

CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN NIGERIA

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**BEING A RESEARCH WORK SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project work was carried out by **ABIODUN Christianah Oluwakemi** with the matriculation number **ART1901779** in the Department of Religions, University of Benin, Benin city in partial fulfilment for the award of B.A(ARTS) Degree in Religions.

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DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this work to my mother Mrs Abiodun Grace and also to the true God who made it possible for me to be where I am today.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

With a heart full of praise and thanks, I want to register my sincere thanks to Almighty God who gave me grace to undertake this program and protected me throughout the period of this academic pursuit. To my supervisor who is also the HOD of this department Prof. Wilson E Ehianu for supervising the work, I say thank you Sir. Appreciation goes to all my esteemed Lecturers in the department who in one way or the other contributed positively to my academic pursuit, I say a big thank you to you all.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	i
Certification	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	ii
Dedication	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	iii
Acknowledgments	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	iv
Table of Contents	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	v
Abstracts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	vii

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1	Background to the Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
1.2	Statement of the Problem	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
1.3	Aim and Objectives	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
1.4	Significance of the Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
1.5	Scope and Limitations of the Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
1.6	Research Methodology	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
1.7	Definition of Terms	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1	Conceptual Framework	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
2.1.1	Christianity	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
2.1.2	Social Justice	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13
2.2	Theoretical Framework	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15

2.3	Historical overview of Christian influence on Social Justice in Nigeria	16
2.4	Empirical Studies on Christianity and Social Justice in Nigeria	18

CHAPTER THREE: SOCIAL JUSTICE

3.1	Social Justice in the Old Testament	21
3.2	Social Justice in the New Testament	26
3.3	The Church's Instrument of Social Justice in Nigeria	31
3.3.1	JDPC	32
3.3.2	CARITAS	36
3.3.3	CAN	39
3.3.4	ADDS	42
3.4	Christian Ethnics, Morality and Social Justice	46

CHAPTER FOUR: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF THE CHURCH'S INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIAL JUSTICE IN NIGERIA

4.1	Prospects	50
4.2	Challenges	55

CHAPTER FIVE: EVALUATION, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

5.1	Evaluation	59
5.2	Recommendations	59
5.3	Conclusion	61
	Bibliography	62

ABSTRACT

Through a comprehensive review of literature, this study investigates the historical roots of Christianity in Nigeria and its evolving engagement with issues of justice, equality, and development. By employing qualitative research methods, including interviews and case studies, the project evaluates the impact of Christian organizations, churches, and leaders in promoting social justice agenda within the Nigerian context. Additionally, it assesses the challenges and opportunities faced by the Christian community in effectively addressing systemic injustices, religious conflicts, and political dynamics. The findings of this research aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between Christianity and social justice in Nigeria and provide insights for fostering inclusive and equitable societal transformations.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Christianity and social justice delves into the relationship between Christian principles, practices and doctrines, and its implications for fostering social justice within societies specifically focusing on the context of Nigeria. Understanding the historical development of Christianity in Nigeria, including its origin, spread and various denominational influence, there by looking into how historical events, colonialism and missionary activities have shaped the role of Christianity in Nigeria (Olufemi, 2018).

Identifying the prevalent social justice issues in Nigeria such as corruption, human rights violations, poverty, ethnic and religious tensions. Also exploring the social political and economic factors contributing to these challenges and their impact on different segments of society. Analyzing the theological foundations of Christianity concerning justice, compassion, love and the dignity of every human, thereby providing understanding of how Christian scriptures, teachings address social injustice (Daramola, 2019).

Assessing the various role of Christian institutions and approaches to address social injustice in Nigeria and not to leave out the challenges and barrier faced by Christian

communities in promoting social justice, also to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of Christian initiatives and interventions in addressing social justice issues at all levels and how Christian principles and values have influenced policy changes, legal reforms and societal attitudes toward social justice in Nigeria (Olufemi,F.A.2018). This study seeks to deepen our understanding of the complex interplay between Christianity and social justice in Nigeria.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Nigeria is home to different ethnic groups, therefore identification of societal issues are prevalent. This societal issues leads to social injustice within Nigeria society which includes; corruption, poverty, gender inequality, ethnic and religious discrimination and lack of access to basic amenities. Nigeria as a vast country, there are major and minor ethnic groups which often leads to exclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups, exacerbating socio-economic disparities, marginalization oppression.

There's a large population of Christians in Nigeria yet there's the lack of comprehensive understanding of how Christian principles, teachings and practices intersect with social justice issues in Nigeria. There is also a challenge of effective social justice, due to internal divisions, theological differences, political constraints and cultural norms that hinder effective indoilzation and action for social change (Daramola, 2019).

Christian individuals and institutions face ethical and theological dilemma in navigating complex social justice issues, including balancing principles of justice, mercy and reconciliation. This study is to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between Christianity and social justice in Nigeria by addressing these problems, while also informing efforts to promote human dignity, equality and solidarity within the country's diverse communities (Ode, 2017).

1.3 Aim and Objectives

The aim of the study is to examine the intersection of Christianity and social justice in Nigeria by exploring how Christian principles, practices and institutions contribute to addressing systematic injustice and promoting human dignity and equality within Nigeria society.

Specifically, the study is to:

1. To examine the theological understandings of Christianity concerning justice, compassion and the dignity of every human being.
2. To evaluate the role of Christian institutions and leaders.
3. To explore social justice issues and challenges in Nigeria.
4. To investigate barriers to social justice advocacy.
5. To assess impact and outcomes of Christian interventions.

6. To generate recommendations for actions and policy reforms.

By achieving these objectives, the study aims to contribute to academic scholarship, policy discourse and practical intervention aimed at promoting social justice, human dignity and global efforts towards a more just and equitable world.

1.4 Significance of the study

This information obtained from this research work will be of good benefits to all and sundry specifically to students, religious leaders and indeed the general public. The significance of the study lies in its potential to contribute to academic knowledge, policy development and social transformation. This study provides valuable insights into the roles of Christianity in addressing social justice issues, aimed at informing policy formation and program development at promoting human rights and inclusion in Nigeria. It highlights opportunities for building bridges across religious divides and harnessing the collective resources and moral authority of religious institutions and leader to promote peace and social cohesion.

This study also shades light on community-led initiatives, grassroots movements and innovative approaches to social change, inspiring collective action and mobilization for transformative social justice outcomes. The study contributes to academic scholarship and research on the intersection of religion, ethnic and social justice

generating new knowledge for understanding complex socio-economic and political challenges in Nigeria and beyond. The study also has significant implications for shaping policies, transforming practices and advancing social change agenda that promote justice, dignity and equality for all in Nigeria.

1.5 Scope and limitations of the study

This research study focuses on Nigeria, examining the dynamics of Christianity and social justice within its diverse cultural, ethnic and religious landscape. The study examine a range of social justice issues including poverty, inequality discrimination, human rights violations, environmental degradation and denial to basic amenities.

1.6 Research methodology

The research methodology for studying Christianity and social justice in Nigeria involves a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative methods may include interviews, case studies, context analysis of religious texts, ethnographic research to understand the perspectives and practices of Christianity involved in social justice.

Quantitative method may involve surveys and samplings representative populations across different regions, to ensure diversity and inclusivity.

Additionally, interdisciplinary approaches such as theology, political science, sociology, law, anthropology are often employed to generate nuanced insights into the complex dynamics of Christianity and social justice in Nigeria.

