capital development. He thereby recommends that the church should produce an economic blue print to ensure systematic contribution towards national growth and development.

Moses Adebolu Adetunmbi, Olujobi Adeleke and John Bukunmi Oluwajana investigate the impact of ecumenical movements on Christian Fellowship in South West Nigeria using theological, historical and sociological approaches. The article titled *The Impact of Ecumenical Movements on Christian Fellowship in South West Nigeria* in chapter nineteen conclude that ecumenical movements such as CAN, PFN, OAIC have been bases for fellowship in South West, Nigeria. Consequently, these ecumenical movements have done much in sensitizing the South West Nigerian Christian churches of the need to desire and seek unity in outlook. Abolarin Isaac Adesina's work in his work titled *The Contributions of Sudan Interior Mission to the Development of Primary Education in Igbomina land Kwara State Nigeria* reveals that western education and Christian religion is Siamese twin in Igbominaland. It is equally revealed

that SIM and CMS were the two mission agencies that separately introduced western education into the land. He concludes that Christianity is an agent of socio-economic and educational transformation in Igbominaland. In chapter twenty-one, the article titled *The Role of Christian Leaders in Sustaining Peace and Security in Ilorin, Nigeria* by Akande Lydia Bosede explores the need to sustain and improve the level of peace and security enjoyed by the people of Ilorin emirate compared to other parts of the nation. She adopts historical, empirical and analytical approaches to posit that issues of intra and inter communal clashes and religious violence, common today in certain parts of the country are seldom heard of in Ilorin metropolis. Hence in order, to sustain the peace and security enjoyed, religious leaders have significant role to play.

In his paper on *The Interaction of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria and Its Role in Promoting Religious Harmony Between the Two Religious People* Alfred Bamgbose in chapter twenty-one examines the interactions among Christians and Muslims in a pluralistic society like Nigeria, particularly in this age of rapid communication and voluminous information in order to promote peaceful and fruitful relations between the two communities for nation building. The paper of Daniel Mary Taiye in chapter twenty-three is entitled *Missionaries Contributions to Development in Nigeria: The Role of Sudan Interior Mission/Evangelical Church Winning All (SIM/ECWA)*. She discusses the activities of Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) and Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) in order to achieve significant success in areas of literacy, health-care, technology, rural development and more.

In chapter twenty-four, Yerokun Timothy Olusoji adopts historical and exegetical approaches to examine *Ecclesiastical Implications of 1 Samuel 16:1-13 on the Choice of Electoral Candidate in Nigeria*. He observes that the Nigerian government has failed woefully in producing/allowing citizens to elect/present candidate of their choice, and even in ensuring availability of Permanent Voters Card (PVC) for every citizen; no creation of an environment that fosters peace and safety for election; nothing like free and fair election and electoral candidates were not discouraged from distribution of money, food and house materials to citizens. She recommends that Nigeria government should emulate undiluted direction of God in chosen King as recorded in 1 Samuel 16:1-13 in their performance regularly against denial of right in choosing candidate, rigging and abnormalities of election in Nigeria. The chapter twenty-five article written by Osinfolarin Michael Olayinka is titled *Application of Whiteheadian Constructive Postmodern Pluralist Model for Religious Tolerance Between Islam and Christianity in Nigeria*. The paper applies the Whiteheadian constructive postmodern pluralist model as a panacea to religious intolerance between Islam and Christianity in Nigeria in order to promote peaceful co-existence.

In another vein, the honouree, Rotimi Williams Omotoye, co-authored by Sunday Timothy Gbade Adewole in chapter twenty-six x-ray *Historical Perspectives of the Anglican Church as Pioneer of African Pentecostalism in Yorubaland, South-Western, Nigeria*. They posit that Pentecostal Churches as being exhibited in the 21st century were inherent and found at St. Saviour's Anglican Church, Ijebu Ode as early as the first decade of the 20th century. They conclude that the Anglican Church as seen today laid the foundation of some features of Pentecostalism in Yorubaland. In addition to the second section, the work of Abiodun Adesina Olubitan in chapter twenty-seven titled *Revisiting the Church's Roles in a Pluralistic Nigeria* Society adopts Analytic and literary interpretative methods to discuss the need for the church in Nigeria to step up her political, social and religious roles in the continuous emancipation of the Nigeria State, despite her pluralistic taxonomy. The last paper in section two is titled *Dynamism of Christian Worship in the Growth of African Independent and Pentecostal Churches* written by Popoola Timothy. He reflects on the concept of worship by the available scholarly works. He

traces the basis of worship from the biblical perspective using historical approach, juxtaposes the worship patterns of both the Old and New Testament periods. He appraises the dynamic features of worship in Africa, orthodox, mainline, AICs and Pentecostal churches today and showcases the new drifts of worship, challenges that are confronting worship in the church today and offers recommendations for a God-centred worship.

