

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIAN  
FESTIVALS ON PASTORS' FINANCIAL AND  
SPIRITUAL LIVES IN ASSEMBLIES OF GOD, OGUN  
STATE, NIGERIA, 2009-2011**

**BY**

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## CERTIFICATION

I certify that this dissertation was carried out by OYENIRAN, Olusola Charles under my supervision in the Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan, in partial fulfilment of the requirement of the Doctor of Philosophy in Religious Studies.

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to the glory of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

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## ABSTRACT

The Assemblies of God (AG) observes Christian festivals, like most other churches, but the economic and religious implications of these festivals for AG's pastors differ from these other churches. Existing literature on AG's activities during these festivals have focused on their mode of conduct without adequate attention paid to their economic and religious effects on AG's clergy. This study, therefore, assessed Christian festivals observed by AG, with a view to determining their economic and religious effects on its pastors in Ogun State, Nigeria.

The study was premised on Emile Durkheim's functionalist theory, which emphasises the unifying role of religion in making members of the society affirm their common beliefs and values. Sixty parishes were purposively selected from the three AG's Districts in Ogun State: Ijebu, Abeokuta and Sango Districts. Quantitative data were obtained through structured interviews of 30 pastors and 40 members, including parishes and Districts' Secretaries. Three hundred copies of a questionnaire were administered to ordained pastors, licentiates, exhorters and deacons. Data were subjected to qualitative analysis and percentages.

Assemblies of God observed Christmas, Easter and Harvest Thanksgiving festivals. These had financial and spiritual effects on the clergy. Financially, Christmas celebrations often led to the reduction in the salaries of AG's pastors whose salaries were determined by the income of the church. Given that cultural ties necessitated mass traveling of members to their hometowns during Christmas, about 32% of its 16,272 members in Ogun State who were non-natives were not available for the celebrations in 2009-2011. This reduced the church's income obtained through tithes, which constituted the parishes' primary economic strength. Consequently, the average salary of pastors dropped from N20, 000.00 to about N12, 000.00. Similarly, the closure of all parishes on Easter Sunday during a four-day joint Easter retreat accounted for a significant decrease in pastors' salaries in 86.7% of the parishes investigated where salaries dropped to about N14,500.00. Conversely, the Harvest Thanksgiving proceeds resulted in economic boom, whereby an average of N23, 000 was received by each pastor. Spiritually, 61.7% of the pastors affirmed that the 2010 Christmas' evangelistic outreach invigorated their soul winning passion, and the spiritual calisthenics aura of the 2011 Easter retreat revived 55.0% of them to better prayer and pastoral commitment for their members. Likewise, 48.3% affirmed that the 2011 Harvest Thanksgiving's proceeds enabled them to actively demonstrate pure religion through cash assistance to 49 AG widows. Respondents constituting 91.6% advocated for a review of AG's pastors' remuneration policy, 81.6% suggested intensive evangelization of the natives, 88.3% agreed to symbiotic inclusion of the non-AG needy in Harvest Thanksgiving's beneficiaries, while 84.2% opined that subsequent Easter retreat should end before Easter Sunday.

Christmas and Easter festivals had negative financial impacts on the pastors of the Assemblies of God who enjoyed some monetary benefits only during thanksgiving celebrations and spiritual renewal during the Easter. There is, therefore, the need for a review of the remuneration policy of the church in order to motivate the pastors for a more committed service to the church.

**Key words:** Christian festivals, Assemblies of God's pastors, Emile Durkheim's functionalist Theory, Pastors' remuneration.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the study

Some Christian denominations and individuals do not attach serious importance to Christian festivals, and as such, do not observe them for various reasons. This disenchantment disposition about Christian festivals replete some Scholars works; for instance, David Pack<sup>1</sup> asserts that the true origin of Christmas could be traced to pagan culture, and that all the various customs associated with it, such as Gift-giving, Father Christmas, Christmas light, Christmas tree, Music and Carol, among others, took their root from Roman customs that have no bearing with the Christian faith. He opines that Christ is never present in the celebration tagged “Christmas” as assumed by its celebrants; therefore, he concludes that Christmas should not be celebrated by Christians.

Scholars also indicated that in 245A.D, Origen<sup>2</sup> of Alexander drew reference from Leviticus 12: 1-8, to discourage Christians from designating a day to commemorate the birth of Jesus. According to him, going by the Bible records, it is only sinners who celebrated their birthdays and that such occasions resulted in loss of lives. These were Pharaoh, who hanged his Chief Baker (Genesis 40: 20-22), and Herod, who beheaded John the Baptist (Mark 6:21-27). Job and Jeremiah were also said to have cursed their days of birth (Job 3:1- 16, Jeremiah 20:14-15). To further strengthen their position of non-observance of Christmas, they indicated that in 303 A.D, Arnobius<sup>3</sup> interpreted the idea of celebrating the birthday of gods as ridiculous<sup>4</sup>. In addition to the above, Christmas is said to be commercialized and secularized in the contemporary time, making it to lose its real significance. Therefore, it is regarded as a strategy employed by businessmen and businesswomen, who promote it vigorously, purposely to use it as a means to increase their sales and maximize their profit. Hence, the argument indicates that Christmas unique features are new dresses and suits, new shoes and the likes<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> D. C. Pack. 2009. The true origin of Christmas. “Retrieved June 18, 2012, from [http. // www. Christmas. Com](http://www.Christmas.Com)”.

<sup>2</sup> Origen. “Levit, Hom. Viii, Migne P. G., xii, 495. “Retrieved June 29, 2013.”

<sup>3</sup> G. McCracken. Arnobius of Sicca: the case Against the Pagan, 2: 83 and G. Brunner (1936) “Arnobius eine zuege gegen weilinachtsfest? JLW 13, 178-181.

<sup>4</sup> D.C. Pack. The true origin of Christmas.

<sup>5</sup> B. Ben. The history of Christmas. Retrieved August 23, 2012, from [http:// www.benbest.com// history/xmas.htm](http://www.benbest.com/history/xmas.htm).

Coming from the same premise, Venerable Bede<sup>6</sup> indicates that Easter derives its name from Eastre, an Anglo-Saxon name of a Teutonic goddess of spring and fertility which by implication means that it is by nature, a pagan pervert to which Christians should distance themselves. Equally, the Easter tradition is regarded as a traditional Catholic celebration beset with drive for materialism, not sanctioned in the Bible for Christians' participation and therefore, becomes the tradition of men.

With regards to Harvest Thanksgiving, the God's Kingdom Society (GKS), for instance, argues that the festival is not a Christian institution, and as such, Christians are not commanded to celebrate it.<sup>7</sup> In addition to this, the Church avers that Jesus only parabolically referred to Harvest to teach the truth about the gathering of God's people and never meant that it should be conducted in form of annual service with the traces of unjust commercialization, profiteering, display of affluence, deprivation of the poor members, gambling and money merchandize found in contemporary Christendom during Harvest Thanksgiving festival.<sup>8</sup> It adds further that the above moral dispositions portray transgression of Christian principles, like moderation, justice and impartiality vouch in the Christian ethics, hence, observance of Harvest Thanksgiving with these propensities should be discouraged by Christians. Accordingly, Christians should concern themselves not with material things but with things that have to do with salvation of the righteous in the last days of the present evil world that is now running with terrific speed to its destruction.<sup>9</sup>

Among the Nigeria Pentecostal churches, reference could be made of Redeemed Christian Church, whose position of non-observance of Harvest Thanksgiving is clearly indicated in its policy statement. It states that "The Redeemed Christian Church of God must not copy other churches in the world .especially in their method of fund raising through harvest, e.t.c."<sup>10</sup>

Unlike the above disenchanted pontificated view which attaches no serious importance to Christian festivals and opposes their observance in a way that seems to suggest that those observing them are neither spiritual, nor with sound understanding of the Bible teachings, but are derailing from genuine Christianity, Assemblies of God, a

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<sup>6</sup> "Retrieved July 2, 2011, from [http:// www.originofeaster.com](http://www.originofeaster.com)"

<sup>7</sup> G.K.S. Worldwide. Thy will be done oh Jehovah. "Retrieved June 6, 2013, from [http:// www.Christianfestivals/html](http://www.Christianfestivals/html)."

<sup>8</sup> G.K.S. Worldwide. Thy will be done oh Jehovah.

<sup>9</sup> G.K.S. Worldwide. Thy will be done oh Jehovah.

<sup>10</sup> Ordained Ministers Handbook in the Redeemed Christian Church of God, September, 2013, 5,6.

classical Pentecostal Church, attaches great importance to them and approves their moral observance. Thus, ethically speaking, the debate of whether or not it is morally appropriate to observe Christian festivals polarizes the Christian church.

The interest of Assemblies of God in Christian festivals is not by nature esoteric, but all embracing in which all its pastors and members participate actively and enthusiastically. Every year, all AG's pastors and members participate in three of such festivals, (Christmas, Harvest Thanksgiving and Easter) with great interest and enthusiasm, suggesting that they are being impacted through them, which we believe would not have been the case, if otherwise. This intense enthusiastic interest of AG in Christian festivals forms the basis of this work. It aims at assessing how these phenomena impact its pastors in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Added to the above, the common assumption among writers is that pastors benefit economically and religiously during Christian festivals, thereby giving the issue within the matrix of pastoral profession an idyllic picture. As much as we do not try to disprove this assertion through subjectivism, we rather, try to see issues involved objectively with a panoramic view, to know the validity of such claim. Is it true in all cases, regardless of prevailing circumstances that pastors benefit, both economically and religiously during Christian festivals? Does every pastor look forward to the coming of each Christian festival annually with great enthusiasm and interest? Is it true that the period of each Christian festival generates to each pastor an experience to remember for good, especially in terms of financial wellbeing? Or are there certain factors that could invalidate the above assertion? If there are such possible factors, what are they? Our determination to verify the truthfulness or otherwise, of the above claim and the discovery of any factor(s) that could invalidate it where possible, prompted this empirical study, so as to determine the economic and religious effects of Christian festivals on AG's pastors in Ogun State, Nigeria.

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

The Assemblies of God (AG) observes Christian festivals, like most other churches, but the economic and religious implications of these festivals for AG's pastors differ from these other churches. Existing literature on AG's activities during

these festivals have focus on their necessity<sup>11</sup>, scriptural basis<sup>12</sup>, eschatological implications<sup>13</sup>, mode of conduct and the principles to follow to guarantee their moral approval<sup>14</sup>, without adequate attention paid to their economic and religious effects on AG's clergy. In other words, what has not received significant attention in scholarship is the study of the interconnectivity between Christian festivals and the economic and religious dispositions of AG's pastors, especially in Ogun State, Nigeria. The fact that the interconnectivity between the conduct of Christian festivals and the economic and religious dispositions of AG's pastors has not been practically tested and addressed generates an overt vacuum in scholarship, which is what this study aims at addressing. This study, therefore, unlike the previous works, assessed the three Christian festivals observed by AG; which are Christmas, Easter and Harvest Thanksgiving, with the view to determine their economic and religious effects on its pastors in Ogun State, Nigeria.

In order to arrive at the above aim, certain pertinent questions came to our minds. For instance, we ask, if the disenchantment of some denominations and individuals to the observance of these festivals is due to the problems like unjust commercialization, profiteering, display of affluence, deprivation of the poor members, gambling and money merchandize found in contemporary Christendom during Christian festivals., how far do the AG's pastors stay clear from such negative propensities in the course of their observance? Are they at alert of the need to avoid a hodgepodge of strange and weird practices perpetrated in the name of Christ during such festivals? Do the AG's pastors vouch related Biblical rubric to guide their actions during such festivals so that any economic benefits they derived might be within the context of the approval of related Christian moral principles?

Furthermore, of interest to us is whether or not the selected festivals are being maximized by AG's pastors in terms of the impact they are likely to generate under their auspices. For instance, if during the conduct of these festivals there is possibility of AG's pastors showing benevolence to the poor, widows, the sick, orphans, prisoners, etc. one may ask, "To what extent are AG's pastors maximizing this possibility, so that through them the phenomena's impact might not be underutilized, but maximized to generate full benefits". Are the AG's pastors in the first place

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<sup>11</sup> O. T. Adebisi. 2002. *Thanksgiving: a necessity*. Ibadan: Topmost Industry Printers. 22.

<sup>12</sup> E. Oboh. 2004. *Discover the secret of divine prosperity*, Lagos: Faith Realm Publishers. 25.

<sup>13</sup> T.N. Nwokoro, 1999. *Prosperity: God's desire for his children*. Kogi: 78, 79.

<sup>14</sup> T.A. Ogunsanya. 2000. *The place of money in the worship of God*. Lagos: Bible Pattern Publishers. 47-50.

actively involved in such services during the festivals? If not involved, or if not actively involved, what factor(s) constitute(s) this apathetic stance, and can we pass this disposition for moral approval or not? If morally disapproved, what panacea is needed to correct this problem, so that the impact generated through the selected Christian festivals might be maximized on the people that formed our research interest? The above points form part of the issues of interest as we assess the impact of the selected festivals, and determine their economic and religious effects on AG's pastors in Ogun State, Nigeria.

### 1.3 Purpose of the study

The research work assessed three selected Christian festivals (Christmas, Easter and Harvest Thanksgiving) observed by Assemblies of God, Nigeria, with the primary aim of discovering the interface between their observance and the economic and religious wellbeing of its pastors in Ogun State. To facilitate the above major objective, the following sub-objectives were also pursued:

1. To know if there is moral basis, justification or approval for Assemblies of God's observance of the selected Christian festivals
2. To know whether or not, AG's pastors articulate relevant moral principles while observing such festivals
3. To determine both the economic and religious effects of these festivals on AG's pastors.
4. To investigate if there are likely identified adverse economic and religious effects of these festivals on the above pastors who formed our research target, including factors(s) that may be responsible for such.
5. To discover, and suggest ways in which such likely adverse economic and religious effects could be curbed, so as to increase and sustain the positive benefits of the festivals on the affected Assemblies of God's pastors.

Our presupposition is that with this study, valid understanding could be provided to the above through empirical, testable ideas within the framework of Emile Durkheim's theory of functionalism.

### 1.4 Scope of the study

A festival is a day or time of the year when people celebrate some special events, often a religious event. As such, almost all religions of the world have their unique and specific festivals. As much as this is true, this work is not purposed to

research on festivals of all religions, but is confined within the orbit of Christian festivals.

Although most Christian denominations observe one form of Christian festivals or the other, this work treats the phenomena within what obtains in Assemblies of God, Nigeria. Furthermore, while all Assemblies of God's Districts and Areas observe Christian festivals; our work is restricted to the confine of its parishes in Ogun State, Nigeria. To further restrict our scope, sixty AG's parishes were purposively selected in Abeokuta, Sango, Sagamu and Ijebu-Ode in Ogun State, based on the concentration of the church in the areas. The rationale for choosing the study area is that the stratum represents the three AG's Districts in Ogun State, Nigeria, and the membership composition is predominantly non-natives. This makes the area to represent a model for enquiry not only in determining what happens in other AG's Districts during Christian festivals, but primarily as the case is in those Districts where the members who are natives are minimal. Moreover, we have examined only three of the Christian festivals observed by AG, which are Christmas, Easter and Harvest Thanksgiving. Similarly, the assessment has been confined within the sphere of the economic and religious effects of the selected festivals on our people of research interest.

### **1.5 Significance of the study**

The research has intrinsic benefits. It reveals the economic and religious effects of Christian festivals on Assemblies of God's pastors in Ogun State, and links that knowledge and understanding to larger issues of spiritual, moral, economic, socio and psychological prosperity and development of each, and all pastors and members of AG, including their Non-AG neighbours in Ogun State, Nigeria. The work further serves as a means to assist one not to underplay the interface between Christian festivals and the economic and religious wellbeing of pastors during such occasions. Previous works have premised idyllic scenario of Christian festivals, whereby, for example, the interconnectivity between these festivals and the remuneration policy of pastors is taken for granted, but this research helps in filling such gap by providing an objective and panoramic information based on empirical and testable ideas within the context of what practically obtains, especially in AG, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Furthermore, it helps to fill the gap of non-existence of work on assessment of the impact of Christian festivals in Ogun State, with particular reference to the pastors.

The way Christian festivals affect the economic and religious dispositions of pastors, especially in Assemblies of God in the State appears to be under-researched and also less reported. In spite of the obvious possible socio, economic, religious and psychological implications of this issue, there have not been dependable policies and guidelines to procure reliable solutions. The findings of this study will invariably assist religious leaders and other relevant stakeholders in developing and implementing appropriate steps and actions geared towards arresting possible negative economic and religious implications of Christian festivals on their vulnerable and susceptible pastors. On the other hand, the study will also provide such affected pastors various coping strategies and steps to be taken to reduce such negative implications of Christian festivals on them. In the same vein, it will provide a source from which future works on Christian festivals that could contribute to knowledge may draw relevant information and recommendations.