1.7 Definition of terms

The context of the study on "Christianity and Social Justice" in Nigeria, the following terms are defined:

1. Christianity:

Christianity refers to the monotheistic religion based on the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as described in the New Testament of the Bible. It encompasses a diverse range of beliefs, practices, and traditions, including various denominations such as Catholicism, Protestantism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Pentecostalism.

2. Social Justice:

Social justice entails the fair and equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, and rights within society, with a focus on addressing systemic inequalities, discrimination, and oppression. It involves promoting human dignity, equality, and solidarity, and advocating for the rights and well-being of marginalized and vulnerable populations.

3.Nigeria:

Nigeria is a country located in West Africa, known for its cultural diversity, multi-ethnic population, and complex socio-political dynamics. It is home to over 200 ethnic groups and a significant Christian population, alongside adherents of Islam, traditional religions, and other faith traditions.

4.Social injustice:

Social injustice refers to unfairness, discrimination, and oppression experienced by individuals or groups based on factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, religion, or other identity markers. It encompasses a range of systemic issues including poverty, corruption, discrimination, human rights violations, and lack of access to basic services.

5.Religious institutions:

Religious institutions are organizations, structures, and communities that facilitate the practice, propagation, and governance of religious beliefs and traditions. In the context of Christianity, religious institutions may include churches, denominations, seminaries, religious orders, and charitable organizations engaged in mission and ministry activities.

6.Social Change:

Social change refers to the process of transformation in societal structures, norms, values, and behaviors over time. It involves deliberate efforts to address social problems, challenge unjust systems, and promote positive social outcomes through individual and collective action, advocacy, and policy reform.

7. Marginalized Communities:

Marginalized communities are groups of people who experience social, economic, and political exclusion, often due to factors such as poverty, discrimination, displacement, disability, or minority status. They may face barriers to accessing resources, opportunities, and services, and are often disproportionately impacted by social injustices and systemic inequalities.

These definitions provide clarity and context for understanding the key concepts and terms central to the study of Christianity and social justice in Nigeria.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Framework

This revolves around biblical teachings and the application of Christian principles to address societal issues like, poverty, corruption, gender inequality. Christianity in Nigeria, like elsewhere draws upon scriptures that emphasize compassion, justice and care for marginalized, underscore the importance of social justice in Christian ethics. The church play a significant role in promoting social justice through it various activities like ministries, outreach programs and advocacy efforts. Christianity emphasize the importance of unity and reconciliation in promoting social justice.

By adopting a conceptual framework that integrates theological, ethical, socio-political, and interfaith dimensions, we can gain a holistic understanding of the complex dynamics of Christianity and social justice in Nigeria, while also identifying opportunities for constructive engagement, dialogue, and transformative action within diverse cultural and religious contexts.

2.1.1 Christianity

Christianity is a monotheistic Abrahamic religion centered around the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, whom Christians believe to be the Son of God

and the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament of the Bible. It is the world's biggest religion, with more than 2 billion devotees universally. Christians have confidence in the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and they love in holy places where they take part in petition, ceremonies, and investigation of the Book of scriptures. Christianity has numerous groups, including Catholicism, Protestantism, and Eastern Conventuality, each with its own exceptional convictions and practices.

Both the Eastern and Western branches of Christianity continue to differ in terms of culture and doctrine, particularly with regard to Christology, ecclesiology, ordination, and the nature of salvation and justification. Most Christian faiths agree that Jesus is the Son of God, the Logos incarnate, who lived a sinless life, died on a cross, and rose from the grave to save humanity. This belief is known as the gospel, or "good news." The Old Testament serves as the gospels' revered backdrop as the four canonical gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—describe Jesus's life and teachings (Perry Marvin, 2012).

In the Roman province of Judea, Christianity originated as a Judaic sect with Hellenistic influences in the first century following the birth of Jesus. Despite severe persecution, Jesus' disciples propagated their beliefs throughout the Eastern Mediterranean region. Christianity gradually broke away from Judaism as a result of the incorporation of Gentiles (2nd century). By issuing the Edict of Milan in 313 and calling the Council of Nicaea in 325, Emperor Constantine I decriminalized

Christianity in the Roman Empire and established the foundation for what would eventually become the official state religion of the Roman Empire (380). While the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church broke at the East-West Schism (1054), the Church of the East and Oriental Orthodoxy also split over disagreements over Christology in the fifth century. During the Reformation (16th century), Protestantism broke away from the Catholic Church into multiple denominations. Christianity spread over the world through missionaries after the Age of Discovery (15th–17th century) (Hayes, Carlton, 1954).

The history of Christianity in Nigeria dates back to the 15th century with the arrival of Portuguese explorers who brought Catholic missionaries. However, the significant spread of Christianity in Nigeria occurred during the 19th and 20th centuries, influenced by various factors such as colonialism, missionary activities, and indigenous evangelism efforts. Portuguese explorers, such as John Alfonso d'Aveiro, were among the first to bring Christianity to Nigeria in the 15th century. However, their efforts did not result in significant conversions. The 19th-century colonization of Nigeria by the British Empire facilitated the spread of Christianity. Missionaries accompanied colonial administrators and established missions across the country.

Various Christian missionary societies, including the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Roman Catholic Church, and later the Baptist and Methodist missions,

played pivotal roles in evangelizing Nigeria. These missionaries established schools, hospitals, and churches, contributing to the growth of Christianity (Adram Hastings, 1450-1950). Nigerian Christians themselves became active evangelists, spreading Christianity within their communities and beyond. Indigenous Christian movements, such as the Aladura churches and the African Indigenous Churches, emerged, blending Christianity with indigenous African religious practices.

It is a known fact that Nigeria is home to a diverse array of Christian denominations, including Catholicism, Anglicanism, Pentecostalism, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and others. Each denomination has its own history, traditions, and theological emphases. Christianity has had a profound impact on Nigerian society, influencing education, healthcare, politics, and culture. Many prominent Nigerian leaders, intellectuals, and activists have been Christians.

Nigeria's religious landscape is dynamic, characterized by both growth and challenges. While Christianity has experienced remarkable growth, especially in southern Nigeria, it faces competition from Islam in the northern regions and contends with internal divisions and controversies (Elizabeth Isichei).

Today, Christianity is one of the dominant religions in Nigeria, with a significant portion of the population identifying as Christian. It continues to shape Nigerian

society and culture in diverse ways, contributing to the country's religious pluralism and identity.

2.1.2 Social Justice

Social justice refers to the concept of ensuring fairness, equality, and opportunities for all members of society, especially those who have been historically marginalized or oppressed. It involves addressing issues related to poverty, discrimination, inequality, and human rights violations. Social justice aims to create a more equitable and inclusive society by promoting policies and practices that strive for justice and equality for all individuals and groups, regardless of their background, identity, or circumstances.

Christian theology is where the term "social justice" comes from. The first time it was used was in Luigi Taparelli's Theoretical Treatise on Natural Law in the early 1840s. Taparelli was an Italian Jesuit cleric composing during the ascent of Risorgimento, a nineteenth century Italian patriot development, and discussions around the unification of Italy. Taparelli's rendition of civil rights was essentially a utilization of equity to get-togethers and held that individuals ought to make the wisest decision in view of a conceptualization of profound quality in light of normal philosophy and religion, and for quite a bit of its set of experiences civil rights has been a strict idea. However, not all ideas of civil rights underscored religion. The term grew as a result of the Industrial

Revolution's impact on society. Later scholars would zero in on civil rights as an honest conviction for individuals inside a general public to work for a long term benefit. Civil rights is a political and philosophical development going for the good division of assets and open doors. By addressing verifiable treacheries and guiding assets to underserved networks, civil rights advocates desire to lay out an all the more fair and equivalent society (Ivestopedia).