The opening article of the third section of this book is written by Martina I. Oguntoyinbo-Atere and is titled *Re-visiting Romans 1:1-17 for Contemporary Church Leaders*. The authors adopt exegetical method to examine Romans 1:1-17 which contains great lessons in addressing some of these issues relating to Church leadership. The intention is to harness the different lessons in the pericope for the benefit of Church leaders. In thirtieth chapter, Oyebanjo Peter Adelaja in his article titled *An Exegetical Study of Eph 5:21-33 As an Antidote for Domestic Violence in Nigerian Christian Marriage* adopts contextual hermeneutics to examine antidotes to domestic violence in biblical perspective. He provides a theological and lexico-semantic study of Eph 5:21-33 and focuses on the Pauline concepts of mutual submission of husband and wife in marriage. He also provides the biblical responsibilities of both the husband and wife and applies the findings of the household code in the pericope as solutions to domestic violence in Nigerian Christian Marriages, seeing marriage as the bedrock of the society. Agoro Adegboyega in chapter thirty-one reflects on the *Moral Values in the Christian Missionary Education System in Nigeria*. He suggests strategies for integrating moral education into Nigerian secondary schools in the interest of enhancing quality assurance in the secondary school education system which will accord high integrity for the candidates, the schools, the certificates and society in general. The thirty-second chapter by Ajetomobi Olumuyiwa Aduralere and Abolaji Tosin Success titled *An Appraisal of Christian Missionaries' Roles in the Educational System of Nigeria* analyses the moral values in the Christian Missionary Educational System in Nigeria using historical and participatory observation.

In addition, Bankole, Michael Tokunbo profiles *A Historical Survey of Homosexuality in The Religious Context* in chapter thirty-three. He adopts historical and sociological methods to survey homosexual practice, particularly in the religious context. He concludes that homosexuality acts are always violations of divine and natural laws. Chapter thirty-four contains the treatise of Olorode Solomon Olutunde that concentrates on *Christianity and Miracles in Contemporary Time*. He delves from the appraisal of the meaning of Miracle, to the fundamental questions raised as regards the phenomenon of miracle in Christianity, most especially in the wake of scientific and archaeological discoveries in recent times. He concludes by making recommendations as regards individual's attitude to miracles, strongly redirecting the readers to focus on YHWH who does miracles and not men who are only vehicles for the miracles. Olanrewaju Ajibola Babalola surveys the implication of 1 Samuel 8 for the need of kingly leadership in Nigeria in chapter thirty-five. He opines that similar to the situation of Israel during theocratic period of Eli and Samuel before the demand for a king, Nigeria needs a charismatic, focused and strategic leadership to checkmate all factors militating against her progress; hence the need for kingly leadership. In chapter thirty-six that concludes the third section, Oloyede Mathew Oyerogba adopts historical and textual methods in discussing *African Christians Perspective on Divorce and Remarriage and Its Implications for Christian Marriage*. He posits that God hates divorce, but there are some cases where divorce may be granted. In such cases, it becomes the responsibility of the Christian scholars to form a common guide that will be helpful for both spiritual leaders and couples in taking any decision concerns divorce and remarriage.

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The last section of this book opens with the article written by Adetunbi Richard Ogunleye in chapter thirty-seven. It is a discourse on *God and Gods of the Yorùbá Fore-Fathers Before the Advent of Christian Missionaries in YorùbáLand*. From the African Traditional Religion's domain, he explores ethnographical study of the Yorùbá religious experience and their concept of God before the arrival of the Christian missionaries on their land, adopting phenomenological approach. He posits that the religious zeal inherent in Yoruba forefathers, which made them to be religious in all things, is still manifesting in their offspring who are now either Christians or Muslim. In the thirty-eighth chapter, Olalusi Kehinde Adedamola in his paper titled *Creating Music for Dance Theatre Productions in the Nigerian Academic Theatre: A Guide for Student Drummers* explores the creative and artistic process of design of dance theatre production. He concludes that the importance of the creation of music/rhythm for dance theatre productions is crucial and as such adequate practical and artistic attention should be given to it. Christian indigenes and propagation of the gospel in Ilorin Metropolis from 1950-2021 is the focus of Omotoye Rotimi Williams, Odunoye Emmanuel Taiwo and Joel Femi in their paper of chapter thirty-nine. From the historical perspective they examine the introduction of Christianity to Ilorin. In chapter forty, J.A. Oluyitan and O. O. Ogunleye present their article titled *Christian Missions and Western Education in Oyo, 1856-1956*. They take other historical perspectives to examine the contributions of Christian missions to the development of Western education in Oyo between 1856 and 1956.

In their paper on *Revisionist Agenda and Church Response in the 21st Century*, Okunoye Job Oluremi, Wambutda Joseph Rotkang and Odei Moses Adeiza, critically discuss the struggle of the church in Africa, especially Anglican in opposing the deliberate effort by western proponents of same sex marriage to influence the acceptance and legalization of the controversial issue in recent time, which ultimately, resulted in the emergence of "GAFCON." They suggest the need for the church in Africa to develop means by which to be self dependent and not rely on western churches willing to offer financial help with the aim to advancing their same sex marriage agenda. Chapter forty-two contains the article on *God of Our Fathers in Yorùbá Before the Advent of Christian Missionaries* written by Adéyemi Roheemat Olábímpe and Layò Ògúnlólá. The article establishes the fact that God in the African context is not different from God in the European context and concludes that discriminating against a race or nation is tantamount to prejudice and cannot bring meaningful development to any society. In chapter forty-three, C. O. Ogunkunle examines the theological distinctives of early United Missionary Society (UMS) activities from where UMCA had its root with a view to understanding their impact on UMCA in his paper titled *Theological Distinctives of Early United Missionary Society Activities*.