#### **1.6 Limitations to the study**

The fieldwork activities of the study were carried out between 2009 and 2011. Three research assistants were recruited and trained for the study. The major constraints of the study were two; one, some pastors and church leaders were not disposed to giving the adequate and accurate statistical data, especially such that bother around their financial status and of their churches' income. They were thinking that if they did they would be divulging information that should be kept confidential. The second constraint bothered on complaints by some of the respondents about the length of the questionnaire. Thus, some of them returned the instrument uncompleted. Some in fact, refused to return theirs. The strains encountered in search for the relevant information almost turned a mirage. The task of reaching the various people, agencies and even obtaining the correct documents was more or less a tortuous one.

With the above limitations, not-withstanding, we used certain conscious efforts to reduce their effects on the outcome of this work. As such, we were resolute in our focus and undaunted over every repulsive attitude of some of the respondents. We were patient with those that were not fast in responding to questions during oral interview. In addition, we made use of on the spot collection of most of the copies of the questionnaire, and promised church leaders of confidentiality in some sensitive statistical data obtained.



## **1.7 Research Methodology**

### **1.7.1 Historical method**

We employed the historical method, where we systematically and objectively located, evaluated and synthesized evidences in order to establish facts and draw conclusion concerning past events. Our use of this method proves relevant because Christian festivals have historical roots, some of which we traced to the Old Testament era. The etymological knowledge of this becomes indispensable as one tries to analyse issues generating in the contemporary Christian festivals. In this bid, we made use of documents, which included a wide range of written and print materials recorded for the purpose of transmitting historical information on the origin, nature and significance of Christian festivals. In the same vein, through this method, we explored into historical documentations on Assemblies of God, with particular reference to its work in Ogun State, Nigeria.

### **1.7.2 Focus group**

We employed focus group method, in which small group of people were brought together in four towns; Sango, Abeokuta, Ijebu-Ode and Sagamu, for in-depth discussions on the impact of Christian festivals on pastors in Assemblies of God, Ogun State. A set of questions relevant to our work, especially as to how the selected Christian festivals affect the economic and religious dispositions of AG's pastors in Ogun State was designed with a moderator taking notes and guiding the discussion process. This afforded us a vantage point, whereby we had panoramic contributions, unlike what obtained in one to one interview, for with it, we were able to see things from different points, based on the various perspectives of the discussants. Four Focus Group Discussion (FGD) sessions were organized with pastors and Deacons. A total of 12 pastors and 20 Deacons participated during the FGD sessions.

### **1.7.3 Survey method**

The use of this method afforded us opportunity to gather information about a given population from our selected sample, whereby the entire population in question was represented. With this method, we utilized three kinds of survey techniques for our enquiries, which are participant observation, personal interview and questionnaire.



### 1.7.3.1 Participant observation

With this method, we were involved in a deliberate search for truth. Participant observation is a system of data collection whereby the researcher joins the everyday routine of those he wishes to study<sup>15</sup>. We used the method in order to avoid limitations that could come through self-report. Sechrest, for example, has argued that social attitudes, such as prejudice, should be studied by means of naturalistic observation, since self-reports of these attitudes are often biased by the set to give a socially desirable response<sup>16</sup>. To use this method, we consciously observed and participated in each of the festivals in the towns under investigation.

We participated in the Easter retreat of 2009, 2010 and 2011 conducted in Ijebu, Sango and Abeokuta Districts of AG respectively. This afforded us the opportunity to interact with the pastors, whereby we were able to feel their impulse on certain economic and religious issues that generated in the course of the programme. As to the Harvest Thanksgiving, we employed the services of research assistants to observe and gather relevant information in 2011 in eight parishes, which are Iperu 1, Ayegbami Sagamu, Ondo road, G.R.A. in Ijebu District; Kuto and Ibara in Abeokuta District; and Sango 1 and Alakuko in Sango District.

### 1.7.3.2 Interview method

We used the In-depth interview in gathering relevant information from the respondents. We asked specific and carefully worded questions to elicit information aimed at knowing how familiar each interviewee was with the impact of the selected Christian festivals on the pastors in Assemblies of God, Ogun State. Specifically, we tried to know his or her view about the economic and religious effects of such festivals on AG's pastors in Ogun State, and the bearing of this on the moral, religious, psychological, social, economic wellbeing of the pastors, members and their non-AG neighbours.

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<sup>15</sup> M. Haralambos and R. Herald. 1980. *Sociology: themes and perspectives*. Slough: University Tutorial Ltd, 502.

<sup>16</sup> I. Sechrest. 1966. Naturalistic methods in the study of social Attitudes. A paper presented at PPA Annual convention.

Coley suggests that in order to get the best from interview, we need a conducive environment, coupled with the construction of our questions in a way that will induce ease in the respondents and give room for conversational flow<sup>17</sup>. To this suggestion, we carefully adhered. We were very attentive and listened with maximum concentration, to know when the interviewee needed more explanation over his or her responses, or when to repeat a question when he could not decode correctly.

In the In-depth interviews, the studied populations were male and female pastors and deacons across the three AG Districts in Ogun State. In all, 70 people were interviewed at this level (30 pastors and 40 Deacons). It is interesting to note that 10 of the respondents for the In-depth interviews were pastors who had their income negatively affected during Christmas and Easter festivals and they were able to share their experiences about the theme of the study.

We purposively selected thirty pastors (ten each from Sango, Abeokuta and Ijebu Districts), comprising the Ordained, Licentiates and Exhorters. Forty members, who were mainly deacons, were also interviewed. The age range of the interviewees is between 20-60 years. Our belief is that these sets of people are matured enough and able to use their consciences to discuss and assess issues that generate during Christian festivals within the context of their economic and religious implications on the pastors, especially in AG Ogun State. The information we got has been reported in honest manner, without attempting to subvert the views of the informants to suit our purpose. This step, according to Edel, is phenomenological description<sup>18</sup>. The interview was conducted orally, in order to help respondents and by so doing encourage them to express their thoughts freely.

Our purpose of using interview method was to assist the uneducated or semi-literate who could not respond to structured questions, and those who perceived structured questions as boring in nature.

The respondents for the In-depth interviews and FGDs were selected using purposive sampling method. Thus, respondents were selected on the basis that they are relevant and available for the study.

### 1.7.3.3 Questionnaire

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<sup>17</sup> M. Coley. 2004. *Modern techniques of research in education*. Edinburgh: Meal and co ltd. 50.

<sup>18</sup> A. Edel. 1963. *Methods in ethical theory*. London: Routhledge and Kagan Paul. 71.

Three hundred copies of questionnaire were randomly administered to sixty parishes investigated in the three AG's Districts within the State to elicit information from both the pastors and laity on how the selected Christian festivals affect AG's pastors economically and religiously. This was used primarily to solicit information from those who wanted to be anonymous, and those who did not have time to spare for personal interview, so that they can contribute, by supplying relevant information at their convenient time. They were, however, given specific time within which to return the copies, so as not to leave their responses open ended. The schedule of the questions contains those that the respondents were able to answer with honesty and accuracy. Most of the copies were administered through personal contact, especially during visits to local parishes within each town investigated. This increased the chance of completed responses and also reduced that of non-return of it. Two hundred and seventy three copies, which constituted 91% were retrieved and analysed. The data collected were subjected to qualitative analysis and percentages. The tables were interpreted for the purpose of supporting the ideas and claims represented in the work. With this we were able to draw our conclusions.

We have combined various methods above to harness the positive values or advantages of each method and as well curtail the limitations of it. We believe that as we have supplemented each of these methods with others, we have been able to obtain results that are comprehensive, objective and reliable.

#### **1.7.3.4 Method of data analysis and interpretation**

The data gathered were described and interpreted through qualitative and quantitative methods. We used simple percentage and frequency count to analyse and present the quantifiable data depicted in the questionnaire. Those of unquantifiable data gathered for the study were in their raw form, with the use of quotations or paraphrases. This enhanced in clarifying the statistical data used in the work, and ultimately resulted in validating our interpretations and conclusions.

The analyses of all the data gathered for the study were done using Emile Durkheim's functionalist's theory. This theory emphasizes the unifying role of religion which prompts members of the society to affirm their common beliefs and values on a

regular basis. Functionalism, as a theory, interprets every aspect of the society in relation to its contribution to the stability of the whole society. As such, it holds that the society is more than the aggregate of its aspects or parts. However, the theory holds that each part of the society has its functions for the whole society. Those different parts are regarded as the society's institutions structured in a way to fill different needs, which consequently affect the form and shape that the society has. Hence, none of the parts is independent, but they all depend on each other. For example, the government depends on the taxes of the family to run the state, while the family depends on the government to provide her children education. Also the family depends on the school which the government provides to assist in getting the children quality education that would assist them in getting good jobs and raise their own families. This makes the children become law abiding, tax compliant citizens, in consequent of which they give the state adequate support it needs. Where all goes well, all the different parts of the society will produce order, stability and productivity. If on the other hand, things do not go well, there would be need for the different parts to adopt a new order, stability and productivity.

By bringing the above within the context of our work, we tried to investigate if all the policies with which AG operates are the best and most relevant within the contemporary situations, especially as to encourage its pastors to be better committed to their divine assignment, or are they irrelevant? Do they generate a scenario, whereby the pastors could affirm their values and beliefs? Where this is the case, one would be right to say that things are moving as expected. But, if otherwise, there would be need for a paradigm shift, according to the expectation of the functionalist theory.

## **1.8 Background to Ogun State**

### **1.8.1 Historical development**

Ogun State was created from the former Old Western State of Nigeria on February 3, 1976, during the regime of the Late Head of State, General Murtala Mohammed. Abeokuta, its largest city, is the state's capital.

Among the prominent Yoruba races that constitute the indigenes of Ogun State are the Egba, Awori/Yewa, Ijebu and Remo people. There is no accurate or precise information on when the ancestors of each of these Yoruba races first settled where they are today. Notwithstanding, history has it that the Ijebu race was already in the Bight of Benin region when the Portuguese arrived there in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. In the case

of Remo race, some assumed the people migrated from Irewo in Ile-Ife, the cradle of the Yoruba race, to the present Remo land around 100 B.C or somewhere nearer, say within 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century<sup>19</sup>. The Egba people settled in their present place after series of inter-tribal wars in 1830, while the Yewa people settled in batches ranging between 13<sup>th</sup> to early 17<sup>th</sup> century.

### 1.8.2 Geographical location

Ogun State has a land area covering 16,762 square kilometers<sup>20</sup>. It shares interstate boundaries with Oyo State in the North, Lagos State in the South, Ondo State in the East and international boundary with the Republic of Benin in the West.

### 1.8.3 Economy

Ogun State is naturally blessed with fertile soil that is suitable for agriculture and mineral resources. Its climate and soil are good for cultivation of a wide range of crops. Among the major crops cultivated are rice, yam, cassava, banana, cocoa, kola nut, rubber, palm oil, etc. Ogun State is considered one of the country's largest producers of kola nut. Its production of timber and rubber is on a large scale. The state's forest reserve, which is suitable for livestock, constitutes about 20% of her land area. Due to its proximity to Lagos coupled with its endowed natural resources and manpower, the state is regarded as potential industrial zone. The scientists' findings indicate that its limestone deposit is enormous and could last five hundred years. This has encouraged the thriving of the multi-million naira cement factory in Sagamu and that of Ewekoro. Sagamu cement factory is of course the largest so far in West Africa.<sup>21</sup> Aside of limestone, the state is equally endowed with other mineral resources like phosphate, chalk, gravels and other high quality stones that are good for construction works. It is also blessed with economically viable modern industries, such as those that produce quality beer, ceramic goods, clay bricks, carpet, bicycle tires and clothing materials.

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<sup>19</sup> E. A. Ayandele, 1992. *The Ijebu of Yoruba Land: 1850 – 1950; politics economy and society*. Ibadan: Heinemann Education Books Nigeria Plc. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Internet information supplied by Rev. Dr. E.A. Akinwunmi.

<sup>21</sup> Internet information “Retrieved Nov 13, 2011, from <http://www.ogunstatenigeria.com>”.

The Remo land, a section of Ogun State, with particular reference to LIPZAD farm, Sagamu, won the award for Best Farmer of the year 1998,<sup>22</sup> at both the State and National level. According to Ayodele, it was remarked that LIPZAD Nigeria Limited was the best farmer in Nigeria in terms of production, loan utilization and repayment, adoption of good farming techniques and practices. The widely known and successful Animal care company popular nationwide is cited in-between Iperu and Ogere, two of the notable towns in Remo land.

#### 1.8.4 Religious life

The people of Ogun State are religiously inclined; the keynote of their life is their religion. In all things, they are religious<sup>23</sup>. Religion forms the foundation and the all-governing principles of life for them. The people practice the three recognized major religions in Nigeria, which are, African traditional religion, Islam and Christianity. Of these, the traditional religion seems to have irremovable influence on the lives of the people; for in most cases, people who claim to be either Christians or Muslims do not usually have absolute withdrawal of their allegiance from the traditional beliefs.

The impact of the traditional religion on the inhabitants of Ogun State is so strong that the religion continues to flourish, notwithstanding the presence of both Christianity and Islam in the State. The religion of the people before the advent of Christianity and Islam was traditional religion. This is intricately bound with their culture. One cannot separate them from their culture. As such, traditional festivals, such as Oro, Egungun (Masquerade) and Eyo festivals are celebrated, and in most cases, both Christian and Muslim adherents participate in them in the name of established customs. There are shrines and groves and meetinghouses of Ogboni fraternity in different places. At times, Christians who accept traditional Chieftaincy titles undergo traditional rituals of conferment. The festival of Oro is still celebrated in the daytime in some of the towns, especially in Remo land, with the exception of Sagamu, whose own occurs in the night. During the celebration, women and girls, irrespective of religious interest, are confined within their compounds.

The religious life of the people manifests in the conduct of each of their festivals. For instance, there is none of these festivals that is executed without due

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<sup>22</sup> O. Ayodele. 2001. *Sagamu: migration to year 2000*. Sagamu: Olu Ayodele Commercial Enterprises. 279.

<sup>23</sup> B. Idowu. 1962. *Olodumare, God in Yoruba belief*. London: Longmans Press. 5.

regard to prayer, which is an indispensable element, regardless of the religious disposition of the participants. In this regard, the presence of the object of worship is invoked in the affairs of the people that would be involved in each festival.

#### 1.9 **History of Assemblies of God in Ogun State, Nigeria.**

The history of Assemblies of God in Ogun State could be traced back to the movement that became the harbinger of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria in 1934<sup>24</sup>. This body, formerly known as the Church of Jesus Christ, was founded by some members of Faith Tabernacle Church in Port Harcourt sometimes in the past. Consequent upon serious study, the group discovered that the experience of Holy Spirit baptism was not meant to be a restricted privilege of believers of the Apostolic age. They were therefore, allowed to peacefully leave Faith Tabernacle to continue in this doctrinal disposition, which the latter did not accept as being in consonance with its own doctrinal teachings and tenets.

The movement (The Church of Jesus Christ) was led by Augustus Ehurie Wogu, who was born into the family of Wogu at Umobutu old Umuahia in the first half of 1920. He was a staff of the old Nigeria Marine Department, now Nigeria Port Authority in Port-Harcourt. Coincidentally, at the time when this group that sparked in Port Harcourt began to build up its work in old Umuahia, another group emerged at Abiakpo Ikot Essien, a village at the outskirts of Ikot Ekpene in Akwa Ibom State.

The initial opinion held by the members at the beginning was that the church would have no name, so that it might be non-denominational. Hence, they replied those inquisitive about the name of the church that they belonged to Jesus, preached only Jesus, and had no association with any church name. However, as a result of expansion of the work, a name was unavoidable. Hence, after discussion, it was unanimously agreed that they should go by the name "The Church of Jesus Christ".

The movement got and read copies of the Pentecostal Evangel, a publication of Assemblies of God in the United State of America on the Baptism of the Holy Spirit which Faith Tabernacle did not believe or teach. The discovery of this truth, coupled with the refusal of Faith Tabernacle to accept it, led to the birth of the church in 1934, when the group left Faith Tabernacle. In their bid to search for deeper understanding

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<sup>24</sup> O. F. Imukhuede. 2009. *A watershed of the Gospel: the history of Assemblies of God, Nigeria*. Aba: Assemblies of God Press. 1.



and experience of the truth taught in the Bible, the movement applied for, received and studied scriptural materials from many Christian organizations outside Nigeria, especially the ones from Rev. Norman Green of Assemblies of God. Rev. Norman Green sensitized them on the exercise and control of the Holy Spirit through the materials he sent. In September 1934, the movement had this outpouring of the Holy Spirit with Marcus Asonye becoming the first recipient of this experience<sup>25</sup>.