Social justice, within the context of Christianity and its study in Nigeria, revolves around the principles of fairness, equality, and the promotion of the common good within society, particularly concerning issues of poverty, oppression, and marginalization (Augustine A.Ikelegbe). In Nigeria, where Christianity is a huge strict and social power, the idea of civil rights is profoundly entwined with the lessons of Jesus Christ, which underscore love, empathy, and care for the minimized and weak citizenry. This includes addressing issues such as poverty, corruption, ethnic and religious tensions, human rights abuses, and inequality.

Christian organizations and leaders in Nigeria often advocate for social justice through various means, including community development projects, advocacy for good governance, provision of social services, and promoting peace and reconciliation among different ethnic and religious groups (Matthew Hassan Kukah).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

It draws from various inter disciplinary perspective, including sociology, theology, political science and ethics. social systems theory provides a framework for understanding how social structures, institutions, and norms shape individual behaviors, interactions, and outcomes within society. It helps analyze the interplay between religious institutions (e.g., churches), political systems, economic structures, and cultural values in shaping responses to social justice issues in Nigeria. Liberation theology emphasizes the biblical mandate to advocate for the poor, oppressed, and marginalized, drawing inspiration from Jesus teachings on social justice and liberation. It also provide theological grounding for Christian engagement in social justice activism, emphasizing solidarity with the marginalized, prophetic critique of unjust systems, and transformative praxis for societal change.

Utilizing ethical theories such as virtue ethics, deontological ethics, and utilitarianism, researchers can analyze the ethical dimensions of social justice dilemmas and decision-making within Christian contexts. Postcolonial theory critiques colonial legacies, neocolonial power dynamics, and Eurocentric ideologies that continue to shape social, political, and cultural realities in postcolonial societies like Nigeria.

It helps explore how colonial histories, cultural imperialism, and globalization influence Christian responses to social justice issues, as well as indigenous models of resistance, decolonization, and self-determination. By integrating these theoretical

perspectives, it develop a comprehensive framework for analyzing the complex dynamics of Christianity and social justice in Nigeria, while also identifying opportunities for transformative action and positive change within diverse cultural and historical contexts.

2.3 Historical Overview of Christian and Social Justice in Nigeria

The historical overview traces back to the introduction of Christianity by the European missionaries during the colonial period and its subsequent growth and impact on Nigerian society. Christianity was introduced to Nigeria by European missionaries, primarily from Britain, in the 19th century during the period of British colonial rule. Missionaries established schools, hospitals, and churches across Nigeria, aiming to spread the Christian faith and provide social services to the local population. Christian missions played a significant role in education and healthcare, contributing to the development of Western-style education and modern healthcare infrastructure in Nigeria.

Christian missionaries advocated for the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade and the liberation of enslaved Africans in Nigeria. Missionaries promoted the idea of the inherent dignity and equality of all human beings, challenging the dehumanizing practices of slavery and advocating for the rights of enslaved individuals. Christian missions established schools and educational institutions, providing opportunities for

formal education and literacy training, especially for marginalized and underserved communities. Education became a tool for social mobility, empowerment, and self-improvement, enabling individuals to challenge social injustices and participate more in economics, social and political life.

Christian missionaries promoted the education and empowerment of women, challenging traditional gender roles and advocating for gender equality within Nigerian society. Missionary societies supported initiatives to improve women's access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, contributing to the advancement of women's rights and status in Nigerian communities. Church and organization became key providers of social services, including healthcare, orphanages and relief assistance to the poor and vulnerable.

Christian leaders and organizations in Nigeria have been vocal advocates for human rights, democracy, and social justice, challenging government policies and practices that perpetuate inequality, corruption, and oppression. Churches have provided platforms for social justice advocacy, organizing protests, campaigns, and initiatives to address issues such as political corruption, ethnic conflict, religious intolerance, and human rights abuses. Also in recent years, Christian communities in Nigeria have engaged in inter faith dialogue and peace building efforts with Muslims and practitioners of other faith tradition. Interfaith initiatives seek to promote mutual

understanding, reconciliation, and cooperation, fostering peaceful coexistence and solidarity among diverse religious communities in Nigeria.

Overall, Christianity's influence on social justice in Nigeria has been multifaceted, encompassing advocacy for human rights, education, healthcare, gender equality, community development, and peace-building. While facing challenges and criticisms, Christian organizations and leaders continue to play a significant role in promoting social justice and contributing to positive social change in Nigeria.

2.4 Empirical Studies on Christianity and Social Justice in Nigeria

There are several empirical studies on Christianity and social justice in Nigeria that have explored various aspects of the relationship between Christian beliefs, practices, and institutions, and the pursuit of social justice. Here are some examples:

"Religion, Civil Society and Justice in Nigeria" by Asonzeh Ukah:

This study examines the role of Christian churches and civil society organizations in promoting justice and social change in Nigeria. It explores how religious beliefs and values influence attitudes towards social justice issues and analyzes the impact of Christian activism on Nigerian society.

"Christianity and Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria: A Study of the Methodist Church Nigeria" by Prince S. Omoera and Comfort O. Akhigbe:

This research investigates the contributions of the Methodist Church Nigeria to socio-economic development and social justice initiatives in the country. It explores the church's involvement in education, healthcare, poverty alleviation, and community development projects.

"Social Justice and Religious Freedom: The Role of Christian NGOs in Nigeria" by Osaro Omoruyi:

This study examines the activities of Christian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in promoting social justice and religious freedom in Nigeria. It investigates how Christian NGOs address issues such as human rights violations, religious persecution, and discrimination against minority groups.

"Christianity and Social Justice: A Study of Christian Responses to Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria" by Solomon Etuk and John Essien:

This research explores how Christian communities respond to ethnic conflict and social injustice in Nigeria. It examines the role of Christian leaders, churches, and grassroots organizations in peace-building efforts, reconciliation processes, and conflict resolution initiatives.

Christianity and Gender Justice in Nigeria: A Study of Pentecostal Churches" by Lovett Lawson and Oluchi Ajuonuma:

This empirical study investigates the perspectives of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria on gender justice and women's rights. It examines the theological teachings, organizational practices, and socio-cultural attitudes within Pentecostal congregations regarding gender equality and women's empowerment.

These empirical studies provide valuable insights into the complex dynamics of Christianity and social justice in Nigeria, shedding light on the beliefs, practices, and impacts of Christian communities and organizations in addressing systemic injustices, promoting human dignity, and fostering positive social change within Nigerian society.

CHAPTER THREE

SOCIAL JUSTICE

3.1 Social Justice in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, social justice is a prominent theme that is deeply woven into various laws, prophetic messages, and narratives. The concept of justice within the Old Testament is often linked to the covenant relationship between God and the people of Israel. The covenant included obligations for the people to uphold justice, righteousness, and mercy. Micah 6:8 encapsulates this idea, "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?".

Old Testament contains numerous laws and regulations aimed at ensuring fair treatment and protection for vulnerable members of society, including widows, orphans, foreigners, and the poor. For example, laws about gleaning (Leviticus 19:9-10), which allowed the poor to gather crops left in the fields after the harvest, and laws prohibiting the mistreatment of foreigners (Exodus 22:21) highlight the importance of social just. The Old Testament emphasizes the fair treatment of vulnerable groups such as widows, orphans, immigrants, and the poor. For example, in Exodus 22:22-24 and Deuteronomy 24:17-22, there are laws protecting the rights of widows, orphans, and foreigners.