A paper written by Felix Abiodun Ogunbisi on *God of Our Fathers in Yorubaland Before the Advent of Christian Missionaries* is the penultimate chapter of the book. Ogunbisi takes an integrative look at the high religiosity of Yoruba people, practicing their own traditional religion before the advent of Christianity and Islam. Finally, the last article included for our readers to peruse is a paper written by Seun Abilawon and Esther Adeagbo. The duo of Seun and Esther explored what our forefathers were using to keep renewing selves medically which contributed to longevity using Mythological approach. The paper finds out that majority of people are dying in the hospital because they have ignored the spiritual cause of sickness which cannot be treated by orthodox medicine. I present this volume of works, contributed by our numerous scholars to our readers on behalf of the department of Religious Studies, Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo and, our honouree, Professor Rotimi Williams Omotoye.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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CHAPTER 43

THEOLOGICAL DISTINCTIVES OF EARLY UNITED MISSIONARY SOCIETY ACTIVITIES

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Abstract

United Missionary Church of Africa (UMCA) as a denomination is over one hundred years old in Nigeria. The church has grown significantly, especially in the last twenty years, from seven districts in 1988 to thirty-four districts in 2022. But then, the growth has not been significant when compared with other denominations that came into being after UMCA had been established. Therefore, this paper examines the theological distinctive of early United Missionary Society (UMS) activities from where UMCA had its root with a view to understanding their impact on UMCA. A multiple historical-phenomenological method is adopted in the paper. It is discovered that UMS/UMCA has sound doctrines that are rooted in scriptures; UMCA has not deviated significantly from the original vision of the founding fathers of the denomination; and that currently, Pentecostalism is having some influence on UMCA as it is happening in other evangelical and orthodox denominations. The paper concludes that UMCA must keep the original vision of the founding fathers as contained in the UMCA Manual and Constitution. The paper recommends that the UMCA make efforts to improve theological distinctive in light of the prevailing globalisation and technological advancements.

Introduction

Two important factors determine the growth or otherwise of any organisation. The first one is centred on the beliefs and practices of such an organisation, while the second factor is on the leadership of the organisation. On the one hand, beliefs and practices are made up of the basic doctrines and teachings by which a denomination is known. Leadership, on the other hand, is the key to the growth and development of an organisation. According to the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2003:800), a leader is "the person who directs or controls a group, organisation or country." At the same time, leadership is "the position of being the leader of a group, organisation or country." Leadership has an extraordinary power to challenge, inspire, encourage and influence people and the organisation. Speaking of religious leadership in particular, Sander (1967:21) notes that such an individual has "confidence in God, seeks to find God's will, follows God's methods, delights to obey God, motivated by love for God and man."

Therefore, in looking at this paper entitled *Theological Distinctive of Early United Missionary Society Activities*, an attempt is made to understand the principal character of the mission (Menno Simons) who had so much influence on the UMCA denomination, highlighting the theological distinctive of the mission; and assess the UMCA denomination in the light of findings in the paper. The phrase 'theological distinctives' is used interchangeably with the denomination's doctrines or beliefs'.

Menno Simons

The input of the Protestant Reformation continued to be felt in the history of the Church. It has been observed that the Protestant Reformation produced three large groups: the Lutheran, the Reformed and the Anglican (Moyer, 1951:353). The "Anabaptists group" is considered to be a smaller group but then has made a significant impact on the Protestant Reformation. 'Anabaptists' was the collective name applied to several groups of people holding various opinions. But then, despite the views and opinions of the Anabaptists, they had at least three things in common which have been aptly articulated by Moyer (1951:354).

- (1) They all rejected infant baptism and rebaptised members who had been baptised as children; hence the name 'Anabaptists', which means 'rebaptisers'.
- (2) They would have nothing to do with state churches or national churches because these, they claimed, numbered many nominal Christians, while the true Church should be an association of true believers only.
- (3) They subordinated the outward Word of God and the Sacraments to the subjective experience of the 'inner light' of the Spirit, or in other words, "tried to promote a spiritual religion by proclaiming immediate, divine revelations which they frequently placed above the authority of the Bible.

Menno Simons, who is regarded as "the conservator of Anabaptism", was born in 1496 at Witmarsum, a small village on the west coast of Friesland, in one of the provinces of North Holland (Moyer 1951:359; Wenger 1949:75; & Bello 2014:8). He was trained as a Catholic Priest. He received training in reading and writing Latin and studying the church fathers, but he never read the Bible. He was consecrated as a Catholic Priest in 1524 and served in the Pinjum Parish near Witmarsum for seven years. In 1531, he was transferred to his home town where he served for five more years. His work as a priest consisted of celebrating the mass, offering prayers for the living and the dead, baptising infants, hearing confessions of sin, and, unfortunately, playing cards and drinking (Wenger 1949:75).