The enthusiasm of the foundation members resulted in some of them quitting their secular jobs to preach the gospel on full time. This determination yielded visible results, in which many got converted through open air outreaches staged in different places. Hence, branches were established at Umuagia, Ngwa, Umuoba, Okaiuga and Ogwe, all in Abia State of Nigeria. The leaders of the church then formulated some doctrinal principles from the Bible. This is stated in the church's tenets of faith, as indicated below:

1. The Bible is the inspired and the only infallible and authoritative Word of God.
2. There is one God, eternally existent in three persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.
3. The Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, His virgin birth, His sinless life, His miracles, His vicarious and atoning death, His bodily resurrection, His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and His personal future return to this earth in power and glory to rule a thousand years.
4. The blessed hope, which is the rapture of the church at Christ's coming.
5. The only means of being cleansed from sin is through repentance and faith in the precious blood of Christ.
6. The regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential for personal salvation.
7. The redemptive work of Christ on the cross provides healing for human body in answer to believing prayer.
8. The baptism of the Holy Spirit according to Acts 2:4 is given to believers who ask for it.
9. It is through the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a holy life.

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<sup>25</sup> O.F. Imukhuede. 2009. *A watershed of the Gospel*. 9-11.



10. The resurrection of the saved and the lost, the one to everlasting life and the other to everlasting damnation.

As a result of serious efforts put into establishing branches, the leaders opted for adding corporate image. This led to their seeking to become incorporated into the body of Assemblies of God in United State of America. Coincidentally, the group of Ikpot Ekpene, who never had any idea of what was going on at Port-Harcourt, made the same request. Upon this request, the Assemblies of God of United State of America responded positively by sending Rev. W. Lyord Shirer who was then a resident missionary in Ghana, to visit and evaluate the beliefs and activities of these Christian groups in 1939. On mutual agreement, the names of the movement, "Church of Jesus Christ" and that of the Ikpot Ekpene were changed to Assemblies of God Mission. Hence, the two groups became a District made up of Igboland division and Annang / Ibibio division accordingly. Consequently, the two groups became Nigeria mission field of the Assemblies of God, U.S.A. The then District Superintendent was the foreign missionary (Rev. W. E. Lyord Shirer), while Rev. G. M. Alioha and Udom Akpan became Assistant District Superintendents in their respective divisions.

The above recognition and status orchestrated the members of the church to embark on rigorous evangelistic outreaches in greater dimension, with both pastors and evangelists actively involved, to take the gospel to many places that were yet unreached. This eventually led to the expansion of the church to other parts of the country like Enugu, where Gabriel O. Oyakhilome, a one- time General Superintendent of the church, was converted. His conversion led to the spread of the church to Mid-Western part, precisely Eko-Ewu in 1937. The work later spread to the Northern part of Nigeria with particular reference to Zaria, through the effort of M. Nwachukwu, a locomotive driver. The ministry further spread to places like Kafancha, Kaduna, etc.

Whereas the church spread to the North, Midwest and Eastern part of Nigeria, no concerted effort was geared toward coming to the western part of Nigeria until 1948. That year marked the entry of the church to the Yoruba land through members of the church that were Igbo who came to Ibadan. They rented a place at Ogunpa for a start and later moved to Adamasingba for regular fellowship. This group later became the first outpost in the West.

Within the space of few years more, branches were opened in places like Bodija, Oke-Ado, Odo-Ona, Agbowo, Moore Plantation, Agodi and Ilorin. This

expansion was as a result of the outreaches of the members and pastors like Rev. Emesi. Thus, in 1959 enough branches were already planted in consequent of which the Western part of Nigeria was given a Missionary Area status, under the leadership of a counseling committee headed by Rev. W. Wood. Thereafter, the church spread to the hinterland of the Yoruba land.

Between 1964 and 1966, the number of Churches increased from 7 to 80. This brought to light the need to establish a seminary to train pastors from the Western region, apart from the already existing ones in Umuahia, Ewu, Ogoja and Saminaka. The financial burden, coupled with the distance between the West and the existing seminaries made the proposal for a Bible School in the West presented by Rev. Robert Webb to the Executive committee to get ratification. And so, the new school, Western Bible Institute, now Southwest Advanced School of Theology started in 1964 in Iperu-Remo in Ogun State. This became the very point through which the church finally got to the present Ogun State, with the first branch being Iperu Assembly. The first pastor of the church was Rev Ajayi Israel Shofile, between 1964 and 1966. He was succeeded by Rev M.K. Ogunbola in 1966. Prominent among the pastors who did pioneering work of the church in Ogun State are Rev Ajayi Shofile ( Iperu Assembly), Rev Samuel Shodipe, who pioneered both Ipara and Ijebu Ode Assemblies. Rev M.K. Ogunbola pioneered Ode Remo Assembly, while Rev Shogunro pioneered Abeokuta church.

In 1974, the Western Area came under the leadership of Rev. Israel Ajayi Shofile, who was appointed the Supervisor. This Area was later upgraded into a District status in 1978, under his leadership. He remained the District Superintendent until the division of Lagos District in 1984. Finally, the Western District was divided into four units: Oyo District, Ondo Area, Ogun Area and Osun missionary Area in 1991. Ogun Area was headed by Rev. Dr. E. A. Akinwunmi until the upgrading of the area to a District status in 1994. There was a division of this District into two in 2009. These are Abeokuta and Ijebu Districts. The latest division of Lagos District into three which occurred in the same year gave rise to Lagos Mainland, Lagos and Sango Districts. Sango District is situated within the land of Ogun state. Hence, Assemblies of God Church in Ogun State as at 2009 had three Districts: Abeokuta, Ijebu and Sango Districts.

Abeokuta District is headed by Rev. (Dr.) B. Awodeyi. It covers 10 local government Areas, which are Abeokuta North, Abeokuta South, Ewekoro, Ifo, Imeko-

Afon, Ipokia, Odeda, Egbado North and Egbado South and Obafemi-Owode Local Government Areas. It has 13 sections, with 66 churches, 66 pastors, and average membership of 4641<sup>26</sup>.

Ijebu District is headed by Rev. Barrister A. Ogunsanya. It covers 9 local government Areas, which are Ikenne, Ijebu East, Ijebu North, Ijebu North East, Ijebu-Ode, Odogbolu, Ogun water side, Remo North and Sagamu local Government Areas, with 17 sections, 74 churches, 75 pastors and average membership of 7788<sup>27</sup>.

Sango District is headed by Rev. Dr. J. K. Amah. It covers three Local government Areas in Ogun State and one in Lagos State, which are Ado-odo, Ifo, Iwaye and Ifako-Ijaye respectively. This District has 13 sections, with 68 churches, 79 pastors and average membership of 5,730<sup>28</sup>.

With regards to its mission and vision statements, AG Nigeria exists to propagate the gospel of Jesus Christ in Nigeria and beyond by all scriptural means in the power of the Holy Spirit, to encourage worship of God and promote fellowship among believers, develop educational work in so far as it seems necessary for the proper growth and efficiency of the church, and to own, hold on trust, use, sell, convey, mortgage, lease, or otherwise, dispose of such property, real or chattel, as may be needed for prosecution of its work under God.

AG Nigeria is affiliated to various national, regional, and world bodies with similar interests. Among such bodies to which it is affiliated are World Assemblies of God Fellowship (WAGF) and Africa Assemblies of God Alliance (AAGA), the continental counterpart of WAGF, which bodies exist purposely for promoting, coordinating and monitoring of its missionary effort. Other similar bodies are World Pentecostal Conference, West Africa Assemblies of God Leaders' Regional Conference; a consultative forum for Assemblies of God Leaders in the sub-region. Other bodies are Africa Theological Training Service (ATTS), a service agency that promotes, coordinates and monitors Assemblies of God Theological education in Africa, Central Africa Assemblies of God Alliance (CAAGA). The Assemblies of God, Nigeria, also belongs to some National Associations, such as Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Nigeria Evangelical Fellowship (NEF) and Bible Society of Nigeria (BSN).

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<sup>26</sup> The programme booklet of First Triennial Council Meeting of Abeokuta District, Assemblies of God Nigeria. 27.

<sup>27</sup> The programme booklet of First Council Meeting of Ijebu District, Assemblies of God Nigeria. 17, 18.

<sup>28</sup> Programme booklet of First Triennial Council Meeting of Sango District, Assemblies of God, Nigeria. 20.

Assemblies of God Nigeria does not practice the Episcopalian system of church government, where an archbishop has authority over many bishops, who in turn have authority over a diocese, which simply means the churches under the jurisdiction of a bishop. The system of government practiced by AG is a mixture of both the Presbyterian and congregational forms of church government.

In practicing the Presbyterian system of government, each set in order local church of a District is permitted to elect leaders to a session. This session has governing authority over the local church. There are also members of the presbytery at the District level, who are vested with authority over several churches in a region. This presbytery consists of some of the ordained pastors in the local churches over which it has authority. Moreover, some of the members of the presbytery, usually the District Superintendents and Secretaries are members of the “general assembly” which has the authority over all the churches within the nation.<sup>29</sup> With this arrangement, the leaders govern not only their local churches but all their churches within the nation, and the national church government demonstrates the unity of the body of Christ, whereby the individual congregation is prevented from falling into doctrinal error as the presbytery exercise their control over all the local churches.

The congregational system of government as reflected in AG can be understood in the sense that the system is “democratic”, whereby every full member of each local church has equal voice in decision making like others. In that sense, no person, pastor or person(s) is (are) in total control. In other words, each member has the right to vote on matters during business meetings. This arrangement is brought to the level of both District and General Council business sessions, where eligible voters participate accordingly. At the District business session, all pastors with the District credentials and one Deacon from each local church participate, while at the General Council, all the ordained ministers and one Deacon from each set in order section are part of the business meeting. In this arrangement, the high point is that the final decision on any important matter lies on the congregation.

Assemblies of God Nigeria is systematically organized for the purpose of orderliness, decency, administrative convenience and enhancement of effective evangelism throughout Nigeria. The arrangement of the church follows this order: The

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<sup>29</sup> W. Gruden. 1994. Systematic Theology. U.S.A: Zondervan Publishing House. 920.

General Council, The General Committee, The Executive Committee, The Board of Administration, District Councils, Area Fellowship, Sections and local churches.

The General Council is the body that unifies the entire work of the church in Nigeria to bring about a formidable force. The General committee refers to a body that is different from the Executive committee. This body meets twice annually. The members of this body are drawn from each district and Area, whereby each is privileged to have three members. These are the District Superintendent together with two others, one of which must be a layman. Other members of the General committee are the Executive committee officers of the General Council, the National Departmental directors, Retired General Superintendents, Head of Schools, and the General Council legal Adviser. They meet twice in a year to address issues bothering on problems and needs concerning the General Council, District and Areas.

The Executive Committee is the body vested with the responsibility of caring for the affairs of the church between General Council meetings. This body is composed of the General Superintendent, Assistant General Superintendent, the General Secretary, and the General Treasurer. Other members of the Executive Committee are the expatriate missionary representative and twelve District Superintendents, who are drawn from the twelve geo-political regions of Nigeria. All, except the missionary representative, are elected during the General Council in session for a four year term. The committee meets on quarterly basis. They also meet during emergencies, to deliberate on the issues affecting the church and take decisions.

The board of administration comprises the Executive officers of the General Council. These officers are the General Superintendent, Assistant General Superintendent, the General Secretary, and the General Treasurer. They are on full time service. The board is chaired by the General Superintendent, who alongside with the three other officers, oversee the day-to-day affairs of the National Secretariat. They meet regularly for the general welfare of the constituency and take important administrative decisions between Executive Committee meetings. This board refers some matters to the Executive Committee for ratification.

The General Council creates the District, making the District, therefore, to be amenable to the entire body in doctrinal issues, personal conduct of all pastors, churches and members. Each District is governed by a seven man presbytery, comprising the District Superintendent, Assistant District Superintendent, District

Secretary, District Treasurer and three others elected as presbyters. The District leaders are elected at District triennial council meetings, and are vested with the responsibility of supervising over all the activities of the church in its prescribed field. Each District has its own bye-laws.

Area fellowships are districts in making. Since they have not reached the status of a District, they cannot conduct election; hence, they are led by the Counseling Committee whose members are appointed by the Executive Committee, and comprise the Area Supervisor or Chairman, (for missionary Area), Secretary, Treasurer, and two other members. The Counseling Committee is vested with oversight of the Area churches. Unlike the Districts who operate through Bye-laws, Areas are guided by policies. The missionary Areas are administered much the same way as Areas. The difference is that missionary Areas are much younger, and occupy geo-graphical areas where the work of church planting is comparatively new, needing much attention, care and encouragement. It is the General Council who sponsors National missionaries to missionary fields.

The sections and groups are created by the District presbytery or counseling committee, with the purpose of facilitating evangelism and enhancement of administration in various parts of the District or Area. Each section is headed by a sectional leader. With the leader, the sectional committee meets from time to time to take care of the affairs of the section. The difference between a section and a group is that groups have not reached the standard required of a section, and therefore, are comparatively smaller, with a group leader serving as their leader. Factors that give rise to the creation of sections or groups include growth and administrative convenience.

Each local church is under the leadership of a pastor. In some cases, the bigger ones may have more than one pastor, in which case we have associates or assistant pastors in charge of children, youths, teenagers, etc. Each local church works harmoniously for the general body and supports the programmes of the General Council, District and section. They recognize the District as having the right to disapprove or approve scriptural doctrine and conduct and to administer discipline as the case may be.

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## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter explores some available works that are related to the impact of Christian festivals on Assemblies of God's pastors, especially in those areas that fall within the aims of our study. With this, we were able to provide the needed background for our investigation, whereby the trajectory of the work is channeled to arrears of specific interest to contemporary scholarship as it has to do with the economic and religious effects of Christian festivals on the AG's clerical stratum in Ogun State, Nigeria. The literature review took cognizance of ethical issues in human behaviour, Christian festivals, their impact on pastors, and the Assemblies of God as an institution. Each of these is considered as a sub-heading below:

#### **2.1 Ethical issues in human behaviour**

The conduct of Christian festivals has ethical implications, owing to the actions exhibited by the participants, more especially the pastors in the course of their celebrations. As such, discussion about ethical issues in human behavior, especially as we see it primarily from the vantage point of the pastors' conduct, finds relevance in this research as we have done below.

The word ethical is derived from ethics, which Couch defines as the science of moral value of man's life. Its concern is on the conduct that is either approved or disapproved. He opines that the scope of conduct that can be judged morally covers the whole range of man's experiences that we regard as being subject to intelligent and voluntary actions. In this sense, the activities of children that have not attained years of discretion and the behaviours of insane persons are excluded from moral premise<sup>1</sup>. In the light of this, we agree that ethics or morality is relevant to pastors' moral dispositions during Christian festivals, for through it, their actions in the cause of the celebration can be appraised, either to be right or wrong.

There is a connection between economics and ethics. This could be understood as one considers the fact that economy is a vital aspect of society. It involves all members of the society in one way or another. Economic activities

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<sup>1</sup> Collier's Encyclopedia. 1965. New York: P. F. Collier and Son Company.7: 432.



mostly entail certain rules of human conduct, whereby certain actions are said to be right or moral and others are wrong or immoral. This implies that economic activities can be brought within the bearing of moral rules. Since such activities are the products of human being, they can be evaluated or appraised within the context of moral perspective just as we do in the case of other activities to which man engages.

Ayantayo avers that ethics is a systematic reflection upon human behavior with expectation of how they are to behave and what they ought to do. He submits further, that the human behavior, which ethics studies, has to do with conduct, which entails both the inward and outward activities like intention, motives, desires, speech, movement and physical action. Such conduct does not only affect its performer, but equally people to whom they are directed. This forms the basis for social background of ethics, which presupposes examination of human conduct from ethical perspectives.<sup>2</sup> He states further that Ethics is the science of what is morally good and bad, right and wrong. He indicates that such questions like: what must we do? How should we do it? Why should we do it? And, what is good for man are of interest to the field of ethics since they indicate the purposefulness of individual's life, guided by social morals.<sup>3</sup> He aptly concludes that as human beings, we should be concerned about ethical conduct because our actions, be it political, economic, and so on generate consequences and implications for members of our society.<sup>4</sup>

It is suggested in the light of the above contributions of scholars, that in ethical judgments, an action is said to be morally right, wrong, obligatory, good or bad depending on whether or not it corresponds with socially approved standard or behavior. It is the kinds of actions that seek to uphold or destroy the moral values of society that becomes subjects of concern to ethical judgment.

The question about the source and components of moral principles is of interest to ethicists. While Dzurgba traces the source of moral principles and religious ideas to human faculties or mental powers,<sup>5</sup> Ayantayo opines that:

Moral values could be positive or negative. Positive values indicate what we ought to cultivate. Examples of

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<sup>2</sup> J.K. Ayantayo. 2000. The Yoruba traditional economy in ethical perspectives. NJEH No 3.

<sup>3</sup> J.K. Ayantayo. 1999. Religious ethical issues in the oath of Office in the Nigeria Constitution. *Orita Journal of Religious Studies*. June and Dec. xxxa/a: 99.