The legal codes outlined in books like Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy emphasize justice and fairness in the treatment of all individuals regardless of their social status. Laws regarding restitution, property rights, and fair trials promote the idea of equitable treatment.

Prophets like Amos, Isaiah, and Micah spoke out against injustice and oppression in society. They condemned and rebuked the wealthy exploiting the poor, oppression of the poor, corruption among the ruling class, and exploitation of the vulnerable. Their messages called for repentance, righteous living, mercy and systemic change to ensure justice for all members of society.

The Old Testament describes the establishment of Cities of Refuge where individuals who accidentally killed someone could flee for safety from avengers seeking revenge. This system protected individuals from unjust retaliation and ensured that justice was carried out fairly. The Sabbath and Jubilee laws were designed to promote social justice and economic equality. Every seventh year was a Sabbath year when debts were forgiven, and every 50th year was a Jubilee year when land was returned to its original owners, and slaves were set free (Leviticus 25).

Sabbath laws in the Old Testament mandated a day of rest not only for the land but also for laborers, slaves, and animals. This provided a safeguard against overwork and exploitation, ensuring that everyone had time for rest and rejuvenation. Exodus 23:12

commands, "Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and so that the slave born in your household and the foreigner living among you may be refreshed."

Old Testament contains narratives that illustrate God's concern for justice and his condemnation of injustice. For example, stories such as the oppression of the Israelites in Egypt(Exodus) and the exploitation of Naboth's vineyard highlight God's displeasure with injustice and the consequences that follow. (1king 21)illustrates the importance of property rights and the condemnation of unjust acquisition. The Old Testament provides guidelines for judges and leaders to administer justice impartially and fairly, without showing favoritism or accepting bribes. Deuteronomy 16:19 advises, "You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality; and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of those who are in the right."

The Old Testament encourages acts of charity and generosity towards those in need. Practices like gleaning, where farmers left parts of their fields unharvested for the poor to gather, and the obligation to provide for the Levites, widows, and strangers demonstrate a concern for the marginalized. Throughout the Old Testament, there are numerous commands to care for the poor and needy. Proverbs 14:31 states, "Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy

honors God. "The Old Testament repeatedly emphasizes the importance of caring for the poor and needy. This includes providing food, shelter, and assistance to those who are less fortunate. Psalm 82:3-4 states, "Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked."

Deuteronomy 15:7-8 urges,

"If there is among you anyone in need, a member of your community in any of your towns within the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your needy neighbor. You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be."

In Amos one and two, the prophet speaks in general terms of blatant injustices. From Amos 2:6 on he speaks more specifically to Israel. Amos preaches that God has to do with justice and righteousness, not with Israel regardless of Israel's way of life. When Israel itself is unjust, God will judge Israel.

Deuteronomy 24:14-15 emphasizes fair treatment of workers: "Do not take advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether that worker is a fellow Israelite or a

foreigner residing in one of your towns. Pay them their wages each day before sunset, because they are poor and are counting on it. "The Old Testament contains principles that promote honesty, integrity, and fairness in business dealings. Proverbs 11:1 declares, "The Lord detests dishonest scales, but accurate weights find favor with him." This verse underscores the importance of honesty and fairness in economic transactions.

In the old testament there were alot of social vices in which usury was a very common one. Usury, the practice of charging excessive interest on loans, was prohibited in the Old Testament. The Israelites were instructed to lend to their fellow Israelites without charging interest, as seen in Exodus 22:25, "If you lend money to my people, to the poor among you, you shall not deal with them as a creditor; you shall not exact interest from them."

Overall, the examples highlight the old testament's comprehensive approach to social justice, addressing various aspects of human welfare, rights and ethical conduct within society. Social justice in the Old Testament underscores the importance of fairness, compassion, and righteousness in human relationships and societal structures, encompassing economic, legal, and moral dimensions aimed at creating a society characterized by fairness, compassion, and righteousness, reflecting God's concern for the well-being of all people.

3.2 Social Justice in the New Testament

Social Justice is a recurring theme throughout the new testament, reflecting the teachings and actions of Jesus Christ and the early church community. Jesus in his teachings consistently emphasized the equal worth and dignity of all people, regardless of their social status, ethnicity, or background. Jesus reached out to marginalized individuals, such as tax collectors, lepers, and Samaritans, demonstrating a radical inclusivity. Jesus teaches that all people are equal in the eyes of God. It emphasizes the importance of treating others with respect and dignity, regardless of their social status, ethnicity, or background.

Jesus outlines principles of kingdom living during his sermon on the mount, including attitudes and behaviors that promote social justice. He blesses the poor in spirit, mourners, the meek, and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, indicating God's special concern for the marginalized and oppressed(Matthew 5-7).

Jesus often showed compassion and concern for marginalized groups such as the poor, the sick, the outcasts, and the oppressed. He frequently interacted with them, demonstrating love and acceptance. The New Testament encourages believers to show compassion and mercy to those in need. This is illustrated in the parable of the Good Samaritan, where Jesus teaches that everyone is a neighbor and should be treated with love and kindness.

Jesus taught about the importance of caring for the poor, the sick, the hungry, and the oppressed. He urged his followers to show compassion and generosity towards those in need, as seen in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) and his emphasis on feeding the hungry and clothing the naked (Matthew 25:31-46). Throughout the New Testament, there are numerous passages advocating for the rights and well-being of the poor and oppressed. Believers are called to care for the needy, provide for the hungry, and seek justice for the oppressed.

Jesus teaches about the final judgment, emphasizing the importance of caring for those in need. He identifies himself with the hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick, and imprisoned, stressing that acts of compassion towards them reflect one's relationship with God (Matthew 25:31-46)

James, the brother of Jesus, emphasizes the importance of putting faith into action. He criticizes favoritism toward the wealthy and challenges believers to care for the poor and vulnerable. James 1:27 highlights true religion as caring for orphans and widows in their distress, representing a core aspect of social justice.

Jesus confronted systems of injustice and exploitation, challenging the religious and political authorities of his time when they oppressed the marginalized or prioritized wealth and power over compassion and righteousness, Jesus spoke against their greed and corruption.

Jesus taught the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation, advocating for a transformative justice that seeks healing and restoration rather than retaliation or revenge. The New Testament promotes peace, reconciliation, and forgiveness as central values in the Christian life. Believers are encouraged to seek reconciliation with others, even their enemies, and to work towards building a peaceful and just society.

The early Christian communities described in the New Testament emphasized communal sharing and support, where members cared for one another and pooled their resources to ensure that no one was in need (Acts 2:42-47). They also practiced radical generosity, sharing their possessions and resources with those in need. They prioritized caring for one another and supporting those who were struggling. The apostles and early Christians continued Jesus' mission by advocating for justice and speaking out against oppression. For example, the apostle Paul condemned social divisions and urged believers to pursue equality and unity in Christ (Galatians 3:28).

Early Christian community in Acts demonstrates radical sharing and communal living (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35). Believers sold their possessions and distributed to those in need, ensuring that no one among them was in need. This communal lifestyle reflects a commitment to social justice and care for one another.

Paul frequently addresses social issues in his letters, advocating for equality and justice within the Christian community. In Galatians 3:28, he proclaims that in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, highlighting the universal equality found in Christ. Paul teaches that love is the fulfillment of the law and that genuine love for one another leads to justice. He emphasizes that love does no harm to its neighbor and fulfills the essence of God's commandments (Romans 13:8-10).

There are a lot of examples of demonstration of social justice mentioned in the New Testament, to mention a few; Jesus challenges a wealthy young man to sell his possessions and give to the poor, highlighting the tension between wealth and discipleship. This passage underscores the importance of prioritizing the needs of others over personal wealth and possessions (Mark 10:17-27).