Menno's conversion started in 1525 when he celebrated mass in his congregation. As he was handling the bread and the wine, a thought suddenly flashed into his mind that these elements could not possibly be the real flesh and blood of Christ. This Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation led to his resolution to study the New Testament. Incidentally, the more he read, the more light he saw in the New Testament. He then began an intensive study of the Bible and the writings of Luther and other reformers. Another event that aided his conversion happened in 1531 when a pious Christian, Sicke Snijder, was beheaded for having been rebaptised by the Anabaptists. This led him to study the question of infant baptism in the scriptures. The writings of church fathers like Luther and others could not help him as they did not agree among themselves. In addition, four years later in April 1535, about 300 Anabaptists were killed near his home where they had sought refuge. Again, this event led him to see more and more the errors and deception of the Roman Church. At the end he had to choose between the Catholic Church and the Word of God. He surrendered his life to God in April 1535 crying for pardon and peace. In January 1536, he renounced the Catholic Church. He declared, as quoted by Wenger, 1949:75:

I have served you all with this small gift as I received it from my God. I gladly would that I could serve you longer with great and abundant grace, to the praise of the Lord. Therefore have I renounced praise, honor, ease and forsaken all, and willingly submitted to the pressing cross of my Lord Jesus

Christ, which oftentimes weighs very heavily on my weak flesh. I seek neither gold nor silver (the Lord knows this), but am ready with faithful Moses to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; and I esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for I know what the Scriptures have promised us. And this is my only joy and desire of my heart, that I may extend the borders of the kingdom of God, publish the truth, reprove sin, teach righteousness, feed the hungry with the word of the Lord, lead the stray sheep into the right path, and win many souls to the Lord through His Spirit, power and grace, and so act in my weakness, as He taught me who purchased me, a miserable sinner, with His crimson blood, and gave me this mind, by the gospel of His grace, namely Jesus Christ: to Him be praise and glory and the eternal kingdom, Amen.

While the reformers such as Luther and Zwingli modified their programmes to secure the political protection of the state, the Anabaptists went bravely ahead and planted a church they felt was true to the teachings of the New Testament. Therefore, Menno, after leaving the Catholic Church, became an elder of the Obbenites at the request of the people. He was baptised and ordained by Obbe Philip, a leading Anabaptist in the region. Even though he got married but then he was so much involved with the evangelical/missionary work. He laboured in several places, such as Amsterdam, Holstein, etc. He was always involved in preaching, writing and publishing tracts. He was a prolific writer who wrote a number of books which include his *Renunciation of Rome*, *Testimony against Jan van Leyden*, and the *Foundation* books, among others.

Unfortunately, the greatest danger to Menno's safety and the Anabaptists lay in the opposition of the Roman Church and the state. It was reported that:

Throughout his evangelistic career, up to the last days of his life, Menno was forced to carry on his work amid great difficulties and the constant dread of a martyr's stake; for by imperial decree a price was resting upon his head". He had become so successful in his organizing work, and was making such inroads on the Roman Church, that by 1542 Emperor Charles V offered a handsome reward for his apprehension. His entire life as a reformer was one of the constant danger and hardship. Not for his apprehension only, but also for the apprehension of any who would give him asylum, there was offered a reward (Moyer, 1952:361).

He fled from place to place to find refuge but then always preaching and writing. Again, he found it impossible to get printers to publish his treatises because printing his books was a criminal offence punishable by death. Fortunately, he owned his own press towards his later years, and this made it possible for him to publish his own pamphlets and books.

During his last days, he was disturbed by the troublesome and divisive elements within his Church, as well as being harassed by the persecutions and hostility from without. He died in 1561 at the age of 65 and was buried in his own garden (Moyer, 1952:362).

Distinctive Theological Beliefs of the Mennonites

The theological beliefs of the Mennonite Brethren are as follows:

1. **The Bible:** The Mennonite brethren placed so much emphasis on the Bible. They accepted it, both the Old and the New Testaments, as inspired by the Holy Spirit and as the oracles of God. The Bible is taken as a means of reaching lives for Christ. Menno Simons, as quoted by Wenger (1949:148), says:

The Word of God is eternal. Neither princes, nor power, nor the commands of men with all their imperial edicts are to constitute faith, neither can a soul be saved by them. Only the heavenly counsel we must hear and follow, that which Jesus Christ, God's first and only begotten Son Himself brought from heaven and taught from the mouth of His Father and confirmed by signs and wonders, and finally sealed it with His crimson blood. This counsel stands and can never be changed or prevailed against by the gates of hell. By this counsel we are, in common, taught that we must hear Christ, believe in Him, follow His footsteps, repent, be born from above, become as little children, not in understanding but in malice, be of the same mind with Christ, walk as He did, deny ourselves, take up His cross and follow Him.

Speaking further on the importance of the Bible, Wenger (1954:33) says:

The central purpose of the Word of God is to lead men to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is to bring them to that gift of eternal life which is received through union with Jesus. The Bible may therefore be called the salvation book, not in the sense that the book itself can bring salvation through propositional truth, but that the function of the Bible is to lead men to put their faith in Him who became man and died and rose again so that man might live.