<sup>4</sup> J.K. Ayantayo. 1999. Religious ethical issues in the oath of Office in the Nigeria Constitution. 101.

<sup>5</sup> A. Dzurgba, 1999. The role of religion in the political and ethical re-orientation of Nigeria society. *Orita Journal of Religious Studies*. June and Dec., xxx 1/1: 110

positive values are justice, honesty, tolerance, truthfulness, responsibility, loyalty, cooperation, kindness, humility... The negative values are the direct opposite of positive values, which consist of actions and ways of behavior considered wrong and from which people should abstain. Examples are dishonesty, cheating, injustice, hatred, falsehood, exploitation, oppression, stealing, untruthfulness, indolence, and irresponsibility.<sup>6</sup>

In the light of the above, one may ask a pertinent question, “Do AG’s pastors articulate justice, honesty and kindness? Do they shun dishonesty, cheating and exploitation in the course of Christian festivals? While we appreciate the contributions of Couch, Dzurgba and Ayantayo for launching us into the meaning, source and principles of ethics, the fact that none of them did treat the issues from the perspective of what obtains among AG’s pastors in Ogun State calls our attention to the need for us to bridge the gap.

The field of ethics, with particular reference to Christian ethics, faces great challenge in the post-modern world, beset by inverted values, with evil being regarded as good, and good is called evil.<sup>7</sup> The implication of this, according to Anderson, is that our world has become a place where the theory of relativity is considered an absolute value in determining the rightness or otherwise, of human behavior, and biblical absolutes have become relative.<sup>8</sup> In that sense, there is need for Christians, especially the pastors, who are our target in this research to be furnished with relevant biblical guidelines as they attempt to navigate the rough waters of morality in this post-modern world.

Anderson avers that an attempt to understand people’s behavior will take into consideration their world view. People’s world view will determine to a great extent how they would behave, since man’s behaviour is a product of his values and belief. Hence, there are those who believe that moral truth is always relative to the person and his or her situation or circumstances.<sup>9</sup> Some also determine moral choices based on their desire to do whatever will bring to them the most pleasing results. Conversely, Christian ethics holds to Christians’ worldview, in which there is

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<sup>6</sup>.K. Ayantayo. 1999. Religious ethical issues in the oath of Office in the Nigeria Constitution.125.

<sup>7</sup> K. Anderson. 2005. *Christian ethics in plain language*. Nashville: Nelson Reference and Electronic, xiii.

<sup>8</sup> K. Anderson. 2005. *Christian ethics in plain language*.1.

<sup>9</sup> K. Anderson. 2005. *Christian ethics in plain language*. 2.

absolute truth, based on biblical principles, and to which Christians, especially the pastors are to lend their personal faith commitment.

The issue of faith commitment is fundamental, because it affects a person's perspective on moral issues. Whereas most of the citizens in our nation claim to have concern over the moral condition of the country, however, it is an undeniable fact that most of these, even some pastors, hold to views that run contrary to the moral teachings of their professed faith.<sup>10</sup> This makes faith commitment essential in human behavior during ethical discussion, for it is this that makes the difference in one's perspective on moral issues in the society.

The relevance of the above discussion to our work is that we are interested in knowing to what extent AG's pastors are demonstrating practical commitment to their professed faith, by articulating relevant moral principles of the Christian teachings during Christian festivals. Do they allow this fact to be overtly seen in them during such occasions? Or are they unmindful of this in the course of such festivals? Hence, we find this need of appraisal in the course of our investigation as a gap needed to be bridged through this work.

Some of the pertinent moral questions that bother on pastors' behaviours, and of which scholars are interested in knowing are: how do pastors keep themselves away from misconduct? Do pastors have a single formula for learning the way to do what is right? Are good pastors born with moral character, or is their ability to make right moral decisions acquired? Of course, there are some moral choices that appear very ordinary, which are not complex and one can easily decide what to do. For instance, choosing between going to sleep or to stay behind to read throughout the night. Other choices are not as easy, but complex in nature. A good example is whether not to tell the truth in order not to expose somebody who takes refuge in one's house from the pursuit of those who want him dead, or telling the truth that he is with one, the aftermath of which those seeking for him may kill him.

In order to give an answer to one of the above pertinent moral questions that bother on pastors, Trull and Carter regard as a myth, the belief that pastors automatically know the right thing to do by the mere fact that they are called of

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<sup>10</sup> "Morality continues to Decay". The Barna update (Ventura, C A), Retrieved Nov 3, 2003, from [www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org).

God.<sup>11</sup> Such a belief makes the laity to assume that God calls only persons of good character to begin with. Birch and Rasmussen also indicate that the development of skills in moral decision making demands that a pastor must understand the role of virtues in character, the place of values in conduct, and the way to develop integrity through what is called moral vision.<sup>12</sup>

A careful look at what transpired in our contemporary society would make one to agree with the position of the above scholars. Considering the pervasive moral failures of prominent pastors, it is difficult to agree with anyone that pastors are innately endowed with moral character or discernment. This underlines the truthfulness of Birch and Rasmussen's position.

Birch and Rasmussen, however, failed to address an ethical question that bothers on authority. By this is meant, who or what should determine what is right or wrong for a pastor? Is he the one to do that? Or is this determinant found outside his person? To these questions, Trull and Carter<sup>13</sup> indicate that Thomas Aquinas believes the answer lies in reason which he terms as infallible teacher. They aver further, that Joseph Butler<sup>14</sup>, on the other hand, traces the role of unerring guide to man's conscience. Gorge Fox, according to Trull and Carter, traces this to what is called the inner light.<sup>15</sup> Conover asserts that there exist three fundamental misconceptions about morality in our contemporary society. First, morality is seen as a personal matter, to be left to the individual. Second, it is said to be a prohibition or taboo, that is, a restraint upon individual and group's freedom, inhibiting them in their pursuit of happiness, success and pleasure. Lastly, we are justified in going contrary to personally accepted moral standard when we do what others do, but which we know are not to be done. At that point, the conduct of others becomes our standard or authority of morality, rather than what, say a pastor, is personally convinced is right<sup>16</sup>.

The issue not addressed by the above scholars is that most pastors often look beyond themselves for dependable guide to assist them in their attempt to navigate moral challenges. Among the Pentecostals, to which Assemblies of God belongs, it is common for pastors to refer to the Bible as the main tangible objective source for

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<sup>11</sup> J. E. Trull and J. Carter. 2004. *Ministerial ethics: moral formation for church leaders*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic. 44.

<sup>12</sup> C. B. Birch and L.L. Rasmussen. 1989. *Bible and ethics in the Christian life*. Minneapolis: Augsburg. 43-62.

<sup>13</sup> J.E. Trull and J. Carter. *Ministerial ethics*. 45.

<sup>14</sup> J.E. Trull and J. Carter. *Ministerial ethics*. 45.

<sup>15</sup> J. E. Trull and J. Carter. *Ministerial ethics*. 45.

<sup>16</sup> C.E. Conover. 1962. *Moral education in family, school and church*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press. 41.

knowledge of what God regards as His will.<sup>17</sup> As much as this is true, Higgenson posits that a careful look at the issue reveals that there are diversities of ways depicted in the Bible as means of navigating moral reasoning.<sup>18</sup> He, therefore, gives details on the use of deontological rules and the principles of consequentialism for moral reasoning in both the Old and New Testaments.

Birch and Rasmussen corroborate the assertion of Higgenson by affirming that the Bible is the major “formative and normative” authority for the development of Christian character and moral decision making.<sup>19</sup> Notwithstanding, this conclusion does not take care of all issues involved in human’s moral questions, especially as it applies to the pastors. Obviously, there are some ethical issues to which the Bible’s position seems to be quite equivocal in that they are both condoned and condemned by it; for instance, divorce and war. Also, some moral issues did not exist in biblical times, such as artificial insemination and media morality. The application of Biblical ethical teachings to issues like those of the above will require skillful exegesis, otherwise, one could be plunged into hermeneutics’ blunder.

What one can glean from the above is that whereas the Bible is the primary source of Christian ethics, especially as it applies to pastors’ moral decision making, there are still certain gaps to be filled by something else outside the Bible. In our context, for instance, a school of thought argues that since Jesus did not command His followers to observe a festival marking His birth and that there are no available records of instances in which His disciples observed it, therefore, it is morally wrong to do so in our time. This position hinges the source of Christian ethics only on the Bible. Our view is that proper discussion on human or Christian behaviours, especially as it applies to the pastors cannot be hinged only on the Bible, since there are issues that appear not to be addressed in it, especially those that did not occur in the days of the Bible writers. Hence, there is the need to look at other helpful sources outside the Bible but not contrary to its principles.

Trull and Carter agree that one of the ways whereby the above could be done is through the work of the Holy Spirit, which hinges on subjective means of

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<sup>17</sup> T.B. Matson. 1974. *Why live the Christian life?*. Nashville: Broadman. 98.

<sup>18</sup> R. Higgenson. 1989. *Dilemmas: a Christian approach to moral decision making*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox. 55-77.

<sup>19</sup> C.B. Birch and L.L. Rasmussen. 1989. *Bible and ethics*. 14-16.

revelation.<sup>20</sup> They aver that while Christ is the pattern for morality, the Holy Spirit is the power that makes Christian living possible (Rm. 8:13-14). Accordingly, we are not to limit the work of the Holy Spirit to sudden inspiration or direct prompting regarding an action, but also recognize His role in giving insight to Christians when they are confronted with serious dilemma in the course of moral decisions.

Scholars such as Anderson<sup>21</sup> also posit that Christian tradition (documents of early church fathers), reflection and the ability to analyze situation, including prayer, are extremely vital aids to guide in decision making in the course of moral perplexities. Prayer, for instance, is regarded as a vital link to God's mind as well as a sure way of confirming God's will, especially as it was exemplified in Jesus Christ (Matt. 26:42, Lk. 6:12).

We find the above scholars' contributions useful to our work in that AG's pastors are expected to utilize the various sources at their disposal in order to be sure that what they do commands moral approval. We are interested in knowing, for instance, the extent at which they utilize such opportunities in determining the moral appropriateness of what they do especially in the course of Christian festivals. While the efforts of these scholars remain commendable, none of them treats issues within the bearing of Christian festivals among AG's pastors leaving for us a wide gap to fill.

The belief of some ethicists is that character development is the key to morality. However, some argue that correct conduct is a product of how one does ethics. Needless to say, both (character) "being good" and (conduct) "doing good", are indispensable elements, for each necessitates the other. Ethicists hold that there are three basic or major components of moral decision making: character, conduct, and moral vision or integrity. These three dynamics in the moral life are in other words known as virtues, values and vision. As a result of that, to be a good pastor or Christian necessitates "being", as well as "doing" and of "living". Integrity is, however, the most fitting word to describe the pastor's moral life. It stands as the element which integrates and unifies character, conduct, and moral vision to make the pastor's life worthy of his high calling.

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<sup>20</sup>J. E. Trull and J. Carter. *Ministerial Ethics*. 9.

<sup>21</sup>K. Anderson. 2005. *Christian ethics in plain language*. 22.

We attempted to know through our investigation what scholars said about the above three essential elements; character, conduct and integrity. Character, according to Trull and Carter, is basic to all ethical decisions.<sup>22</sup> This is because what a person is, is determined by what he does. Jesus in his teaching gave premium over man's character above his conduct, and taught that man's morality proceeds from his heart, (Mtt. 5:3-48). Hence, he stresses the futility in praying or practicing benevolence to the poor when such actions are motivated through the desire to be seen of men (Mtt. 6:1-8). He does not give approval to the superficial righteousness of the Pharisees and Sadducees because of their hypocrisy, even when the actions they performed were right (Mtt. 5:20, 6:5).

Granting that character supersedes conduct as indicated above, one may ask, how then is man's character formed? Willimon<sup>23</sup> asserts that character is formed consciously and unconsciously in a community or a social setting. Stanley Hauerwas<sup>24</sup> corroborates this, that what a man is, is the ultimate determinant of what he does. In this sense, individuals do not approach a moral choice objectively, but each brings along his dispositions, experience, traditions, heritage and virtues that he or she has cultivated.<sup>25</sup> The evidences of a good character, according to Richard Gula, are in its fruits.<sup>26</sup> Character consists of those personality traits that are moral and which traditionally are regarded as virtues. Trull and Carter aver that these virtues, according to Ancient Greek's philosophers, are seen in four cardinal traits: prudence, justice, temperance, and courage.<sup>27</sup> Daniel Tylor opines that man's goal is to have all of them without undue emphasis over one above the others. According to him:

It is not good enough to get two out of three or three out of four. That might be great for baseball, but is bad for society. The core virtues make each other possible. A sense of justice is ineffectual if one lacks the courage to stand against injustice. Courage without wisdom is simply foolhardiness. And all the other virtues are underrated when one lacks self-control.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> J.E. Trull and J. Carter. *Ministerial ethic*.47.

<sup>23</sup> W. Willimon, 1983. *The service of God*. Nashville :Abingdon. 28-29.

<sup>24</sup> S. Hauerwas, 1975. *Character and the Christian life*. San Antonio :Trinity University Press.115.

<sup>25</sup> D.G. Saul. 1988. *The Ethics of decision making: Understanding Christian ethics*, Ed. W. Tillman Jr, Nashville: Broadman. 90.

<sup>26</sup> R.M. Gula. 1996. *Ethics in pastoral ministry*. New York: Paulist Press. 33.

<sup>27</sup> Trull and Carter. *Ministerial ethics*. 49.

<sup>28</sup> D. Taylor. 1995. In *Pursuit of Character*, " *Christianity Today*". 31.



What the above Scholars said find relevance with the pastors in our research setting. For instance, we have evidences that some of the respondents consulted agreed that there were cases in which some of the pastors allowed what were done by their colleagues in the pastoral profession, especially in AG, to influence their choice of what to do whether right or wrong during Christian festivals. Added to this, some of the pastors interviewed disclosed that it took strong courage on their part to maintain a disposition that is different from the wrong ones of their colleagues. Hence, the above validates both Willmon's and Tylor's positions.

Hauerwas indicates that both the Greeks and the Christians hold that virtue is the central concept for moral reflection. While the above is true for both the Greeks and the Christians, there was no consensus among them as to the virtue which constitutes the primary nonetheless; both parties believe that the description of a virtuous life is the starting point of consideration of morality.<sup>29</sup>

Although writers, like the Greek and the Christians cited above, have differing opinions as regard the most important virtue of a man, especially as we relate the issue to the clergy, the consensus of all is that ministerial morality always starts with character. According to Smedes, character is the nexus that links all virtues, with each depending on the other:

Without gratitude there can be no integrity, ingratitude falsifies life at the start. But integrity needs courage when honesty runs the risk of trouble. And courage needs discernment so that we can see what is going on and know when bravery calls us to act and when it calls us to stay where we are. But discernment needs self-control because when we fly off the handle we cannot see what is going on, and when we cannot see what is going on we usually end up making a mess of things.<sup>30</sup>

The above summation, therefore, is that character ethics are basic or central to ministerial ethics. It is not the clerical collar that guarantees ethical conduct of the pastor. Rather, it is what exists within the collar that is the real determinant, or that affects moral choice of the pastor. Bishop Nolan Harmon succinctly discusses this

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<sup>29</sup> S. Hauerwas. 1981. *A community of character*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press. 10.

<sup>30</sup> L. B. Smedes, 1990. *A pretty good person*. San Francisco: Harper and Row. 3.



with the assertion that “The Christian minister must be something before he can do anything ... his works depends on his personal character”.<sup>31</sup>

Most writers consulted in our investigation attested to the above statement of Harmon as being the fact of the issue at stake. For instance, Dudley Strain indicates that “what the minister is will be his greatest sermon”,<sup>32</sup> and to John Coburn, what he does is, sometimes, not really as important as what he is,<sup>33</sup> while David Switzer says, “I do not just perform a ministry, I am a minister.”<sup>34</sup> This underscores the importance of character ethics, which, according to Darrel Reeck, enables pastors to fulfill their roles by providing them a certain sense of calmness in doing the right thing and courage to resist what is wrong, and a measure of discretion that leaves the final judgment up to the individual.<sup>35</sup>

By bringing the above discussion to the bearing of our work, we try to know whether or not the AG’s pastors are mindful about the issue of their character during the conduct of Christian festivals. To what extent do they ensure that their actions conform to the ethics of character? This is to ensure that they serve as good models for people to see what the Christian ethics teaches. This serves as a point of interest to us in our work of assessment which none of the above works has been able to express.