Jesus demonstrates social justice by reaching out to Zacchaeus, a despised tax collector, and inviting himself to his home. Zacchaeus responds by pledging to give half of his possessions to the poor and repay anyone he has cheated fourfold, illustrating the transformative power of encounter and repentance (Luke 19:1-10).

Jesus calls Matthew, a tax collector, to follow him, demonstrating acceptance and inclusion of social outcasts. He declares that he came not for the righteous, but for

sinner, emphasizing his mission to seek and save the lost and marginalized (Matthew 9:9-13).

Paul's letter to Philemon addresses the issue of slavery, advocating for reconciliation and forgiveness between Philemon, a slave owner, and Onesimus, his runaway slave. Paul encourages Philemon to receive Onesimus back not as a slave, but as a beloved brother, promoting equality and reconciliation in Christ (Philemon 1:8-22).

Paul organizes a collection among the Gentile churches for the impoverished believers in Jerusalem, demonstrating solidarity and support across cultural and geographical boundaries within the early Christian community (1Corinthians 16:1-4, 2Corinthians 8-9).

Hebrews exhorts believers to show hospitality to strangers, reminding them that by doing so, some have entertained angels without knowing it. This passage emphasizes the importance of welcoming and caring for outsiders, reflecting God's inclusive love and concern for all people (Hebrew 13:1-2).

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus demonstrates compassion through healing miracles, feeding the hungry, and restoring dignity to the marginalized. These acts exemplify a commitment to social justice and the restoration of wholeness to individuals and communities.

Overall, the New Testament provides a foundation for understanding and practicing social justice, emphasizing the importance of love, compassion, equality, and advocacy for the marginalized and oppressed. New Testament promotes a vision of social justice that is rooted in love, compassion, and the pursuit of righteousness. It calls believers to actively engage in addressing systemic injustices and working towards a more just and equitable society. The New Testament's profound concern for Social Justice, emphasizing compassion, equality, generosity and advocacy for the marginalized as integral to the Christian faith.

3.3 The Church's Instrument of Social Justice in Nigeria

The Church plays a significant role in promoting social justice in Nigeria; Churches often advocate for social justice issues such as poverty alleviation, healthcare access, education, and human rights. They educate their congregations on these issues and mobilize them to take action. Many churches engage in community development projects aimed at addressing poverty, providing healthcare services, offering vocational training, and promoting sustainable livelihoods.

Churches provide humanitarian aid to those in need, including food assistance, shelter, clothing, and medical care, especially in times of crisis such as natural disasters or conflicts. Some churches offer legal aid services to marginalized groups, advocate for

legal reforms to protect the rights of the vulnerable, and support efforts to combat corruption and injustice in the legal system.

In a country with diverse ethnic and religious communities like Nigeria, churches often play a crucial role in promoting peace, reconciliation, and conflict resolution through dialogue, mediation, and peacebuilding initiatives. Church leaders often speak out against corruption, injustice, and human rights abuses, providing moral guidance to both their congregations and society at large.

The Church serves as an instrument of social justice in Nigeria by advocating for the rights of the marginalized, providing practical assistance to those in need, and promoting values of compassion, equality, and justice.

The church gets involve in activities for social justice through different group such as JDPC, CAN and many more of it.

3.3.1 Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC)

The Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) is a Catholic Church organization dedicated to promoting social justice, development, and peace in Nigeria.

The Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) traces its origin to the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), which emphasized the Church's commitment to social justice, development, and peacebuilding efforts around the world.

In Nigeria, the establishment of JDPC can be linked to the pastoral letter titled "Justice in the World," issued by the Synod of Bishops in Rome in 1971. This pastoral letter called on the Church to be actively engaged in promoting justice and peace in society, addressing the root causes of poverty, inequality, and injustice. Inspired by this call to action, Catholic bishops and clergy in Nigeria recognized the need to create structures within the Church to effectively address social, economic, and political issues affecting the country. As a result, the Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) was founded within the Catholic Church in Nigeria. The exact timing of JDPC's establishment may vary across different dioceses and regions within Nigeria, but generally, it emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as a response to the Church's commitment to social justice and human rights advocacy.

JDPC's formation reflects the Church's recognition of its role as a catalyst for social transformation and the promotion of integral human development. It serves as a vehicle through which the Catholic Church in Nigeria can engage with the broader society, advocate for the rights of the poor and marginalized, and contribute to efforts aimed at building a more just, equitable, and peaceful nation. Since its inception,

JDPC has evolved into a vibrant network of diocesan and parish-based commissions, actively involved in advocacy, community development, human rights protection, peacebuilding, and other initiatives aimed at advancing social justice and sustainable development in Nigeria.

JDPC engages in advocacy efforts to address social injustices, human rights violations, and systemic issues affecting marginalized communities in Nigeria. They raise awareness about issues such as poverty, corruption, gender inequality, human trafficking, and environmental degradation.

JDPC implements various community development projects aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of vulnerable populations. These projects may include initiatives related to education, healthcare, agriculture, water and sanitation, livelihood enhancement, and infrastructure development.

JDPC provides support to individuals and communities whose rights have been violated. They offer legal assistance, advocacy, and empowerment programs to help people access justice and assert their rights in the face of discrimination, abuse, and injustice.

JDPC works to promote peace and reconciliation in areas affected by conflict and violence. They facilitate dialogue, mediation, and peacebuilding initiatives among conflicting parties to foster understanding, tolerance, and cooperation.

JDPC conducts training programs, workshops, and seminars to empower individuals and community groups with knowledge, skills, and resources to advocate for their rights, participate in decision-making processes, and promote social justice within their communities.

In times of humanitarian crises such as natural disasters or displacement due to conflict, JDPC provides emergency relief assistance, including food, shelter, medical care, and psychosocial support to affected populations. JDPC collaborates with government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society groups, and other stakeholders to strengthen advocacy efforts, leverage resources, and maximize impact in advancing social justice and development goals.

JDPC's involvement in social justice in Nigeria reflects the Catholic Church's commitment to promoting human dignity, solidarity, and the common good in society, particularly among the most vulnerable and marginalized populations (journal of Catholic social thought XIV (2) 2017)

3.3.2 Catholic Caritas Foundation of Nigeria (CCFN)

The Catholic Caritas Foundation of Nigeria (CCFN) originated within the framework of the Catholic Church's response to social and humanitarian needs in Nigeria. While specific historical details may vary, the establishment of CCFN aligns with the broader history of Caritas Internationalis and the Catholic Church's commitment to social justice and charitable work. Caritas Internationalis, founded in 1951, serves as the global network of Catholic charitable organizations. It coordinates efforts among national Caritas organizations to address poverty, inequality, and humanitarian crises worldwide. In Nigeria, the Catholic Church recognized the need for a coordinated approach to tackle social issues and provide assistance to those in need.

The exact founding date of CCFN may vary, its establishment in 2010 by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN). CCFN operates as the relief and development arm of the CBCN, but it likely emerged in response to the growing social and economic challenges facing Nigeria. These challenges include poverty, disease, displacement, and inequality, among others. The Catholic Church, through CCFN, sought to consolidate its efforts in delivering aid, promoting development, and advocating for social justice across the country.

CCFN operates through partnerships with local Catholic dioceses, parishes, religious congregations, and other organizations, including UNICEF, UNHCR, UNAIDS,

Global Fund and Caritas Internationalis Member Organizations (MOs) as well as relevant State Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in Nigeria. It mobilizes resources, implements programs, and engages in advocacy to address the multifaceted needs of communities throughout Nigeria. Its work encompasses a wide range of activities, including healthcare, education, emergency response, community development, and peacebuilding.