2. **Unqualified love for and nonresistance to evil men:** The brethren believed in unqualified love for and nonresistance to evil men as the divine ethic for Christian believers. This teaching is based on Mat 5:38-48; Lk6:27-36; John 18:36; Rom 12:17-21; 1Thes 3:15; 2Tim 2:24; Heb 12:14; 1Pet 2:20-23; 3:8, 9, 13, and 17. Therefore, the Mennonites oppose the use of force in private life and also reject military service in any form. They base their ethic of nonresistance on both the letter and spirit of the New Testament, believing that the Christian's calling is to "make disciples of all nations" (Mat 28:19). To them, the calling of the Christian is evangelism and not the dispensing of justice in the state. They refused to serve in the public force or as lawyers. They recognised that God ordained the state to administer law and justice and that Christians are obligated to obey the government in all matters (Rom 13:1-7; Titus 3:1; 1Pet 2:13-14) (Wenger, 1949:153).
3. **Christians should not sue at law:** The Mennonites believed Christians should not sue at law. According to them, the New Testament advises that it is better for Christians to suffer injustice than to achieve their "rights" by resorting to litigation (Wenger, 1949:153). The key passage for this position is 1Cor 6:1-7 which says:
If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? ²Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? ³Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! ⁴Therefore, if

you have disputes about such matter, appoint as judges even men of little account in the Church! ⁵I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? ⁶But instead, one brother goes to law against another and this in front of unbelievers! ⁷The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?

4. **Swearing of oaths:** Just as Jesus Christ admonished His followers to let their word be strictly truthful (Mat 5:33-37; 23:16-22; James 5:12), so also, the Mennonites simply make an affirmation when asked to take an oath. Menno, as quoted by Wenger (1949:157), wrote in his clear confession that:

We are aware that the magistracy claim and say, we are allowed to swear when justice is on our side. This we simply answer with the word of the Lord. To answer truly was allowed to the Jews under the law; but the gospel forbids this to Christians.

5. **Secret society:** The Mennonite brethren are strongly opposed to any form of secret society with the anchor passage as 2 Cor 6:14-7:1.

¹⁴Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? ¹⁵What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people". ¹⁷"Therefore come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you". ¹⁸"I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty". 7: "Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

6. **Permanence of marriage:** The brethren believed in the permanence of marriage. In other words, marriage is for life (Mat 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; Rom 7:1-3; 1 Cor 7:1-16, 13. Re-marriage is allowed only at the death of a spouse. Menno, as quoted by Wenger (1949:159), states:

We acknowledge, teach, and approve of no other matrimony than that one which Christ and His apostles publicly and plainly taught in the New Testament, namely one man one woman (Mat 19:4), and that they may not be divorced except in case of adultery (Mat 5:32), for the two are one flesh; but if the unbelieving depart, a sister or brother is not under bondage in that case (1 Cor 7:15).

7. **Simplicity of life:** The brethren placed so much emphasis on the simplicity of life and thereby discouraged bogus and flamboyant types of living. Wearing of jewellery is proscribed. Menno, as quoted by Wenger (1949:159-60), states:

Beloved reader, take notice that all the proud, haughty, avaricious, carnal and adulterous who call themselves Christians, but who are by no means such, testify by their disposition, heart, mind and walk that they hate and are inimical to Christ.....

They say that they believe, and yet there are no limits nor bounds to their accursed

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wantonness, foolish pomp, show of silks, velvet, costly clothes, gold rings, chains, silver belts, pins, buttons, curiously adorned shirts, hand-kerchiefs, collars, veils, aprons, velvet shoes, slippers and suchlike foolish finery; never regarding that the enlightened apostles, Peter and Paul (I Pet.3:3,4;I Tim. 2:9,10) have in plain and express words forbidden this to all Christian women. If this is forbidden to woman how much more then should men abstain from it, who are the leaders and heads of their women, notwithstanding all this they still want to be called the Christian Church.

8. **Women haircut:** The Mennonite brethren prohibited women haircut. According to them, the art is unnatural and unscriptural (1Cor 11:6).
9. **Worldly recreation:** The Mennonite brethren found it necessary to warn their young people against worldly recreation in general and watching all kinds of movies in particular. They believed the people involved in the film and entertainment industry were too carnal and worldly. The scriptural passages used to support their position are 1 John 2:15-16 and Rom 8:12-13.
10. **Church discipline:** The brethren placed emphasis on church discipline as they believed that it is the responsibility of every congregation to warn and restore those who may fall into sin (Gal 6:1). But then if the transgressor remains impenitent then it becomes necessary to make known to the entire congregation that such an individual is no longer a member. (1 Cor 5:13).
11. **Close communion:** The Mennonites practised what they called "close communion" in their congregations. They saw themselves as the only group faithful to the biblical standards.

Assessment of Distinctive Theological Beliefs of Early UMS and their Impact on UMCA.

This paper, no doubt, has been an eye-opener to everything currently happening in UMCA regarding her doctrines and practices. A popular adage says "like father like son", meaning in this context that what we see in contemporary UMCA is actually that which had been handed over to the Church by the early missionaries. Also, the Yoruba proverb says *ile ni a a wo ki a to so omo l'oruko* which literally means that one should look inside the house before a name is given to a new baby. In other words, there is a need to carefully examine the circumstances that brought about the establishment of UMCA.