Scholars are of the opinion that conduct and its values must be added to character and its virtues to guide human beings, especially the pastors in making right moral decisions. Owing to the nature of pastoral profession coupled with the vulnerability of the pastor, Trull and Carter accentuate that clergy’s ethical misconduct bother around sex, money and power.<sup>36</sup> Richard Foster agreed that the modern preachers are vulnerable to the above trilogy of temptation, and that the three are uniquely related. Money, according to him, manifests itself as power; sex is used to acquire both money and power, while power is best aphrodisiac.<sup>37</sup> What we can glean from the views of the above authors is that a crucial ingredient in the performance of the ministry of a pastor is ministerial behavior. To behave in unethical

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<sup>31</sup> N.B. Harmon. 1978. *Ministerial ethics and etiquette*. Nashville: Abingdom. 34.

<sup>32</sup> D. Strain. 1964. *The measure of a minister*. St. Louis: Bethany Press. 21.

<sup>33</sup> J. B. Coburn. 1963. *Minister: man-in-the middle*. New York: Macmillan. 159.

<sup>34</sup> D. K. Switzer. 1979. *Pastor, preacher, person: developing a pastoral ministry in dept*. Nashville: Abingdom. 16.

<sup>35</sup> D. Reeck. 1982. *Ethics for the professions: a Christian perspective*. Mineapolis: Augsbura, 48.

<sup>36</sup> J. E. Trull and J. Carter. *Ministerial ethics*. 52.

<sup>37</sup> R. Foster. 1985. *Money, sex and power: the challenge of the disciplined life*. San Fransisco: Harper and Row. 15.

and indiscreet way can negatively affect the ability of a pastor to serve the church to which he is assigned.

In the same way we interpret the concept of “being” as virtue, the concept of “doing” has to do with values. Values, according to Birch and Rasmussen, are moral goods to be realized in the society.<sup>38</sup> They refer to the ideal and concepts which a group of people consider to be of great worth. A noticeable function of a value is to give emphasis to behavioural consequences in the society. This makes the violation of the accepted value of a society by the action of someone to be regarded as what could weaken or threaten the beliefs that unify the community. The writers of the Bible often used the word “good” to designate moral and spiritual values, for instance, Paul says “...whatsoever things are of good report...think on these things” Phil. 4:8

Trull and Carter posit that moral values, such as love and justice are guides to pastoral ethics, and that the understanding one has of God and His will is one of the ways to discern the “good”.<sup>39</sup> Love, as a character of God, reveals the real sense of meaning for the self in relation to others. As such, it promotes empathy which provokes the feelings that emanates from putting oneself in the place of others. This brings one to see the importance of the question of obligations. Here the ontological question one may need to ask is what duties are necessary for the pastor? Darell avers that while one of the weaknesses of character ethics is failure to specify with clarity what a person ought to do, however, that deficiency is satisfied to some extent by the ethics of obligation.<sup>40</sup> Hence, we observe that examples of deontological duties abound in the Bible. We have the Ten Commandments, which are moral absolutes given to Israel as a nation (Ex. 20:1-7). In the New Testament, the Golden Rule is one of the moral imperatives (Mtt. 7:12). The deontologist philosopher, Immanuel Kant, regards universal moral absolutes as “categorical imperatives” which one must follow without exception. The maxim or rule is that one must always treat persons as an end, never as a means.<sup>41</sup>

W.D. Ross, as an extension of the contribution of Kant cited above, gives a list of moral absolutes which he called prima facie, that is, “on first appearance” duties. Among such absolutes, we have fidelity, gratitude, justice, duties of benevolence; whereby those who are helpless are helped, and duties of non-maleficence, which make one to refrain from inflicting injury on others. Lebacqz

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<sup>38</sup> C. B. Birch and L.L. Rasmussen. 1989. *Bible and ethics*. 43-62.

<sup>39</sup> J. E. Trull and J. Carter. *Ministerial ethics*. 55.

<sup>40</sup> D. Reeck. *Ethics for the profession*. 47.

<sup>41</sup> J. Macquarrie. 1967. *Dictionary of ethics*. “Kant and Kantian Ethics”. Philadelphia: Westminster.

corroborates this with the assertion that certain acts should be viewed as right because of their nature. These, according to him, include promise keeping, truth telling, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice.<sup>42</sup> Justice is a character of God which corresponds to fairness in recognition of the dignity of humanity. It connotes being fair in the process of decision making, following due process by avoiding partiality but giving equal opportunities to all parties. It gives due recognition to merit, responsible behavior, distributes goods and services equitably, gives needed motivation and relevant law.

The relevance of the above works to our study is obvious. If, like Kant indicated, one must always treat persons as an end, and never as a means to an end, we try to ask if AG's pastors are careful not to use their members as a means to their financial end during Christian festivals. If fidelity entails among other things, loyalty to a set of beliefs, then we try to ask, to what extent are AG's pastors adhering or loyal to what the Bible teaches on Christian moral dispositions during festivals? Furthermore, how far do they go in ensuring that justice characterizes their actions in the sharing of the proceeds of festivals, especially among the needy? In the same vein, since the Bible enjoins benevolence to the poor as a way of articulating true religion, one may equally ask, whether or not, AG's pastors allow their practice of benevolence to symbiotically include the poor outside their congregations or parishes. If such gesture is not being extended to the non-AG needy, could such attitude be passed for moral approval? And does it agree with the Christian faith to which they profess? If not, what should we do to assist them in that direction so as to maximize the impact of the festivals through them? These are some relevant issues that the above works do not address, thereby justifying the rationale for our study.

Trull and Carter aver that obligations also include rules, which entail how biblical norms, church codes, and government edicts should be understood by the pastor.<sup>43</sup> They hold that rules have value; Biblical norms give guidance for ordinary, everyday decisions, describe the kind of person Christians ought to be. Trull and Carter, however, indicate that the pastors should avoid the temptation of falling into legalism. In this sense, they should not turn the Bible into a book of law, whereby they rely on the judgment of a religious hero, or to allow their church tradition to become a rule of faith. This demands proper understanding of the relationship

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<sup>42</sup> K. Lebacqz. 1985. *Professional ethics: power and paradox*. Nashville: Abingdom. 24.

<sup>43</sup> J. E. Trull and J. Carter. *Ministerial ethics*. 56.

between rules and values. Each rule sets forth in the Bible is meant to articulate value, which is the reason behind it.<sup>44</sup> T.B. Matson concurred to this, that the ethical emphasis of the Bible is on principles rather than rules.<sup>45</sup> For instance, the commandment “Thou shall not commit adultery” (Ex. 20:14), is not to be used as a rule to prohibit sexual desire. Rather, proper exegetical application of it with due consideration of its principle is that “marriage is an intimate sexual union existing between a legally married man and woman, and excludes all other sexual partners”. Going by the above summation one can say that AG’s pastors would stand the chance of being better assisted in their bids to navigate moral issues that generate during Christian festivals if they learn to translate rule into principles. This, we believe, as the above scholars maintained, would prevent them from turning the Bible into a book of rule during such occasions.

The fact that there is no record found in the Bible of instances of observance of festivals like Christmas and Easter therefore, should not be used as a rule that Christians should not observe them. There is the need to navigate into principle, which for instance, enables us to give correct exegesis of such statement like “He who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord...” Rm. 14:6. The simple meaning of this, therefore, would be that where a festival is observed with regard to articulation of relevant moral principles as taught in the Bible, then such observance should be permitted as unto God and with moral approval.

Trull and Carter aver that values also have to do with teleology, which is the ethics of aspiration. The question this asks is what is the purpose or end result of an action? In other words, the focus is on consequences, which makes one to want to consider how to act so as to bring about a better state of affairs.<sup>46</sup> John Stuart Mill is credited for the articulation of the policy of utilitarianism, otherwise known as consequentialism. Its usefulness lies in its serving as aid to make a person to consider all the relevant factors in a decision without undermining their consequences. Its limitation, however, lies in the fact that one can never know with certitude what a consequence may be.

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<sup>44</sup>J. E. Trull and J. Carter. *Ministerial ethics*. 57.

<sup>45</sup>Matson. *Biblical ethics*.Viii, 168.

<sup>46</sup>Trull and Carter. *Ministerial ethics*. 56.

Although utilitarianism is beset with some limitations, Higgenson avers its presence in both the Old and New Testaments.<sup>47</sup> For instance, he cites the decision of the Hebrew midwives that deceived Pharaoh by sparing the male babies of the Israelites, which received God's sanction (Ex. 1:15-20). In the New Testament, some of the numerous conflicts that Jesus had with the religious leaders of His time over the Sabbath can be viewed in the light of His favouring consequentialism during such occasions. For instance, He indicates that, "the Sabbath was made for humankind and not humankind for the Sabbath". Hence, consideration of favouring man in this case generates better consequences than observance of the law (Mk. 2:27). Paul the apostle was equally found in many instances in which he gave premium emphasis to assessment of consequences before he decided what to do. Hence, he obliged to the vow of having his hair cut, not to fulfill an obligation but to conciliate the Jewish leaders (Acts 18:18). In this sense, during application of consequentialism by a pastor, the end result of any moral choice should be taken into consideration as part of the final decision.

The above contributions of scholars find bearing with our work. We attempt to know if AG's pastors, who are our research interest, consider the consequences of what they do in the course of Christian festivals before venturing into such actions, or do they take this for granted? Our belief is that where the former is the case, moral approval would characterize their dispositions during such occasions, and this would result in making the festivals to generate greater impact than what could be the case, if, otherwise.

The provision to use the principles of consequentialism, according to Lewis Smedes, may, however, deceive one into believing that one's loving lies are gallant when they may be only a way to save one from trouble. Putting this in his words, he avers that:

Telling one loving lie does not turn a person of integrity into a liar any more than one wrong note turn a concert violinist into a barn dance fiddle. But if you get used to getting away with a wrong note, you may get careless with yourself, and become just another fiddler when you could have been an artist.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Higgenson. *Dilemmas*. 55-69.

<sup>48</sup> Smedes. *A pretty good person*. 85.

What we deduced from the above is that the principle of consequentialism may not always be the right way to determine what to do, especially as we bring the issue to the bearing of the pastors. As such, AG's pastors should not only think of tending to doing what could generate to them much consequences, but should as well take into consideration whether or not such agrees with what the Bible teaches in order to ensure that they affirm what their religion teaches according to the functionalist's theory.

Birch and Rasmussen indicate that the process of making good moral choices transcends the issue of being a good person (character) and doing the right thing (conduct). A third essential component, according to them, is integrity, otherwise known as moral vision, which is the most unique of the three.<sup>49</sup> Apart from completing the trilogy of the major components in ethical decision making, integrity performs the role of unifying man's character and conduct into a wholeness of life, hence, the need to know what scholars say about its importance.

George Wharton avers that the man in the pew attaches great weight to the integrity of the preacher (pastor).<sup>50</sup> Strain corroborates to this fact that misconduct is inexcusable among professionals, but much more glaringly among the pastors.<sup>51</sup> Although Lebacqz challenged the notion that pastors are superhuman that are not subject to normal human faults, he nevertheless indicates that:

The minister is expected to embody trustworthiness in such an integral way (i.e., to have such integrity) that even the slightest failure becomes a sign of lack of integrity. This does not mean the minister is permitted no faults. It means that the minister is permitted no faults that have to do with trustworthiness.<sup>52</sup>

We agree, therefore, that integrity is the right term to describe the ethical wholeness of life expected of a pastor. This implies that the growth of a morally mature person or pastor will entail character, conduct, and moral vision (integrity). There is perfect interaction between these three elements, whereby the morally complete person emanates. AG's pastors as well as every Christian need the three, and none of them is complete without the other two.

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<sup>49</sup> Birch and Rasmussen. 1989. *Bible and ethics*. 59.

<sup>50</sup> G.P. Wharton, 1915. *A dice from the crowd*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 23.

<sup>51</sup> Strain. *Measure of a Minister*. 50.

<sup>52</sup> Lebacqz. *Professional ethics*. 89.

If integrity is expedient in the life of a pastor, what then do we mean by it? Webster's Dictionary defines it as the quality or state of being complete; unbroken condition; wholeness; entirety; the quality or state of being of sound moral principle; uprightness, honesty; and sincerity.<sup>53</sup> Charles Swindoll avers that the presence of this in a person connotes absence of hypocrisy. It means the one is personally reliable, financially accountable, with private cleanness and innocent of pure motives.<sup>54</sup> It, therefore, implies that integrity is all embracing, including who one is and what one does. Also included in this is how one thinks as well as acts.

Writers indicate interest in how a pastor can develop character, conduct, and moral vision to an organic whole known as integrity. Glen Saul opines that the solution to this, especially as it relates to Christian living, is in embracing ethics of discipleship, otherwise called narrative ethics. He avers that rather than reducing the teachings of Jesus to principles or values, costly witness is called for, which implies living in the liberty that the new age has dawned in Christ.<sup>55</sup> This, calls for integrating character and conduct in decision making. To this end, every Christian, especially a pastor who is confronted with a moral choice, according to Charles Sheldon, will ask "what would Jesus do?"<sup>56</sup> The example of Jesus, thus, becomes the guiding story to determine the right thing to do. In other words, as Trull and Carter put it, it is the way a pastor's life embodies the gospel story, the life and teachings of Jesus Christ that gives him integrity.<sup>57</sup> We agree with the above works, that pastors must be the epitome of integrity in what they do. This is relevant to our work as we try to see how AG's pastors practically demonstrate integrity during the course of Christian festivals. This, of course, becomes a gap left unfilled by the works cited above which we intend to fill.

The contributions of the various writers above succinctly accede to the fact that to the pastor, just as every other mortal man, ethical integrity is not endowed, not genetically inbred at conception or automatically gotten at the time of his ordination. The pastor is vested with the responsibility to grow in faith and morals, like other Christians. To this end, he must learn to make good moral choices, and this involves a lifelong process known as Christian discipleship.

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<sup>53</sup> V. Neufeldt. 1988. *Webster's New World Dictionary of American English*. New York: Webster's New World.

<sup>54</sup> C. Swindoll. 1989. *Rise and shine: a wake-up call*. Portland: Mutriomah, 190.

<sup>55</sup> D.G. Saul. 1988. *The Ethics of Decision Making*. 90.

<sup>56</sup> C.M. Sheldon. 1956. *In his steps*. Chicago: Moody, 16.

<sup>57</sup> Trull and Carter. *Ministerial ethics*.63.



## 2.2 Christian festivals

A festival, according to Walter Elwel, is an occasion of public or private rejoicing to commemorate some significant events or personage. He avers also that in contemporary usage, “festival” usually refers to activities extending over a period of time, while “feast” indicates one part of the celebration, often a meal. Notwithstanding, he indicates that in religious usage, both ancient and modern, the two words are synonymous<sup>58</sup>.

Webster concurs with Walter’s assertion, indicating that a festival is a time or a day of feasting or celebration, especially a periodic religious celebration, entertainment, or series of performances of a certain kind, often held periodically.<sup>59</sup>

The above works bring three traits of a festival into limelight. First, it occurs periodically (annually), thereby discounting the possibility of having to do with ceremonies like naming, wedding or funeral which occur on regular basis. Second, it is by nature a religious celebration, implying that not all annual celebrations fall within its orbit. Finally, it involves feasting, indicating that wining and dining do not invalidate the sacredness of festival, provided it is done within moral approval. The Bible equally indicates that God delights in His people’s feast “let my people go, that they might hold a feast unto me in the wilderness” Ex. 5:1.

The works cited above contribute essentially to this research, especially in addressing the meaning, essential traits and nature of a festival. However, the approach of each author appears too general, not being confined or restricted within the periphery of Christian festivals, thereby leaving a gap that we have tried to fill through this work.

Webster avers that a festival is an entertainment, supper or bazaar that is used to raise funds for some charitable or other purpose.<sup>60</sup> Oniya concurs to this assertion by indicating that through Christian festivals there could be concerted efforts to organize projects and programmes to put the poor and helpless but able bodied men into employment.<sup>61</sup> We see in this sense that festivals could be used as means of

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<sup>58</sup> A. E. Walter. 1995. *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*. Grand Rapid: Baker House. 1: 783.

<sup>59</sup> N. Webster. 1979. *Webster’s new twentieth century dictionary of the English language*. U.S.A: William Collins Publishers.

<sup>60</sup> N. Webster. 1979. *Webster’s new twentieth century dictionary of English language*.

<sup>61</sup> G. Oniya. 2004. *Unemployment and the Christian church*. Osogbo: Christian Religion Publication. 5.



promoting charitable programmes to assist certain individuals or projects that are worthwhile, especially such that could benefit a community, for instance, a Church.

We are interested in the point raised by the above authors, for this has a lot to do with the purpose of our work. For instance, we desire to know if AG's pastors in Ogun State understand this possibility of using Christian festivals for such useful purposes and to what extent have they been maximizing this possibility, especially to help the indigent ones both within and without their various parishes. Although the above works were able to explore into a vital purpose of Christian festivals, the fact that they are void of assessment, especially in our area of interest which is on economic and religious effects of these festivals on AG's pastors, made us to see a gap which our work aims at bridging.