As an integral part of the Catholic Church's mission, CCFN upholds the principles of Catholic social teaching, which emphasize the dignity of every human person, the common good, solidarity, and subsidiarity. Through its various initiatives, CCFN aims to empower individuals and communities, promote human flourishing, and build a more just and compassionate society in Nigeria.

The Catholic Caritas Foundation of Nigeria (CCFN) is deeply involved in promoting social justice in Nigeria through various initiatives and programs. CCFN engages in advocacy efforts to raise awareness about social justice issues affecting Nigerian society. This includes advocating for policies and practices that promote human dignity, equality, and fairness. CCFN implements projects aimed at alleviating poverty and improving the livelihoods of marginalized communities. This may involve providing access to basic necessities such as food, clean water, healthcare, and education.

CCFN supports community development initiatives that empower local communities to address social and economic challenges. This includes capacity building, skills training, and income-generating activities aimed at fostering self-reliance and resilience. Nigeria is a country with diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds, CCFN plays a role in promoting peace and reconciliation. It supports initiatives that aim to mitigate conflicts, foster dialogue, and build understanding among different communities.

CCFN advocates for the protection of human rights and dignity for all individuals, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalized groups. This involves supporting initiatives that address issues such as human trafficking, gender-based violence, and discrimination.

During times of crisis, such as natural disasters or humanitarian emergencies, CCFN provides immediate relief assistance to affected communities. This includes the distribution of food, shelter, medical supplies, and other essential services. CCFN recognizes the importance of environmental stewardship and sustainable development in promoting social justice. It supports initiatives that address environmental degradation, climate change, and promote sustainable livelihoods.

CCFN's involvement in social justice in Nigeria reflects the Catholic Church's commitment to serving the most vulnerable and marginalized members of society,

promoting human dignity, and building a more just and compassionate world(caritas.com).

3.3.3 Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN)

The origins of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) can be traced back to the late 1970s when Nigeria was experiencing significant political and social changes. The country had just emerged from a civil war (1967-1970) and was grappling with issues of national integration, religious tensions, and political instability. During this period, there was a growing need for Christians in Nigeria to have a unified platform to address common concerns, advocate for their rights, and promote religious harmony in the country. Various Christian leaders and denominations recognized the importance of coming together to form an organization that could represent the interests of Christians across Nigeria.

In 1976, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) was formally established as an umbrella organization for all Christian denominations in the country. Its founding members included representatives from diverse Christian groups, including the Catholic Church, Protestant denominations, Pentecostal churches, and Orthodox traditions.

CAN's primary objectives include:

Promoting unity among Christians: CAN serves as a forum for fostering unity and cooperation among Christians of different denominations, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds. Advocating for Christian rights: CAN advocates for the rights and interests of Christians in Nigeria, including religious freedom, social justice, and equality before the law. Addressing social and political issues: CAN engages in dialogue and advocacy on various social, political, and moral issues affecting Nigerian society, including poverty, corruption, education, healthcare, and human rights.

Promoting interfaith dialogue: CAN seeks to promote dialogue and understanding between Christians and members of other religious communities in Nigeria, with the aim of fostering peaceful coexistence and religious tolerance. Over the years, CAN has played a significant role in shaping Nigeria's religious landscape and has been actively involved in national debates, policy discussions, and advocacy campaigns on a wide range of issues. Despite occasional internal challenges and criticisms, CAN remains a key voice for Christians in Nigeria and continues to be influential in both religious and political spheres.

The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) has been actively involved in advocating for social justice in Nigeria across various spheres. Some of the key areas where CAN has shown involvement include:

CAN advocates for the protection of human rights, including religious freedom, freedom of speech, and the rights of minorities. It speaks out against religious persecution, discrimination, and injustice faced by Christians and other religious groups in Nigeria. CAN is involved in initiatives aimed at alleviating poverty and promoting socioeconomic development, especially among marginalized communities. It supports programs that provide assistance to the poor, including food aid, healthcare services, education, and vocational training.

CAN has spoken out against corruption in Nigeria, which remains a significant challenge affecting all sectors of society. It calls for transparency, accountability, and ethical leadership in government and private institutions. CAN plays a role in promoting peace and reconciliation in areas affected by religious and ethnic conflicts. It engages in dialogue, mediation, and peacebuilding initiatives to foster understanding and peaceful coexistence among different communities.

CAN supports initiatives to improve access to quality education and healthcare services, particularly in rural and underserved areas. It advocates for government policies and programs that prioritize education and healthcare as fundamental rights for all citizens. CAN advocates for gender equality and the empowerment of women in Nigerian society. It supports initiatives that promote women's rights, address

gender-based violence, and provide opportunities for women's education and economic empowerment.

CAN's involvement in social justice issues reflects its commitment to promoting the well-being and dignity of all Nigerians, regardless of religious affiliation, ethnicity, or social status. Through its advocacy efforts and community engagement, CAN contributes to shaping a more just, equitable, and inclusive society in Nigeria.

3.3.4 Anglican Diocesan Development Services (ADDS)

The Anglican Diocesan Development Services (ADDS) in Nigeria has its roots in the broader mission of the Anglican Church in the country and its commitment to addressing social, economic, and developmental challenges facing Nigerian communities. While the specific details may vary among dioceses, the Anglican Church has a long history in Nigeria, dating back to the 19th century when missionaries from the Church Missionary Society (CMS) arrived in the country. These missionaries not only spread Christianity but also established schools, hospitals, and other social services as part of their mission.

Over time, as the Anglican Church grew and established dioceses across Nigeria, it became increasingly involved in addressing the pressing needs of communities, including poverty, lack of healthcare, education, clean water, and sanitation.

Recognizing the need for a more structured and coordinated approach to development work, Anglican dioceses in Nigeria began establishing their own development services agencies. These agencies were tasked with implementing development projects, mobilizing resources, and collaborating with local and international partners to address community needs effectively.

ADDS in Nigeria often collaborate with government agencies, NGOs, donor organizations, and other stakeholders to leverage resources and expertise. These partnerships enable ADDS to implement larger-scale projects and reach more communities in need. A key principle underlying the work of ADDS in Nigeria is the empowerment of local communities. They emphasize community participation, ownership, and sustainability in the design and implementation of development projects. This approach ensures that interventions are contextually relevant and have a lasting impact. Over the years, ADDS in Nigeria have diversified their interventions to address a wide range of development challenges, including education, healthcare, agriculture, livelihoods, infrastructure, and advocacy for social justice and human rights.

While ADDS in Nigeria are committed to addressing the practical needs of communities, they also integrate faith-based components into their programs. This

may include spiritual counseling, values education, and promoting principles of justice, peace, and reconciliation.

In summary, the origin of ADDS in Nigeria reflects the Anglican Church's holistic approach to mission and ministry, which seeks to address the spiritual, social, and developmental dimensions of human life. Through their work, ADDS contribute to the well-being and empowerment of individuals and communities across Nigeria. The Anglican Diocesan Development Services (ADDS) in Nigeria are actively involved in various initiatives aimed at promoting social justice across the country. ADDS often engage in advocacy efforts to promote and protect human rights, including religious freedom, freedom of expression, and the rights of marginalized and vulnerable groups. They speak out against injustice, discrimination, and violations of human rights, working to raise awareness and mobilize support for the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms.