UMCA started in Nigeria in 1905 through the Missionary activities of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church from North America. Their first Missionary to Nigeria, Alexander Woods Banfield, who had had a few years of missionary experience in Nigeria with Roland Bingham of the Sudan Interior Mission, arrived in Shonga in 27th August 1905. Other dedicated missionaries equally joined him. UMCA became a denomination in Nigeria in 1955, during the jubilee anniversary of the Church. On the 29th of September, 1956, the United Missionary Church of Africa became a corporate body under the Land Perpetual Succession Ordinance, Cap 107 of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, with registration number 427 (Minister's Manual, 2011:2). This marked the beginning of both missionaries and Nigerians giving leadership to the Church. Four of the dedicated Nigerian workers include: Late Rev. D.

O. Taylor (the first ordained minister in the denomination), Late Senior Pastor Andrawus Nama, Late Rev. Nathaniel Jiya and Senior Pastor Abel Kolawole (Minister's Manual, 2011:2)

On January 5, 1978, a special service was held at the United Missionary Theological College Chapel, Ilorin, where the Missionaries (United Missionary Society) turned over the running of the Church's affairs to Nigerians. Thus, UMCA became an independent indigenous Church, with the following as the first central administrative officers:

- Rev. Dr Jacob Bawa Isa – President
- Rev. Samuel Adebayo Oloyede – General Secretary
- Rev. James Tswanya Harman – Treasurer/Vice President

Also, in 1978, the Church had its District Superintendents as follows:

1. Rev. Sule Magaji – Hausa District
2. Rev. Peter Kolo Audu – Nupe District
3. Rev. Joseph Adeyanju Adeyemi – Yoruba (Kwara)
4. Rev. Simon Adeyemo Adedokun – Yoruba (Oyo)

As of January 1988, seven (7) other Districts were created, and in 2008, the number of Districts increased to 22. Currently, UMCA has 34 districts found in three Geo-political zones of Nigeria, namely South West, North Central and North West. The theological beliefs of the early UMS missionaries have had great impact on the UMCA denomination. These distinctive doctrines are as follows:

1. **Strong Emphasis on the Word of God, the Bible:** The Anabaptists vis-à-vis the Mennonite brethren placed so much emphasis on the Bible. The Bible is understood as the final authority on every issue of life. It is the book that contains answers to all questions. It was the Bible that Menno Simons turned to while searching for the truth concerning the doctrine of transubstantiation, infant baptism, among others. Similarly, UMCA, since its inception, has strongly emphasised reading, studying and meditating on the Bible. In this light, the Church has a seminary-UMCA Theological College Ilorin, regarded as one of the best Evangelical Theological Colleges in Nigeria. The denomination also has several Bible Colleges/Schools where Pastors, Teachers, Evangelists, etc. are trained. These schools include UMCA Bible College, Tunga Magajiya and Bible schools in Mokwa, Igbeti, Salka, Tsaragi, and Share, among others.
2. **Biblical Doctrines:** As early as 1527 the Anabaptists of northern Switzerland, southern Germany and Moravia came together and drew up the movement's doctrines. The meeting was presided over by Hans Denck. Seven articles of faith and practice formulated in that meeting were as follows:
 - a. Baptism must be administered to believers only;
 - b. The unfaithful shall be excluded from the fellowship of the faithful by means of the ban;
 - c. The Lord's Supper is to be regarded merely as a token in remembrance of the suffering and death of Jesus;
 - d. Christians must live a life separated from the world;
 - e. Ministers shall be of good report, shall teach and help the members in their spiritual life, and shall be aided by the congregation when in need;
 - f. The Christian cannot use the sword and shall have no part in civil government; and

- g. All taking of oaths is forbidden by the followers of Christ.

Obviously, the UMCA articles of faith, as contained in the Manual and Constitution of the denomination, are deeply rooted in the Bible and influenced by the Anabaptist's doctrines as formulated in 1527. The doctrines have gone a long way in shaping and moulding individual lives in the church.

3. **Missions:** One strong emphasis of the early UMS is missions. In fact, the Bible is used as a tool for missions and evangelism. The emphasis on missions is further noted in the number of missionaries sent out to Africa, India, and South America, among others, by the church in the United States of America and Canada. Lageer, (1960), in his book entitled *Who is Who in United Missionary Society*, has biographies of 135 missionaries who laboured in different parts of the world.

Incidentally, UMS mission's work in Nigeria started in Shonga, a village in the present Edu Local Government of Kwara State. This was unlike other previous missions like Methodist, Anglican and Baptist missionaries who started in cities like Lagos, Abeokuta, and Ibadan, among others. Therefore, it is not out of context to state that UMS/UMCA all along has been a missionary church whose focus is on the rural areas. Currently, the mission's activities of the denomination are no longer limited to rural areas as emphasis is placed equally on cities like Abuja, Lagos, Ibadan, and Lokoja, among others.