Scholars like Oboh Etim, Geza Vermes, and William Couch give the meaning of each of our festivals of interest. Accordingly, Oboh avers that Harvest Thanksgiving refers to offerings one give God in appreciation for things He has done for one, which may be for childbirth, marital blessing, promotion or protection during the year<sup>62</sup>. In the same vein, Geza Vermes asserts that Christmas is the festival which commemorates the birth of Jesus to the virgin Mary as a fulfillment of Old Testament's Messianic prophesy,<sup>63</sup> while Williams avers that Easter is the church's feast commemorating Christ's resurrection, and is regarded as the most ancient and important Christian festival.<sup>64</sup> We agree with the definitions proffered above and commend the scholars for being specific in addressing each festival concerned. Nonetheless, none of the works indicates whether or not these festivals impact the people concerned, especially within our areas of interest which are the economic and religious impact they have on pastors. This justifies the expediency for the research we embarked upon.

The controversy that trails the biblical foundation of festivals was of interest to some scholars. For instance, Matthew, Jamieson and Macleren trace the actual time in which the Israelites started observing religious festivals. Matthew and Jamieson posit that the institution of the Nation's three great national festivals; the feast of unleavened bread (the Passover), the feast of harvest (Pentecost) and the feast of

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<sup>62</sup> E. Oboh. 2004. *Discover the secret of divine prosperity*. Lagos: Faith Realm Publishers. 103.

<sup>63</sup> V. Geza. 2006. *The nativity: history and legend*. London: Penguin. 22.

<sup>64</sup> T.C. William. 1959. *Collier's encyclopedia*. Toronto: Collier and Sons Corporation. 6: 654.

tabernacle (annual thanksgiving) is traceable to the biblical record found in Ex. 34:8-20.<sup>65</sup> Macleren opines that the three festivals were sacred by nature and all had reference to agriculture, though two of them also receive a reference to national deliverance. According to him, and contrary to Matthew's submission, the fact that they have bearing with agriculture may show that they were in existence before Moses and that he simply imposed a new meaning on them as indicated in Ex. 34:8-20.<sup>66</sup> Where this is true, it could, therefore, be implied that certain festivals observed today in the Christendom predate the era of Christianity, but were later incorporated into the practices of the religion by those who got converted into it from their former religions. This, of course, is an issue of interest to us as we investigate the impact of Christian festivals on AG's pastors in Ogun State Nigeria. Since certain festivals were originally not part of the Christian religion, does the introduction of such into Christianity make those who practice them become idolatrous? Put in other words, are Christians, especially Assemblies of God's pastors who conduct those festivals that were not originally part of the Christian faith morally justified for doing so? If they are morally justified, on what premise do we base such conclusion? If, on the other hand, they are not justified, what can be done to assist them to know and do what is right? These are some of the issues of interest to us which we discovered that the above scholars could not address.

Regardless of the divergent views of the above cited scholars, what is crystal clear is that some festivals, especially as it is taught in the Bible pre-date the coming of Christ. The Harvest Thanksgiving in particular could be traced to the Old Testament era and not a contrivance of the modern religionists in contemporary worship.

As much as we agree with the presentations of the above cited works, none of them treats the issue involved from the etymological perspective of either Christmas or Easter. Furthermore, nothing is said about how Harvest thanksgiving impacts in our areas of interest, and the appraisal of same is void in their works, leaving for us a wide vacuum we aim to fill through this research.

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<sup>65</sup> H. Matthew, 1998. Matthew Henry's commentary. U.S.A: Hendricks Publishers. 146 and F. Jamieson, and F. Brown. 1961. Practical and Explanatory on the whole Bible. Grand Rapid: Zondervan Publishing House. 5:72.

<sup>66</sup> A. Macleren. 1977. *Exposition of Holy Scripture*. Grand Rapid: Baker House. 115.

David Pack and Bede exhibit interest in the origin of Christmas and Easter festivals. David asserts that Christmas originated from pagan culture; and that nearly all aspects of it (Father Christmas, Gift-giving, Christmas' tree and so on.) have their roots in Roman customs and religion that have no bearing on Christian traditions. He avers that Jesus Christ was not born on December 25<sup>th</sup>, nor could he be honoured through the festival termed Christmas.<sup>67</sup>

In the same vein, Bede opines that while Easter is a Christian festival, its name derives from Eastre, Anglo-Saxon name of a Teutonic goddess of spring and fertility. This implies that its source is borne of pagan idea. S. E. Hijmans, however, refutes the claim of Christian festivals deriving their source from pagan pervert. He posits that while Christians were aware that pagans called December 25 the birthday of Sol Invictus, this neither concerns them, nor plays any role in their choice of date for Christmas celebration.<sup>68</sup> Tighe William concurs to the above disposition by arguing that Emperor Augustus instituted the birthday of the Due Natalis Solis Invicti in 274 A.D as an attempt to give a pagan significance to a date already important for Christians in Rome.

Obviously, those who oppose the observance of Christian festivals draw their argument primarily from the premise of both David and Bede. For instance, God's Kingdom Society is biased against the observance of Harvest Thanksgiving Festival for some reasons. First, the Church argues that Harvest Thanksgiving is not a Christian tradition, and for this reason Christians are nowhere in the Bible commanded to observe such as we have for water baptism and the communion service. Second, it holds that while harvest was used as a parable by Jesus to teach the truth about the last gathering of those who belong to God's Kingdom, it is not meant to be redefined as an annual event in form of celebration characterized by profiteering, display of affluence, deprivation of the poor, gambling and money merchandize as the case is with the contemporary Harvest Thanksgiving celebration. Third, that the early disciples of Jesus Christ did not organize bazaar at any time to raise funds to carry out God's work as is being done in some contemporary denominations in the process of Harvest Thanksgiving festival.

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<sup>67</sup> P. David. The true origin of christmas, "Retrieved June 18, 2012, from [http:// www. Christmas.com](http://www.Christmas.com)"

<sup>68</sup> S.E. Hijmans. Sol the sun in the art and religions of Rome. "Retrieved June 18, 2012, from <http://www.christmas.com>"

Unlike the above position, the Wikipedia Encyclopedia indicates that the earliest Christians, like Origen, encouraged the observance of Christian festivals as a reminiscence of important spiritual things. Hanegraff Hanks corroborates this that the early Church fathers emphasized that there was need for the Christians' holidays to be observed with solemnity and decorum, to differentiate them from pagan festivals, which display riotousness. He avers further that during Christian festivals, Christians did not allow the pagans to join them in their celebrations, but used such festivals to provide an alternative to the more popular secular festivals. For instance, Christmas was accepted to be observed by Christians as a replacement of Mithra.

Paul Poupard opines that there is the possibility of an uncompromising synthesis between Faith and Culture in the Christian religion, which manifests in form of inculturation. He avers that the inculturation of the faith was the part of the pontifical Biblical Commission. In that wise, the Extraordinary Synod of 1985 for the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the conclusion of the Vatican Council, cited by Pope John Paul II in the Encyclical "Redemption Mission" presents the issue as "The intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures". The simple truth being accentuated here, therefore, is that it is not morally wrong to integrate authentic part of the people's culture into the Christian faith, especially through the observance of festivals, which is our own context, in order to permit the relevance of Christianity to the concerned people. Hence, such introduction does not invalidate the moral appropriateness of the people's conduct.

What we, therefore, see clearly in the differing` of opinions of the above Scholars is that the issue of whether or not it is morally appropriate for Christians to observe Christian festivals polarizes the Christendom. We find this relevant to one of the aims of our work, which is to find out from our respondents their views about the moral appropriateness or otherwise, of AG's pastors' observance of the Christian festivals.

We commend the above works, especially in bringing to light the controversy that trails the origin and moral appropriateness or otherwise, of observance of Christian festivals; nonetheless, the view favoured by most of our respondents in all the research instruments used is that it is not the origin of each of these festivals that is the fundamental issue, but the truth or significant message each conveys to those observing it. In that sense, it is, for instance, the person (Christ), whose birth and

resurrection Christmas and Easter commemorate, that becomes the issue of concern to the contemporary Christians during such celebrations. The average Christian celebrating them, especially in our research setting, according to most of our respondents, does not picture the idea of idolatry, but is Christo-centric in his or her focus while observing them.

Of equal importance to the above point is an attempt to exegete biblical understanding of festivals. The question is what does God's word say about how the Christians should approach holidays or festivals? According to Paul's teaching in Roman 14, some of the things we normally consider to be pagan are really not in themselves evil. He indicates that it is both the conscience and the motivation of the person in question that constitute the real significance. Hence, he writes "one person regards one day above another, another regards everyday alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind". (Rm. 14:5). Since most Christians are not trying to celebrate pagan gods in their celebrations during Christmas, Easter or Harvest Thanksgiving, but the Lord, or His faithfulness to them, the festivals are not to be tagged as being corrupted. It is only when such celebrations permit ideas that run contrary to the Christian message or principles that they become dangerous. Hence, our pivotal concern is how these festivals have impacted the AG's pastors in Ogun State financially and religiously, and to assess such impact in order to know their economic and religious effects on them.

Scholars are of the view that the period of Christian festivals can be effectively used by the Church to reach out to its neighbourhood with the Gospel message in an unprecedented way. In this sense, Aina Albert posits that Christmas festival is the time most churches find most challenging in attracting and keeping their youths. It is equally a festive period, characterized by travelling and receiving of visitors.<sup>69</sup> He ranks both Christmas and Easter among special days in the Church in which there could be special services that can be used as great ways to make it easy for their members to invite prospects. Oniya<sup>70</sup> also acquiesced to this fact by indicating that the period of festival can be used for collective charitable outreach.

The relevance of the above work to our study is that we are interested in knowing to what extent are AG's pastors in Ogun State utilizing the avenues of

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<sup>69</sup> A.O. Aina. 2012. *100 ways to increase church attendance*. Lagos: Christian Leadership Skills Inc. 321.

<sup>70</sup> G. Oniya. 2004. *Poverty Alleviation: A role for the church*. Osogbo: Christian Religion Publications. 2.

Christian festivals to get themselves and their members committed to programmes geared towards bringing in prospects into their congregations during such occasions. Our belief is that apart from other reasons, this could create a way whereby the Churches' income during such occasions could be affected positively, which, consequently, would generate positive effects on the pastors' salaries.

The conduct of Christian festivals has ethical implications, owing to the actions exhibited by the participants in the course of their observance. This agrees with what Couch affirms earlier in the preceding section, that the scope of conduct that can be judged morally covers the whole range of man's experiences that we regard as being subject to intelligent and voluntary actions. The actions of pastors during Christian festivals fall within this premise, hence the possibility of assessing them in this work.

Added to the above, we also disclosed in the same preceding section, that Conover affirms that there are certain fundamental misconceptions about morality in our contemporary society, which, according to him, are that morality is viewed as a personal matter, a prohibition or taboo or restraint upon individual and group's freedom, inhibiting them in their pursuit of happiness, success and pleasure and that one is justified in going contrary to personally accepted moral standard when one does what others do, but which one knows is not to be done.

The relevance of the above work to our research is obvious. Since morality is neither a private matter, nor a prohibition, it means an attempt to assess how people, especially pastors' participation in Christian festivals affects them morally is in the right order. Also, since the fact that the majority does it does not make it right, appraising what is done by the majority of AG's pastors during Christian festivals, is a worthwhile enterprise. This is so because we believe that for what the majority does to be regarded as being right, the rightness of such action must have to be morally proven. Hence, the need for moral assessment of the impact of the selected Christian festivals on AG's pastors in Ogun State as we bring this to the bearing of the actions of the pastors that generate such.

Ikenga Metu<sup>71</sup> asserts the possibility of distinguishing four factors in morality. These, according to him, are the ground for morality, which implies that that makes an act to be said to be either good or bad. This, in other words, is that from which an act or its prohibition derives its binding term; examples of these are law, custom, religion, and society. The second is the reason underlying what an individual does. The third is the criterion for morality, which simply put is the measure through which we know the right or wrongness of an action, for instance, the conscience. Lastly, we have sanction for morality, either reward or punishment that usually accompanies morality, although essentially it is not part of it.

The above work is of great relevance to our research. We are interested in knowing for instance, the things that make certain actions exhibited by pastors in the course of Christian festivals to be said to be either good or bad. This is what we trace to the principles and standards set forth by the related religions of our community of interest (Ogun State), especially Christianity, as we see issues within the context of pastors in Assemblies of God in Ogun State. We believe that any action that does not jettison the articulation of these principles and standards during such occasions is morally right, while those actions that run contrary are regarded to be wrong. This issue runs in conformity to the functionalist theory, which demands that, those who practice any religion, especially Christianity, which is our own context, are to affirm their common beliefs and values. We ask, "Are those actions exhibited by AG's pastors during Christian festivals in conformity with what the Christian religion teaches? Or are they deviating from them? While we approve of the former, the latter will receive our disapproval in our work of assessment.

We are also interested in the issue of the motive that underlies certain externalities as asserted by Ikeng above. Our conviction is that, correct moral appraisal of people's or pastors' actions in the course of Christian festivals cannot be done without taking cognizance of the motive, but good motive of a Christian must be consistent with the Bible's teaching. Consequently, it might be in agreement with expectation of the functionalist's theory that stipulates the affirmation of members' religious common beliefs. We also believe that sanction for morality, which is either the reward or punishment is of importance. For instance, our conviction is that where

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<sup>71</sup> M.E. Ikenga 1<sup>st</sup> –6<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1980. Religion and Morality in Traditional African Beliefs: Assessment of view points. S.B. Mala, and Z. Oseni, *NASR conference papers, being the proceedings of the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference at University of Jos*, Jos. 103.



religious custodians could put in place certain policies regarding the conduct approved for their adherents during festivals, such a step will go a long way in articulating proper moral conduct during such occasions. Such sanctions, especially in the light of Christian approach, must not be dogmatically initiated without scriptural backing but must be in agreement with it. To this end, we commend the Redeemed Christian Church of God for putting up a policy in this direction. While we do not mean that we support its policy statement of non-observance of Harvest Thanksgiving, we, however, hold that the fact that it is not equivocal that its members should not use Harvest Thanksgiving for profiteering, like other churches, is a good step in the direction of assisting them to navigate the path of ethical approval during such occasions.

As much as we agree with the above assertions of Ikeng, we do not believe that conscience is entirely valid in assessment of man's conduct, especially during Christian festivals. To the contrary, Christian ethics holds that man's conscience is not an infallible standard for evaluating the rightness of, or wrongness of man's action. The Bible says the heart of man is deceitful (Jer. 17:9). Furthermore, it maintains that there are seared and reprobate consciences (I Tim. 4:2, Rom. 1:28). Such conscience could not help as ground of determining the rightness or wrongness of man's actions. In this sense, Christian ethics holds that whatever the conscience dictates must be judged in the light of what the Bible teaches. Where there is no connection, it means such cannot be said to be right. Hence, we see this as a gap not bridged in Ikeng's work, thereby justifying the need for our work to fill the existing gap.

David Jones<sup>72</sup> in our view appears to have given a better panoramic insight into related issues that transpired during Christian festivals than Ikeng. He posits that human's conduct, especially during festivals is subject to threefold assessment from moral point of view. First, the end a person seeks to achieve in the course of an action must be good, being intrinsically worthy of human pursuit. Second, the motive for wanting to do it must be good, which makes the seeking of the end to be worthwhile, a product of good character. Third, the means to the end must be good; conforming to the right standard of what is right, because neither a good end nor a good motive is

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<sup>72</sup>D.C. Jones. 1994. Biblical Christian ethics. Baker Books. "Retrieved June 18, 2012, from [thegospelcoalition.org/blog/trevin](http://thegospelcoalition.org/blog/trevin)."



compatible with bad means. By implication, for a pastor's action to be morally praiseworthy, especially during Christian festivals according to the thesis of Jones, it must be certified as being good in all the above three respects. Not in the least, because it is impossible to separate the end, motive, and means in the course of assessing an action. Concerning the issue of assessment, Jones asserts further necessitates the presence of standards of judgment. Since ends are judged good or bad by criteria of intrinsic values; agents are judged by good or bad by criteria of moral virtue; actions are said to be either right or wrong by criteria of moral obligation.

Jones indicates that the criteria used by men to appraise humans' conduct depend on some broader philosophical perspective, some views of human beings and their place in the universe. He concludes that from the Christian perspective, the question of criteria for the Christian's goals and practices boil down to this: "What is God calling us to be and to do?". Considering the fact that God's call to salvation, received by Christians, especially the pastors, is not a mere invitation lacking a specific goal, but is with the manifestation of His sovereignty and power, the question is more fully: "What is God summoning and enabling us, his redeemed people, to be, and to do?".

The above work is relevant to our research, especially in that it does not only give a broad spectrum of the standard of appraising pastors' conduct during Christian festivals, but was also specific in giving us the Christian approach. We see this as an objective in our study as we try to investigate the impact of Christian festivals on AG's pastors in Ogun State by bringing the assessment within the bearing of the pastors' actions that generate the impact.