In regions affected by ethnic and religious conflicts, ADDS play a crucial role in peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts. They facilitate dialogue between conflicting parties, promote understanding and tolerance among different communities, and work to address the root causes of conflict to foster sustainable peace and stability. ADDS may provide legal aid and support services to individuals and communities facing injustice, discrimination, or violations of their rights. They offer guidance,

representation, and advocacy to help people navigate the legal system and seek redress for grievances and injustices they have experienced.

ADDS empower communities to advocate for their rights and participate actively in decision-making processes that affect their lives. They facilitate community mobilization, capacity building, and leadership development initiatives to empower individuals and communities to assert their rights and demand accountability from government and other institutions. ADDS promote gender equality and women's rights by addressing issues such as gender-based violence, discrimination, and unequal access to resources and opportunities. They support programs and initiatives that empower women economically, socially, and politically, and work to challenge cultural and societal norms that perpetuate gender inequality and injustice. ADDS address the structural causes of poverty and inequality by implementing development programs and initiatives aimed at improving livelihoods, promoting economic empowerment, and enhancing access to essential services such as education, healthcare, and clean water.

Overall, the involvement of ADDS in social justice initiatives in Nigeria reflects their commitment to the principles of fairness, equity, and human dignity. By advocating for the rights of marginalized and vulnerable groups, promoting peace and reconciliation,

and empowering communities to address injustice and inequality, ADDS contribute to building a more just, inclusive, and equitable society in Nigeria.

3.4 Christian Ethics, Morality and Social Justice

Christian ethics, morality, and social justice are intertwined concepts deeply rooted in the teachings and principles of Christianity.

Christian Ethics:

Christian ethics refer to the moral principles and guidelines derived from the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Bible. It encompasses the ethical standards and values that Christians strive to uphold in their personal lives, relationships, and interactions with society. Central to Christian ethics are principles such as love, compassion, honesty, forgiveness, humility, and justice.

Christian ethics is grounded in the belief that human beings are created in the image of God and are called to reflect God's character in their lives. It involves discerning moral decisions based on biblical teachings, the life of Jesus Christ, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Christian ethics emphasize virtues such as love, compassion, honesty, integrity, humility, and selflessness. The Ten Commandments, the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, and the ethical principles found throughout the

Bible serve as foundational sources for Christian ethical reflection and decision-making.

Morality:

Morality within Christianity is based on the belief in God's absolute standards of right and wrong as revealed in the Bible. It involves discerning and choosing actions that align with God's will and are consistent with the teachings of Jesus Christ. Christians believe in the importance of moral virtues and strive to live virtuous lives guided by the Holy Spirit.

Morality in Christianity is based on the understanding of God as the ultimate source of moral authority and the giver of moral law. The moral teachings of Christianity emphasize the importance of obedience to God's commandments, love for God and neighbor, and the pursuit of righteousness.

Christians believe in the inherent dignity of every human being, which informs their moral obligations to treat others with respect, dignity, and compassion. Moral discernment in Christ

ianity involves prayer, reflection on scripture, consultation with religious authorities, and consideration of the teachings of the Church.

Social Justice:

Social justice is a central theme in Christianity that emphasizes the fair and equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, and rights within society. It involves advocating for the dignity, equality, and well-being of all individuals, especially the marginalized, oppressed, and vulnerable. Christians are called to address systemic injustices, poverty, discrimination, and exploitation while promoting peace, reconciliation, and solidarity.

Social justice within Christianity is rooted in the biblical mandate to seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8). It involves addressing systemic injustices, inequality, oppression, and poverty while advocating for the rights and dignity of all individuals, particularly the marginalized and vulnerable.

Social justice in Christianity is not merely about charity or individual acts of kindness but also about challenging unjust structures and systems that perpetuate inequality and exploitation. Christians are called to embody the principles of social justice through acts of compassion, advocacy, solidarity, and efforts to promote systemic change and reconciliation in society.

In essence, Christian ethics, morality, and social justice are integral components of the Christian faith that guide believers in living virtuous lives, loving their neighbors, and working towards the establishment of God's kingdom of justice, peace, and righteousness on earth.

Christian ethics, morality, and social justice are interconnected aspects of the Christian faith that guide believers in living morally upright lives and actively working towards a more just and compassionate society, reflecting the values and teachings of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF THE CHURCH'S INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIAL JUSTICE IN NIGERIA

The Church's involvement in social justice in Nigeria can offer hope, community support, and moral guidance to address issues such as poverty, corruption, and inequality. However, challenges like political interference, resource constraints, and cultural resistance may hinder its impact. Balancing these factors with a commitment to advocacy, empowerment, and education can help the Church make a meaningful difference in promoting social justice in Nigeria. The involvement of the Church in social justice in Nigeria has both prospects and challenges. On one hand, the Church has the potential to bring about positive change and address societal issues. However, there are also challenges such as navigating political influences and ensuring inclusivity in their efforts. It's an ongoing process, but important for creating a more just society (Ogunleye Oluwafunmilayo, 2012).

4.1 Prospects

The term "prospect" typically refers to the possibility or likelihood of something happening in the future. It can also denote the potential for success or positive outcomes associated with a particular situation, endeavor, or opportunity.

In the context of discussing the prospects of the Church's involvement in social justice in Nigeria, "prospect" refers to the potential opportunities, benefits, and positive outcomes that could arise from the Church's engagement in addressing social justice issues within Nigerian society. It encompasses the potential impact, effectiveness, and contributions that the Church could make toward promoting justice, equality, and social well-being. The prospects of the Church's involvement in social justice in Nigeria are significant given its historical and cultural influence. Here are some key points:

Moral Authority: The Church holds significant moral authority in Nigerian society, any nation, that places no value on moral standards is like a body without a soul, which can be leveraged to advocate for social justice issues such as poverty alleviation, human rights, and equality.

The Church enjoys significant moral authority and influence in Nigerian society, with millions of adherents looking to religious leaders for guidance and direction. This moral authority positions the Church as a powerful advocate for social justice, capable of mobilizing communities and shaping public opinion on critical issues such as poverty, corruption, and human rights abuses.

Grassroots Presence:

The Church has a widespread grassroots presence across Nigeria, with churches and religious organizations operating at the community level. This grassroots network provides the Church with a platform to address local issues and mobilize support for social justice initiatives, fostering community engagement and empowerment.

Advocacy and Awareness:

Churches in Nigeria often engage in advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns to highlight social injustices and advocate for policy reforms. Through sermons, publications, and public statements, religious leaders raise awareness about issues such as poverty, inequality, and corruption, mobilizing public support for meaningful change.

Social Services and Welfare Programs:

Many churches in Nigeria are actively involved in providing social services and welfare programs to vulnerable populations, including the poor, the sick, and the marginalized. These initiatives, such as education, healthcare, and poverty alleviation programs, address immediate needs while also addressing underlying systemic injustices.

Community Outreach: Churches often have extensive community outreach programs that provide social services such as healthcare, education, and disaster relief, which can directly impact marginalized communities.

Political Engagement: The Church can play a role in advocating for policy changes that promote social justice and hold government officials accountable for addressing issues such as corruption, inequality, and injustice.

Collaboration with NGOs and Civil Society: Churches can collaborate with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society groups to amplify their impact and reach a broader audience in addressing social justice concerns.

Empowerment and Education: Churches can empower individuals and communities through educational programs, vocational training, and capacity-building initiatives, enabling them to advocate for their rights and improve their socio-economic status.

Mobilization of Resources: Churches in Nigeria often have vast resources, including financial assets, human capital, and infrastructure, which can be mobilized to support social justice initiatives. These resources can fund programs for poverty alleviation, education, healthcare, and community development.