4. **Conservatism and Simplicity of life:** Generally, the Mennonite brethren are very conservative, and they believe in living a simple life. I had the privilege of being taught by Rev. Russell Sloat, and Dr Hyla Ross, among others, who were very conservative. The conservatism of these teachers was reflected in their teachings- in that one could not repeat the name of Jesus while praying; prayer was usually said quietly; clapping of hands was done quietly, and drums were not allowed at the time of worship. In other words, praise and worship were hardly allowed. The above picture is no longer the case at UMCA Theological College, Ilorin. Testimony Monday which used to be a solemn time in the Chapel, is now like a music concert with lots of singing, clapping and dancing. Also, the College now has a unit where interested students are taught classical and contemporary music. Furthermore, virtually all the local congregations in the denomination now have musical instruments, making the worship experience livelier. In addition, the early missionaries' simple lifestyle perhaps made them settle in villages for evangelism and mission work. Even in the Bible College at then UMTC, it was compulsory for every student to take part in weekly village evangelism.

5. **Identification with Material Poverty:** All that the early missionaries of UMS were interested in was spiritual prosperity, and every effort was geared towards members getting into the Kingdom of God. Indirectly, members were discouraged from any form of material prosperity. Old members were indoctrinated to be poor in the things of the world. As a child growing up, I could hear my father, who did not know how to read and write, singing the following songs:

1. *Ki Jesu ha nikan jiya*
Ki Jesu ha nikan jiya
K'araiye lo lofo?
Iya mbe f' olukuluku;
Iya si mbe fun mi
Em' o ru agbelebu mi
Titi 'ku y'o gba mi
'Gbanaa, ngo lo le lo d'ade
'Tor'ade mbe fun mi
Ni 'le ita Kristali naa
Leba ese Jesu
Ngo f'ade wura mi lele
Ngo yin oruko Re

Aa! Agbelebu! Aa! ade!
Aa! ojo ajiunde!
Eryin Angel' e sokale
Wa gbe okan mi lo. Amin.

2. *Jesu mo gb' agbelebu mi*
Jesu mo gb' agbelebu mi
King le maa to O lehin
Otosi at'eni egan
'Wo l'ohun gbogbo fun mi
Bi ini mi gbogbo segbe
Ti ero mi gbogbo pin
Sibe oloro ni mo je
Temi ni Krist'at' orun

Eda le maa wahala mi
Y'o mu mi sunmo O ni
Idanwo aiye le ba mi
Orun y'o mu 'sinmi wa
Ibanuje ko le se nkan
Bi 'fe Re ba wa fun mi
Ayo ko si le dun mo mi
Bi 'wo ko si ninu Re

Okan mi, gba igbala Re
Bori ese at' eru
F'ayo wa ni ipokipo
Maa sise, si maa jiya
Ro t'Emi t'o wa ninu re
Ati 'fe Baba si O
W' Olugbala t'o ku fun o
Omo orun, mase kun

(Must Jesus bear the cross alone)

Must Jesus bear the cross alone
 And all the world go free?
 No, there's a cross for everyone
 And there's a cross for me
 The consecrated cross I'll bear
 Till death shall set me free
 And then go home my crown to wear
 For there's a crown for me
 Upon the crystal pavement
 Down at Jesus' pierced feet
 Joyful I'll cast my golden crown
 And His dear name repeat

O precious cross, O glorious crown
 O resurrection day
 Ye Angels, from the stars come down
 And bear my soul away

Jesus, I my cross have taken
 Jesus, I my cross have taken
 All to leave and follow Thee
 Destitute, despised, forsaken
 Thou from hence, my all shall be
 Perish every fond ambition
 All I have sought and hoped and known
 Yet how rich is my condition
 God and Heaven are still my own

Let the world despise and leave me
 They have left my Savior too
 Human hearts and looks deceive me
 Thou art not, like them, untrue
 And whilst Thou shalt smile upon me
 God of wisdom, love and might
 Foes may hate and friends disown me
 Show Thy face and all is bright

Man may trouble and distress me
 Twill but drive me to Thy breas
 Life with trials hard may press me
 Heaven will bring me sweeter rest
 Oh, 'tis not in grief to harm me
 While Thy love is left to me
 Oh, 'twere not in joy to charm me
 Were that joy unmixed with Thee

*Nje koja lat' ore s' ogo
N'nu adura on 'gbagbo
Ojo ailopin wa fun o
Babay'o mu o de 'be
Ise re laiye fere pin
Ojo ajo re mbuse
Ireti y'o pada s' ayo
Adura s' orin iyin*

Hasten on from grace to glory
Armed by faith and winged by prayer
Heav'ns eternal days before me
God's own hand shall guide me there
Soon shall close my earthly mission
Swift shall pass my pilgrim days
Hope shall change to glad fruition
Faith to sight, and prayer to praise

Again, the perspective has changed significantly. While members of the Church are encouraged to be heavenly-minded; they are equally admonished to make use of their talents and work hard so as to improve their financial base.

6. **Non-participation in Politics:** The doctrine of the Mennonite brethren did not allow any member of the Church to be involved in politics. However, while this position was tenable at the time of Menno Simons and the early missionaries; this is no longer the case for contemporary UMCA members. Nigeria is practising democracy, and if members of the church should exclude themselves from politics, it means that non-believers will be dictating what Christians are to do, which will be dangerous to the body of Christ. Again, this perspective has changed significantly in UMCA, where a significant number of members are currently involved in politics. There are members of UMCA occupying political positions such as Chairmen of Local Government Councils, Commissioners and various other political posts.