Coming from the background of the relevance of ethics to Christian festivals, certain works reviewed explicate what Christian ethics says on issues related to festivals. Macleren<sup>73</sup>, Robertson<sup>74</sup> and Henry<sup>75</sup>, for instance, enjoin the articulation of good motive, such as love, gratitude, appreciation and glorification of Christ on such related issues. The Bible's teaching which is expected to be affirmed by Christians, and which agrees with the functionalist theory of Emile Durkheim holds that motive is a strong factor to be considered in appraising human's action. Hence, it says "look

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<sup>73</sup> A. Macleren. 1977. *Macleren exposition of Holy Scriptures*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House. 10: 119 – 125.

<sup>74</sup> N. W. Robertson. 1956. *The Expositor's Bible*. Grand Rapids: Eerdman's Publishing Co. 5: 198 –201.

<sup>75</sup> H. Matthew. 1998. *Matthew Henry's commentary*. U.S.A: Hendricks Publishers. 5: 861-863.

not on his countenance, God does not see as man sees” (I Sam. 16:7). While man looks at the outward appearance or externality, the focus of God is on the heart. Also, God does not take delight in strength, horse or legs; rather, His pleasure resides in godly fear. (Ps. 147:10-11). In the same vein, He does not need someone to testify of another to Him, for He understands what resides in each person’s heart (Jn. 2:25). A clear picture of this, in relation to invitation to religious feast by one with a deceitful heart, is also stressed by Solomon, King of Israel:

Don’t eat at the table of a stingy man or be greedy for the fine food he serves, “Come on and have some more”, he says, but he doesn’t mean it, what he thinks is what he really is. You will vomit up what you have eaten and all your flattery will be wasted.<sup>76</sup>

The issue of motive being a strong factor in assessing the rightness or wrongness of man’s conduct is equally affirmed in the Qu’ran. It says: So woe to the worshiper ... Those who want, but to be seen of men Surah 107:4-6.

The relevance of the above biblical and Qu’ranic portions to our work is that it is possible to hide wrong motive under the guise of conduct of Christian festivals. Take for instance, a pastor can give emphasis on the gifts people should give during a Christian festival, telling them that God deserves the best from them as their Creator and enabler. However, if the reason that underlies such action is what he envisaged to gain from such donations, then his motive is wrong. Although the members may not discover this, since it is rooted in wrong motive, it cannot be in consonance with Divine approval, especially as we treat issues from the Bible teaching. In that sense, such a disposition does not affirm but deviates from the common belief in his religion which is expected to be met, according to the functionalist theory of Emile Durkheim.

Macleren and others assert further that good motive will not underplay or jettison the articulation of the principles of right means and affordability to justify moral approval of man’s action. We agree with the above assertion, that moral approval of the actions of participants, especially pastors during Christian festivals will demand the presence of the above principles accentuated. They are principles, not only relevant to Christian ethics, but also taught in Islamic ethics and Traditional religious ethics. For instance, the proverb “se bi o ti mo, elewa saapon”, cut your coat

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<sup>76</sup> Proverb 23:6-8.

according to your material, is meant to articulate the principle of affordability in Yoruba traditional religion. Relating this to what happens to participants in Christian festivals, especially the pastors, one may ask, “What they spend, can they afford it without stress or becoming indebted?” Where this issue is not considered, the action becomes questionable in the context of the principle of moderation as taught in the Bible. This invariably negates the expectation of the functionalist’s theory.

Ken Matto opines that the word moderation has almost become a lifestyle principle among Christians. He stresses that the exegetical use of it in the scripture (Phil. 5:5) does not imply the permission to use everything in life within sensible limit, but rather implies gentleness.<sup>77</sup> We commend Matto for his exegetical presentation, and we equally maintain that the “everything” to be used within sensible limit is that, which is good and consistent with godly living. Hence, moderation cannot be overstretched without reasonable discrimination. In addition, the Bible upholds the principle of modesty, which can be interpreted as using things in proper proportion, not excess, but being modicum (1 Peter 3:1-3) “likewise, ye wives ... whose adorning let it not be that of outward adorning...”

The above discussion is, therefore, a strong defense that though the exegetical use of the word moderation in Phil. 5:5 may not mean the use of everything in life within sensible limit, the Bible’s teaching in nowhere approves going into extremity in the use of things whose utilization have moral backing. Christian ethics, according to Mattson, enjoins moral virtues of temperance and self-denial. By temperance, it means the virtue of self-control, discipline and self-mastery. Christian ethics requires that man’s instincts, appetites and drives be made subject to the Holy Spirit’s dominance. It holds that some of man’s appetites may be legitimate when one does not disregard the virtue of moderation. The reverse is, however, the case, when such legitimate appetites are carried to excess. At such times, they become vices rather than virtue<sup>78</sup>.

In the light of the above, whereas eating, especially in the course of festivals, is necessary, however, when eating is carried in excess, or where one eats unwholesome food due to the craving of one’s appetite, what one does becomes a

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<sup>77</sup> M. Ken. *Everything in moderation.* “Retrieved June 15, 2011, from [www.recessionproofchristianlife.com](http://www.recessionproofchristianlife.com).”

<sup>78</sup> A.D. Mattson. 1947. *Christian ethics: the basis and content of the Christian life.* Illinois: Augustana Book Concern. 251 – 256.

vice. This same principle is relevant with respect to the failure to abide by principles of moderation and frugality in what pastors spend or do in the course of Christian festivals.

Mattson further adds that suppression is not enough as a means for humans, especially pastors, to overcome their natural appetites, for it often has disastrous consequence. He recommends sublimation as the surest way to overcome temptation. With this, he indicates that there is an expulsive power in a new affection. The “drive” should be given an opportunity to express itself in social attitudes and activities. He further opines that Jesus accepted invitations to tables (Lk. 7:36), and even to a wedding feast. Hence, Jesus was not an ascetic, neither does He want His disciples to be. However, in renouncing asceticism, Christians are not permitted to give into laxness in moral life, for there is an element of self-denial in Christian ethics.

On amusement, Mattson avers that Jesus spoke of play with a kindly interest, attended banquets and wedding. He did not disapprove of social customs, except when they injured higher life (Mt. 11:16-19, Lk. 14:7-14). Hence, His use of many illustrations that have this bearing is a proof of his approval of social customs (Lk. 15:22-24).

We see, therefore, in the light of the above, that the conduct of, or attendance at religious festivals is not against Christian ethics. This discipline gives an implicit approval in the light of its teaching. However, this approval does not imply a jettison of relevant Christian moral teachings during such occasions.

The works of other authors further strengthen biblical teachings on issues bothering on Christian festivals. In this regard, Matthew indicates that God forbids Israel “seething the kid in its mother’s milk” because He (God) would not want His people to use the superstitious ceremony which probably they had seen the Egyptians practiced, or observed, from the neighbouring nations, bless their harvest with.<sup>79</sup> In this regard, we see that since the feast of ingathering is synonymous to the contemporary Harvest Thanksgiving, God has specification or approved pattern within which the festival could be observed to justify ethical approval, especially as

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<sup>79</sup> H. Matthew. Matthew Henry’s commentary. 5: 129, 130.

we treat issue within the context of what the Bible teaches the New Testament believers.

To further reinforce his point, Matthew asserts that some particular directions are given about the feast (festivals) to be observed by Israel. For instance, at the feast of ingathering (Thanksgiving), they must give God thanks for the harvest-mercies they had received, and which depend upon Him for the next harvest. In this sense, they must not construe it in their minds that such benefits could come through superstitious practices of some Gentiles, who at their harvest seethed (cooked) a kid in the mother's milk and sprinkled the milk pottage in magical way, upon their farms, to make them fruitful the following year. Hence, Israel must abhor such and refrain from it.<sup>80</sup> Jamieson interprets the issue of "not seething the kid in its mother's milk" in the context of the contemporary Christianity to mean that Christians are not permitted to introduce any unchristian conduct or practice into their festivals, no matter how tempting or promising it may be, otherwise, the festival or feast would not be said to be unto the Lord.<sup>81</sup>

We agree with the disposition of the above authors, and affirm that their contributions are relevant to our work of appraising the impact of Christian festivals on pastors in Assemblies of God, Ogun State. For instance, we want to know if there are incursions of certain practices that run contrary to Bible teachings into Christian festivals among pastors in our research setting. Furthermore, we will like to know what led to such introductions, their effects, whether negative or positive and what to do to combat the likely negative effects. Nonetheless, the fact there is no work that treats issues specifically within the bearing of our setting calls for a need to bridge a gap.

Joseph avers that, ethically, there are certain conditions which a festival must meet to command divine approval. These, according to him, are that what is used to appreciate God must be pure, and secondly, the best.<sup>82</sup> The above position agrees with Oboh's disposition, who posits that in Mal. 1:6-8 the cause of the controversy of God's rebuke on the priests was that they (the priests) were offering whatever they liked unto God as sacrifice during festivals and God calls this dishonour unto Him.

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<sup>80</sup> H. Matthew. Matthew Henry's Commentary.

<sup>81</sup> F. Jamieson and F. Brown. 1961. *Practical and explanatory on the whole Bible*. Grand Rapid: Zondervan Publishing House. 72.

<sup>82</sup> E. Joseph. 1973. *The Biblical Illustrator (Exodus)*. Grand Rapid: Dickson Bros. Inc. 443.

He posits that, it is not the size or how much one offers to God that matters during festivals; rather, it is the heart with which one brings it because God judges the motive.<sup>83</sup> Hence, we see the issues of purity and proper motivation as strong basis for appraising the festival that commands divine approval being strongly defended.

The relevance of the above work to our research is obvious. We are interested in knowing, through our investigation, to what extent AG's pastors consider the moral purity of their members of greater value than what they give during Christian festivals. Do they amplify this above the gifts or allow undue consideration to be given to the gifts above the lives of the givers? Our position is that as much as what people give during festivals is important, the moral disposition of the givers should in no way be sacrificed at the altar of the bountifulness of what they give. For God clearly indicates that obedience is better than sacrifice. 1 Sam. 15:22.

Ogunsanya<sup>84</sup> presents a critique on illegality of using "Harvest Thanksgiving and Bazaar" as means of generating fund for the work of the church. He avers that some churches go to the point of awarding special banners to those who donate more money during such programmes. In the same vein, he disapproves the idea of making pagans chairmen during festivals for the purpose of making such people donate huge amount. To him, God is no party to such disposition, and therefore, it is uncalled for during Christian festivals. He avers further, that God has not said anywhere that it is no longer wrong to make His house a place of buying and selling, which Christ frowns at in John 2:13-16.

The above perspective of Ogunsanya agrees with the school of thought which holds that Harvest Thanksgiving, like most Christian festivals, has become a secular institution, moving from religious meaning to cultural tradition.<sup>85</sup> It stresses that Christmas is now more about Santa Claus than Jesus; while Easter is more about bunny than the resurrection of Jesus Christ.<sup>86</sup> We are interested in the above assertion. If Christian festivals are gradually becoming secular, the tendency for them to lose their sacredness and religious potency could not be winked at. And so, we want to know at what point could this problem occur, and what are to be done to avoid this, so as to enhance the festivals' impact and make them to sustain their relevance. While

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<sup>83</sup> E. Oboh. 2004. *Discover the secret of divine prosperity*.104.

<sup>84</sup> T. A. Ogunsanya. 2000. *The place of money in the worship of God*. Lagos: Bible Pattern Publishers. 47-50

<sup>85</sup> Harvest Thanksgiving in U.S.A. "Retrieved 17 May, 2012, from <http://www.com>."

<sup>86</sup> Harvest Thanksgiving in U.S.A.

we believe it is not wrong that such festivals should have cultural outlook as we contextualize their conduct within the bearing of our own culture, we opine that their religious potency should not be permitted to get eroded through any cultural interference. As much as we agree with the appropriateness of contextualization during Christian festivals, this stand however, does not permit the conduct of these to degenerate into adulteration. As much as we have benefited from the contributions of the above authors, the fact that their approach and presentation distance themselves from the real situation among AG's pastors in Ogun State creates the need for discussion in the light of what obtains in our research setting to remain a gap yet to be filled.

### 2.3 Impact of Christian festivals on pastors

Tokunboh, Nwokoro, Macleren, Excel and Jamieson explicate the religious impact of festivals within the teachings of the Bible. Accordingly, Tokunboh accentuates that some festivals are meant to remind God's people, of which the pastors constitute significant part, both of the liberty He has given and the produce of their soil. However, they are still expected to put in the work to grow their crops<sup>87</sup>. Nwokoro agrees with this assertion, and equally maintains that Harvest Thanksgiving festival speaks of the last day, when the angels of God will reap the world<sup>88</sup>. Macleren concurs to this eschatological bearing as he avers that Harvest Thanksgiving teaches the reality of reaping, but much more points to the great harvest<sup>89</sup>.

The implication of the position favoured by the above cited scholars is that festivals, especially Harvest Thanksgiving, have the potency of invigorating in the celebrants, most especially, the pastors moral impact. Therefore, those of them who aspire to be included in the last harvest will allow this teaching to shape their lives in conformity with the lifestyle that indicates their preparedness to participate in it. This agrees with the assertion of Joseph Excel who avers that religious festival must promote the social and benevolent instinct of our nature<sup>90</sup>. Historically, religion has been among the most powerful agents to bring about change in human attitudes and

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<sup>87</sup> T. Adeyemo. 2006. *African Bible commentary*. Nairobi: World Alive Publishers. 118.

<sup>88</sup> I. N. Nwokoro. 1999. *Prosperity: God's desire for His children*. Kogi: 78, 79.

<sup>89</sup> A. Macleren. 1977. *Exposition of Holy Scripture*. 117.

<sup>90</sup> E. Joseph. 1973. *The Biblical illustrator*. 440.



behaviour. It is religion that has traditionally defined what is meant by being humane, including the nature of our goals in interpersonal relationships.<sup>91</sup> It is on this point, the struggle to influence human attitudes and behaviour for a change through the aid of religion that the use of Christian festivals to address the need for education and development offers a great hope. Without doubt, the outcome of such a step will be what would accelerate peaceful co-existence among individuals coupled with overall development of the society.

The interest of Walter on festivals premises social dimension. To him, a festival places great emphasis on community participation coupled with the continuity of social or religious traditions, especially where the celebrations are substances of a regular civil or religious calendar<sup>92</sup>. This is so because a festival is not construable without a community backing, even in a family celebration the success of festival lies in the participation of the community. Hence, according to Walter, when there is community participation, a festival assists in reinforcing the individual and community memory of specific occasions, and can perpetuate that store of recollection over years and generations.

We agree with the contribution of Walter for the shared memory indicated above can generate cohesive effect upon the community, resulting in the establishment and reinforcement of the traditions by which the group lives. Added to this, the coming together of pastors, the reunion of their family relatives and friends, both from distance and near to celebrate, generate positive socio impact during such occasions. This social impact is equally enshrined within the context of psychological benefit. For instance, before such occasions, some of the pastors and their families were possibly facing depression, stress, etc. about their survival as a result of insecurity arising from their poverty or social crises in the community. However, during such festivals, people gather and relate together. Those they once considered as their enemies celebrate together with them, and so they gain courage and develop positive thinking and rapport among their neighbours. This will give, at least, temporary, if not permanent, psychological solace.

Like what is discussed in the above paragraph, the work of Ronald Young also stresses the social impact of festivals. He avers that festivals of Israel were

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<sup>91</sup> How religion promotes social change. “ Retrieved 12<sup>th</sup> August 2012, from [www.bahia.com](http://www.bahia.com)” .

<sup>92</sup> E.A. Walter. 1995. *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*. Grand Rapid: Baker House. 1: 783



community observances. In this, the poor, the widow, the orphan, the Levite, and sojourner or foreigner were invited to participate.<sup>93</sup> Accordingly, these less privileged citizens see festivals as means whereby others express concern and affection to them in the community and a part of their needs is met in the process. This case is similar to what obtains in Nigeria during Christmas festival in which gift-giving is practiced, especially to meet the needs of the less fortunate ones. Such ones apart from benefiting socially, equally breathe sigh of relief implying psychological impact is generated in the process.

Both Walter's and Ronald's works cited have bearing on our research as we try to investigate the impact of the Christian festivals on AG's pastors, in order to determine the economic and religious effects on them. The relevance becomes overt as one considers the fact that the Bible teaches that pure religion cannot be practiced by the Christians without concern for the unfortunate citizens in one's community. Hence, in our work, we try to investigate and see to what extent AG's pastors in our research setting are using such avenue to assist the unfortunate members of their community, so as to know if they exemplify what the Bible teaches in that direction. This helps to ascertain their affirmation of their beliefs and values according to functionalist's theory of Emile Durkheim.