Cultural Influence: Nigeria is a deeply religious society, with Christianity being one of the dominant religions. The Church's cultural influence allows it to reach a wide

audience and shape public opinion on social justice issues. Its messages resonate deeply within communities, influencing attitudes and behaviors towards social justice causes.

Empowerment of Marginalized Groups: The Church has historically been a champion for the rights and dignity of marginalized groups, including women, children, the poor, and ethnic minorities. Through empowerment programs, advocacy, and legal aid services, the Church can empower these groups to assert their rights and challenge systemic injustices.

Interfaith Collaboration: Nigeria is a religiously diverse country, with a significant Muslim population alongside Christians and other religious groups. Interfaith collaboration between Christian and Muslim organizations can amplify the impact of social justice initiatives and promote greater tolerance and understanding across religious divides.

Ethical Leadership: Churches can provide ethical leadership and moral guidance on social justice issues, holding government institutions, corporations, and individuals accountable for their actions. By advocating for transparency, accountability, and ethical governance, the Church can help combat corruption and promote social equity.

Youth Engagement: With a large youth population in Nigeria, the Church has the opportunity to engage and mobilize young people as agents of social change. Youth-oriented programs on social justice education, activism, and community service can inspire the next generation to become advocates for justice and equality.

By harnessing these prospects and actively engaging in social justice efforts, the Church in Nigeria can contribute significantly to addressing systemic injustices, promoting human dignity, and fostering a more equitable society.

Overall, the Church's involvement in social justice in Nigeria holds promise for fostering positive change and advancing the well-being of marginalized populations (Ogunleye Oluwafunmilayo, 2012).

4.2 Challenges

The term "challenges" refers to difficulties, obstacles, or problems that arise in various contexts, which can impede progress, success, or achievement of goals. Challenges can be encountered in personal, professional, academic, or societal endeavors, and they require effort, skill, and resilience to overcome, in the context of the church's involvement in social justice in Nigeria, "challenges" refer to the various obstacles, difficulties, and complexities that the church encounters in its efforts to advocate for and address social justice issues within Nigerian society. They can range from minor

hurdles to significant barriers and may arise from internal or external factors, including limitations in resources, lack of knowledge or expertise, opposition from others, or unforeseen circumstances. Successfully addressing challenges often involves problem-solving, adaptability, perseverance, and sometimes collaboration with others (Emmanuel Ojo, 2014). Some of these challenges include:

Corruption: Nigeria struggles with pervasive corruption at various levels of society, including within government institutions, law enforcement agencies, and even religious organizations. Corruption undermines the rule of law, fosters inequality, and diminishes trust in institutions. The Church's efforts to promote social justice can be hampered by corruption, as resources may be diverted, and justice may be compromised.

Political Interference: Nigeria's political landscape is often marked by power struggles and the manipulation of social issues for political gain. Political leaders may seek to co-opt or suppress the Church's involvement in social justice initiatives, viewing them as threats to their authority or interests. This interference can undermine the autonomy and effectiveness of the Church's advocacy efforts.

Ethnic and Religious Divides: Nigeria is ethnically and religiously diverse, with deep-seated tensions and conflicts between different groups. These divides can complicate efforts to promote social justice, as mistrust and animosity may hinder

collaboration and solidarity. The Church must navigate sensitivities related to ethnicity and religion while advocating for inclusive social justice policies and programs.

Limited Resources: Many churches in Nigeria operate with limited financial, human, and infrastructural resources. This constrains their ability to address the multifaceted challenges of social injustice, including poverty, inequality, and human rights abuses. The scarcity of resources may limit the scale and impact of the Church's interventions, particularly in marginalized or remote communities.

Security Concerns: Nigeria faces security challenges, including terrorism, insurgency, communal violence, and criminal activities. In regions affected by insecurity, the Church's involvement in social justice initiatives can be hindered by safety concerns for clergy and congregants. Threats to personal safety and property may deter active participation in advocacy and community mobilization efforts.

Cultural Barriers: Nigeria's cultural landscape is rich and diverse, encompassing a myriad of traditions, beliefs, and practices. However, some cultural norms perpetuate social injustices, including gender inequality, discrimination against marginalized groups, and harmful traditional practices. Challenging these entrenched norms while respecting cultural sensitivities requires nuanced approaches and sustained dialogue within communities.

Lack of Awareness and Education: Many Nigerians lack awareness of their rights, legal protections, and avenues for seeking redress against social injustices. Limited access to education and information exacerbates vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. The Church plays a crucial role in raising awareness, empowering individuals, and advocating for policies that promote social justice and human rights.

The Church's involvement in social justice in Nigeria holds promising prospects for promoting equity, fairness, and human dignity. However, it also faces significant challenges, including political interference, corruption, sectarianism, and resource constraints, which impede its effectiveness. Overcoming these challenges requires sustained commitment from religious leaders and organizations, as well as collaboration with civil society, government institutions, and other stakeholders. Despite the obstacles, the Church remains a vital agent of change in Nigeria, advocating for social justice and promoting the common good in pursuit of a more just and equitable society (Okafor Gabriel, 2017). The Church must adopt strategies that prioritize collaboration, grassroots engagement, capacity-building, and advocacy for systemic change. By working in partnership with civil society organizations, government agencies, and international partners, the Church can leverage collective expertise and resources to address the root causes of social injustices and promote sustainable development and human flourishing in Nigeria.

CHAPTER FIVE

EVALUATION, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Evaluation

The study of Christianity and social justice in Nigeria reveals both the significant contributions of the Church to promoting equity and fairness and the challenges it faces in achieving meaningful social change. The Church's involvement in social justice initiatives, including advocacy, awareness-raising, and social welfare programs, demonstrates its commitment to addressing systemic injustices and improving the lives of the marginalized and oppressed. However, the study also highlights the limitations and obstacles that hinder the Church's effectiveness, such as political interference, corruption, sectarianism, and resource constraints.

5.2 Recommendations

Strengthen Accountability and Transparency:

Church leaders and organizations should prioritize accountability and transparency in their activities, ensuring that resources are used efficiently and effectively to promote social justice. Establishing mechanisms for oversight and reporting can help build public trust and confidence in the Church's efforts.

Foster Interfaith Collaboration:

Promoting interfaith collaboration and dialogue is essential for overcoming sectarian divisions and fostering unity in addressing social justice issues. Churches should work closely with mosques, traditional religious leaders, and civil society organizations to build bridges of understanding and cooperation across religious lines.

Advocate for Policy Reforms:

The Church should engage more actively in advocacy for policy reforms aimed at addressing root causes of social injustice, such as poverty, inequality, and corruption. By advocating for laws and policies that promote human rights, economic empowerment, and social inclusion, the Church can help create an enabling environment for sustainable development and social change.

Empower Grassroots Initiatives:

Supporting grassroots initiatives and community-based organizations is critical for ensuring that social justice efforts are responsive to local needs and realities. The Church should invest in capacity-building, training, and resource mobilization for community-led projects that address poverty, healthcare, education, and other social challenges.

5.3 Conclusion

The study of Christianity and social justice in Nigeria underscores the vital role of the Church in advocating for equity, fairness, and human dignity. Despite facing numerous challenges, including political interference, corruption, and resource constraints, the Church remains a potent force for social change, mobilizing communities and advocating for policy reforms to address systemic injustices. By strengthening accountability, fostering interfaith collaboration, advocating for policy reforms, and empowering grassroots initiatives, the Church can enhance its impact and contribute to building a more just and equitable society in Nigeria.

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