Recommendations

In the light of the activities of Menno Simons and members of the Mennonite Brethren on UMCA, as exemplified by the early UMS missionaries, the paper makes the following recommendations:

1. Every member of the church, especially those in Pastoral leadership, must prioritise personal reading and meditating on the Bible, the Word of God. The Bible has solution to every problem, be it spiritual, physical or otherwise. It was in the Bible that Menno Simons received answers to several questions he had.
2. The Theological Education Board of the denomination should be strengthened and empowered to do more in coordinating the activities of the Theological and Bible Colleges of the denomination. The UMCA Theological College, Ilorin, has significantly contributed to the Theological training of ministers in Nigeria, and this should continue.
3. The leadership of UMCA must guard jealously the articles of faith of the denomination as contained in the UMCA Manual and Constitution.
4. Every congregation, district, and denomination must be involved in aggressive missions and evangelism. The denomination must live up to its name- the United Missionary Church of Africa. Presently, the Church has not covered the whole of Nigeria, not to talk of Africa. The way out of the challenge is to target both cities and villages in the missionary enterprise. Individual congregations and districts in UMCA should have the target of planting a certain number of churches within a stipulated period.

5. The simplicity of life should be promoted in the denomination. The goal of every member of the denomination must be to become like Jesus Christ in word and action.
6. The erroneous idea that politics is a dirty game should be corrected. The denomination should encourage and pray for members who are called upon to serve their community/local government or state.
7. The Theological and Bible Colleges of the denomination must be upgraded. Qualified teachers must be employed and well-remunerated, and the Library must be stocked with current theological books and journals.
8. Scholars in UMCA, especially those in the Theological College, should cultivate the habit of writing books on different aspects of the denomination.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the rich heritage which UMCA inherited from the life and ministry of Menno Simons, members of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church and the activities of UMS missionaries in Nigeria. Obviously, the theological beliefs of Menno Simons, as articulated by the UMS missionaries, have had great impact on UMCA as a denomination in Nigeria in areas of strong emphasis on the Word of God, biblical doctrines, evangelism, and attitudes to government and politics, among others. It is believed that UMCA as a denomination will experience tremendous growth if the above recommendations are seriously and religiously considered.

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CHAPTER 44

GOD OF OUR FATHERS IN YORUBALAND BEFORE THE ADVENT OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES

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Abstract

The Yoruba, like other tribes in Africa, are highly religious. They practised their own traditional religion before the advent of Christianity and Islam. Each community has individual deity(s) peculiar to its devotional needs. Despite the peculiarities, Yoruba in the past and even presently as always revolve around these five major elements: 1. Belief in God, the Supreme King over a theocratic world, the creator of heaven and earth, the absolute controller and sustainer of the universe. 2. Belief in divinities (*òrìṣà*) which they believe to be about four hundred and one, and are the representatives and ambassadors of *Olódùmarè*. They are also the intermediaries between God and the people. 3. Belief in spirits, (*Irúnmọ̀lẹ̀*), all-pervading, who also serve as agents and messengers of *Olódùmarè* and the people, both between the celestial world and this terrestrial ball. 4. Belief staunchly in ancestors who are seen as still very much around and are contributing in terms of help and support for their families, *à fowó wewó*, *lowó fií mó*, *àgbájọ ọwó*, *la fií sọyà*, *àjẹjẹ*, *ọwó kan kò gbégbá dórí*, *omódé gbón*, *àgbà gbón*, *la fi dá lẹ̀'Fẹ̀*, meaning, Yoruba believe in contribution rather than mere accumulation. 5. Belief in the practice of magic and medicine is another germane proof that the power to heal and the power to change things from ordinary to extraordinary all belong to God. All these and other attributes make the very strong belief in *Olódùmarè*, whom the Africans in general and Yoruba in particular served before the advent of Christian missionaries right from dim to antiquity.

Keywords: God; Our Fathers; Yorubaland; Advent; Christian Missionaries

Introduction

The Yoruba people are an ethnic group of south-western Nigeria which comprises the majority of *Ọ̀yọ́*, *Ọ̀gùn*, *Ọ̀sun*, *Ọ̀ndó*, *Èkitì*, Kwara and Lagos States, as well as parts of Kogi State and the adjoining parts of Benin and Togo commonly known as Yorùbáland¹, estimated to be around 50 million people. The Yorùbá (pronounced as 'yoh-ru-bah') are one of the largest African ethnic groups south of the Sahara. They are, in fact, not a single group but rather a collection of diverse people bound together by a common language, history and culture. Within Nigeria, the Yorùbá dominate the western part of the country. However, there are also some scattered groups in the Republic of Benin and Togo, which are small countries to the west of Nigeria. Yorùbá language is a tonal language.

Yorùbá mythology holds that Yorùbá people descended from a hero called *Odùduwà* or *Oòduà*. Another account of creation maintains that *Odùduwà* was just one out of the 401 divinities who