Oboh Etim's work indicates the possibility of someone, especially a pastor attracting prosperity from God if he demonstrates large heart in giving to Him during Harvest Thanksgiving. On the other hand, he avers that curse<sup>94</sup> could emanate if one is stingy. We do not dispute his assertion, but try to ask that prosperity in what form? Although he was not specific, we seem to believe that he was talking in terms of economic benefits or impact of festivals, especially Harvest Thanksgiving. Notwithstanding, we believe prosperity can come to a pastor in different forms, physical, socio, economic, psychological, and so on. Hence, we see a gap to be filled in this work in terms of absence of concreteness or specificity in relation to the impact of Christian festivals on pastors, justifying the rationale for our work.

Ogunsanya posits that three things occur when someone, who in our context, means a pastor engages in Harvest Thanksgiving. First, it proves the person's obedience to God's commandments (Ps. 50:14); second, it opens doors for greater blessing from God; and lastly, it becomes a means whereby certain needs of the

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<sup>93</sup> E.Y. Ronald. 1995. *Nelson's new illustrated Bible dictionary*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers. 561

<sup>94</sup> E. Oboh. *Discover the secret of divine prosperity*. 108.

church are met.<sup>95</sup> This work carefully examines or addresses the issues of religious, economic and socio impact of Christian festival. We agree that the obedience to God implies religious blessing; greater blessing coming to the person could be holistic (spiritual, economic, psychological and socio); while various needs of the church being met could be both material and immaterial. For instance, the proceeds from such exercise could be means in which the needs of the pastors and the needy members of the church like the widows, orphans, poor and other indigent ones could be met. However, Ogunsanya could not specifically indicate whether or not this interpretation is what he intends to articulate.

Verga Melody accentuates the economic impact of festivals, especially in relation to Christmas season. He avers that this festival is typically the largest annual economic stimulus for many nations around the world. In this sense, according to him, sales increase dramatically in retail areas, while shops equally introduce new products and people engage in purchase of gift items, decorations and supplies.<sup>96</sup> Gwen Outen and Julia Kolewe corroborate the above assertion of economic impact of Christmas festival. As such, in United States, it has been calculated that a quarter of all personal spending occurs during this festival holiday shopping.<sup>97</sup> Industries that completely depend on Christmas according to writers we consulted include cards of which about 1.9 billion are produced and sent to the United States each year. Likewise live Christmas tree, of which 20.8 million were cut in USA in 2002.<sup>98</sup> Aside from this, the season accelerates the sales in bookstores, jewelry stores and employment in retail stores in the two months leading up to Christmas.<sup>99</sup> This situation is equally true of the Nigerian society in which sales of Christmas items astronomically grow above what obtains during the pre-Christmas' period.

Going by what Verga, Gwen and Julia said above, one can deduce that in parishes not affected by mass exodus of members, and where the salaries of their pastors are calculated relatively to the parishes' income, the increase in sales of members who deal with festivals' goods will generate more profit to the concerned members, which invariably may boost their offerings, tithes and other donations to their church, and in turn increase their pastors' salaries. Conversely, where the members spend too much

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<sup>95</sup> T.A. Ogunsanya. 2000. *The place of money in the worship of God*. 47-50.

<sup>96</sup> M. Verga, Retrieved Nov 12, 2011, from [http:// www.womeninbusinessanswers/a/w.b-Answers-What-is-the-Definition-of-Christmas-Creen.htm](http://www.womeninbusinessanswers/a/w.b-Answers-What-is-the-Definition-of-Christmas-Creen.htm).

<sup>97</sup> O. Gwen. 2004. "Economic Report – Holiday shopping Season in the U.S." Voice of America [http:// voanews. Com/Special-English/archieve/2004](http://voanews.com/Special-English/archieve/2004), Retrieved Nov. 12, 2010.

<sup>98</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. "Facts. The holiday season". Retrieved 18 June, 2012.

<sup>99</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. "Facts. The holiday season".

on their families' festivals' needs, the pastors' salaries may be adversely affected. In the same vein, if the festival accounts for exodus of many of the financial members, like what we gathered in most AG's parishes we investigated in Ogun State during this research, the result is a drop in the pastors' salaries. What we, hereby, conclude is that the economic impact of Christian festivals on the pastors could be favourable or adverse, depending on certain factors. The factors include; the nature of the membership composition of their parishes, whether natives or non natives and the church remuneration policy.

We agree, therefore, in the light of the above works that Christian festivals have economic impact on pastors. They are, therefore, not useless or wasteful enterprises, considering the fact that those individuals, especially the pastors who enjoy favourable economic benefits on such occasions would at least have financial empowerment through them. With this, they are able to compete favourably with the financial demands in their society, which may not have been the case in the absence of such occasions. As much as we see the works as being relevant to this research, the writers could not assess this benefit of such festivals, especially within the context of their effects on the pastors. This leaves for us a vacuum we attempt to fill through this research.

Terry Stewar discusses the impact of Christian festivals within the context of psychological dimension. He avers that Christmas displays in form of beautiful decorations, such as Christmas tree, Christmas light, etc. have effects on people's psychological well-being.<sup>100</sup> According to him, a research done by Michael Schmitt, Kelly Davies, Mandy Hung, and Stephen Wright, published in the Journal of Experimental social psychology affirms that those who celebrated Christmas were reported as having more self-assurance and joviality and generally with more positive mood than those who did not celebrate the festival. The non-celebrants consistently reported a less positive mood in the cubicle with Christmas tree. In the same way, a second experiment proved that while Christians, especially pastors who celebrate Christmas are positively influenced by Christmas decorations in terms of mood and sense of well being; the non-Christians, who do not celebrate it, are threatened in their sense of self. They have their mood depressed with evidence of feelings of alienation and exclusion.

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<sup>100</sup> S. Terry. Can Christmas decoration be psychologically Harmful? Retrieved June 8, 2012, from [http. // www.psychologicalimpactofChristmas.com](http://www.psychologicalimpactofChristmas.com)

What the above facts indicate is that the impact of festivals, especially Christmas, cannot be viewed only within positive dimension, the issue of negative effects is also possible. Therefore, in the work of Terry Stewar, festivals, impact both positively and adversely, especially in terms of psychological influence on people. Economically, pastors and others who fail to spend within their means during such occasions are negatively impacted in that they may incur debt in the process and ultimately become psychologically in-balance.

We commend the work of Terry Stewar, especially for the fact that it does the work of assessment of the impact of festivals, which has a lot to do with the direction of this research. However, the absence of work done among pastors in Assemblies of God, Ogun State on such appraisal creates a great gap left unfilled, which our work tries to fill.

Coming from the background of the school of thought that holds that pastors are not professionals, and as such, should not take the issue of any adverse phenomenal effects on their remuneration as of what they should bother about, we consulted relevant works to test the validity of such claim. Are pastors not entitled to good remuneration from their Church leaders simply because they are not professionals? Should they not agitate for workable remuneration policy in their denomination mainly because their services are spiritually oriented? Should we disregard any economic hardship a pastor may suffer through drastic fall in his salaries, which his church remuneration policy orchestrates during Christian festivals? Do pastors actually have any right to advocate for a review of their church's remuneration policy if the periods of Christian festivals have adverse effects on their salaries? Is such a quest on the part of the affected pastors not tantamount to being carnal in their sacred duties? These constitute part of the pertinent questions of which we intend to generate relevant answers as we try to see whether or not pastors are professionals.

Scholars are interested in knowing how a person enters vocational Christian service. The question often asked is, does the person receive a divine calling from God or does he simply choose a career? In other words, is the pastoral ministry a profession or an occupation?

William opines that there is confusion of terminology in the words vocation, profession and career, which has generated tensions. According to him, each

Christian has a vocation which means commitment to God and his neighbor. He avers that career on the other hand, connotes a sense of selfishness, whereby one pursues one's own private goals. Accordingly, a career person will be interested in what he wants to be, and where he wants to go, rather than what the need of his community is.<sup>101</sup>

Trull and Carter indicate that profession historically meant "to testify on behalf of", or to stand for something. In this sense, being a professional person connotes implications about knowledge and moral responsibility.<sup>102</sup> Barbara Kikmund corroborates the above by asserting that the professional has knowledge of something that will be of benefit to the wider community, and he takes up the responsibility to utilize same knowledge to assist that wider human community.<sup>103</sup>

In order to prove that pastors are professionals, scholars like Darell Reeck<sup>104</sup>, James Adams<sup>105</sup>, Trull and Carter<sup>106</sup>, traced the history of the use of the word profession, and maintained that the earlier use of it was in relation to those who "professed" vows in a religious order, and their essential services provided to the society included both the sacred and secular, as monasteries became centers of artist and education.

James Adams characterized a profession by saying:

It performs a unique and essential social service; it requires a long period of general and specialized training, usually in connection with a university, it presupposes skills that are subjected to rational analysis, service to the community rather than economic gain is supposed to be the dominant motive; standards of competence are defined by a comprehensive self-governing organization of practitioners, a high degree of autonomy ... some code of ethics.<sup>107</sup>

While quoting Parson, Trull and Carter indicate that certain moral obligations, such as competence and lack of self-interest are essential for the performance of the

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<sup>101</sup> F.W. May. 1988. "Vocation, career and profession" (paper presented at ) "A consultation on Evangelicals and American Public Life" sponsored by the Institute for the study of American Evangelicals, 17-19, November, 3,6.

<sup>102</sup> J. E. Trull and J. Carter. 2004. *Ministerial ethics*: 25.

<sup>103</sup> B. Kikmund. 1990. Changing understanding of ordination. *The Presbyterian Predicament*. Ed. Coulter, J. Mulder, and L. Weeks, Louisville: John Knox, 154.

<sup>104</sup> D. Reeck. 1982. Ethics for the professions.33.

<sup>105</sup> J. L. Adams. 1958. The social import of the professions. *American Association of Theological Schools Bulletin* 23, 154.

<sup>106</sup> Trull and Carter. *Ministerial ethics*. 26,27.

<sup>107</sup> Adams. *Social import of the professions*. 156.

social function of a profession.<sup>108</sup> Edmund Pellegrino indicates that there are four fundamental features to a true profession. According to him, these features are: the nature of human needs it is to meet, the vulnerable state of those it is to serve, the expectations of trust it generates, and the social contract it implies. All these features, Edmund opines, set the traditional ideal of a profession apart from other occupations that lay claim to the title.<sup>109</sup> Patrick Miller, while agreeing with the position of the above authors, indicates that in the simplest terms, a profession is intended to be a combination of *techne* and *ethos* ... of technical knowledge and practice combined with responsible behaviour...joining of knowledge and character.<sup>110</sup>

Paul Camenisch posits that an attempt to compare the professional characteristics with the vocation of a pastor clearly shows that there are many areas of identity. In other words, the role a pastor is expected to play agrees with all of the features of a professional, except two, a code of ethics and autonomy, which, however, are partially met in some contemporary denominations.<sup>111</sup>

Although some scholars admitted that there are ways in which the contemporary pastor is unlike the traditional professionals, they, however, indicate that in some other ways the pastor's vocation fits in with that designation. For instance, he is usually concerned with the total person, being a generalist with a broad educational background, which is a trait of the professional. Equally, the status of the pastor hinges on competence in his field, especially in theological disciplines, both theoretical and practical.<sup>112</sup> For instance, an ordained AG's pastor should be able to explain what is meant by Christian marriage, and also perform a wedding service. Equally, as a professional, an AG's pastor is expected to be dedicated to serving others rather than himself. His primary motivation for service should not be financial reward and social status. He is obliged to put the needs of others before his own, for it is through this that he demonstrates practically what it means to be a called servant of Jesus Christ.

In the view of Trull and Carter:

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<sup>108</sup> Trull and Carter. *Ministerial ethics*. 30.

<sup>109</sup> E. D. Pellegrino. 1987. Professional ethics; moral decline or paradigm shift? *Religion and Intellectual life* 4 Springfield. 27.

<sup>110</sup> P. D. Miller. 2002. Work and faith. *Theology Today* 59: 349.

<sup>111</sup> P. Camenisch, 1991. Clergy ethics in a changing society: mapping the terrain. Ed. J. P. Wind, R. Burck, P. F. Camenisch, and D.P. McCann, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 121-215.

<sup>112</sup> Adams. *Social import of the professions*. 163.

Vocation in the sense of a calling by God, is, the essential element that prevents the concept of a professional minister from degenerating into an enterprise for personal success. While not demanding that a minister exemplify the notion of the professional in every way, we are convinced that there are good historical and theological reasons for asserting that the Christian minister is a professional. If this is the case, then the recovery of the religious and social meaning of the clergy vocation and profession can revitalize the church as well as build a foundation for an ethical ministry.<sup>113</sup>

What we, therefore, conclude in the light of the debate as to whether or not pastors are professionals, is that in many ways they are. As such, they are entitled to be treated with consideration, especially with regard to what affects their finances, however, they do not take material success as their primary goal in discharging their duties. In that sense, Church leaders are to consider the wellbeing of their pastors as of importance and put in place a workable remuneration policy that will favour the masses and not just the privileged few. According to Essien, treating others with decency and respect is equal to the golden rule, which is a prominent precept in the Bible and within Christianity.<sup>114</sup> The treatment of others, especially the pastors, involves valuing them and knowing they have value. In the subjective sense of work, since pastors are created in God's image and are persons with capability for self-realization, their work should be valued because they are workers rather than the products of their work. Work acquires its real meaning in so far as it allows them to realize their humanity. The fact that pastors' families are confronted with similar needs, like those of their counterparts in other professions, validates any attempt to see how Christian festivals affect them economically which is an issue of importance which our study aims at doing.

#### 2.4 Assemblies of God as an institution

Writers have written about the history of Assemblies of God, United State of America and Nigeria, its tenet of faith, mission and vision statements, three-fold

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<sup>113</sup> Trull and Carter. *Ministerial ethics*. 40.

<sup>114</sup> Essien, D.2010. *Work ethics and attitude of Christian civil workers in selected local government areas in Akwa-Ibom state, Nigeria*. PhD.Thesis: Dept. Of Religious Studies.University of Ibadan.



mission, core value, function declaration, organization pattern and mode of choosing leaders.

Livingstone and Cross traced the origin and founding of Assemblies of God in U.S.A in 1914 to the Pentecostal revival of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. They aver that sovereign missionary activities and relationship maintained with other denominations resulted in its expansion, through which it became a worldwide movement, with 140 autonomous loosely associated national groups of over 300,000 pastors in about 212 countries, serving almost 60 million members. Assemblies of God's World fellowship was formed in 1988.<sup>115</sup>

We, therefore, glean from the above works that Assemblies of God is a force to reckon with in the comity of churches. However, one is surprised to see that in our scope of research, it appears to be in obscurity, and its impact is sparingly felt in the State. This implies that an attempt to investigate the economic and religious effects of Christian festivals on its pastors, with the aim of procuring relevant solutions to their problems could be a way of boosting the image of the Church in our research setting. In this sense, we believe that any helpful recommendation(s) that could result in arresting adverse economic effects of such festivals could be a way of boosting the commitment of the concerned pastors in the state, which would ultimately enhance the image of the Church in our research area.

Assemblies of God, Nigeria, does not practice the Episcopalian system of church government, where an archbishop has authority over many bishops, who in turn have authority over a diocese, which simply means the churches under the jurisdiction of a bishop. The system of government practiced by AG is a mixture of both the Presbyterian and congregational forms of church government.

In practicing the Presbyterian system of government, according to Wayne, each set in order local church of a District is permitted to elect leaders to a session. This session has governing authority over the local church. There are also members of the presbytery at the District level, who are vested with authority over several churches in a region. This presbytery consists of some of the ordained pastors in the local churches over which it has authority. Moreover, some of the members of the presbytery, usually the District Superintendents and Secretaries are members of the

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<sup>115</sup> F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone. 2011. *The oxford dictionary of the Christian Church*. London: Oxford University Press, Accessed on June, 2011.



“general assembly” which has the authority over all the churches within the nation.<sup>116</sup> With this arrangement, the leaders govern not only their local churches, but all their churches within the nation. The national church government demonstrates the unity of the body of Christ, whereby the individual congregation is prevented from falling into doctrinal error as the presbytery exercise their control over all the local churches.

Wayne<sup>117</sup> posits further that the congregational system of government as reflected in AG can be understood in the sense that the system is “democratic”, whereby every full member of each local church has equal voice in decision making like others. In that sense, no person, pastor or person(s) is (are) in total control. In other words, each member has the right to vote on matters during business meetings. This arrangement is brought to the level of both District and General Council business sessions, where eligible voters participate accordingly. At the District business session, all pastors with the District credentials and one Deacon from each local church participate, while at the General Council, all the ordained ministers and one Deacon from each set in order section are part of the business meeting. In this arrangement, the high point is that the final decision on any important matter lies on the congregation.

David’s work accentuates the Pentecostal heritage and doctrine of AG. He asserts that it is classical Pentecostalism, Trinitarian, with belief in inspiration of the Bible, which is regarded as authoritative rule of faith and conduct.<sup>118</sup> If, as aforesaid, that AG regards the Bible as authoritative rule of faith, then our work finds relevance in this in that we are interested in knowing to what extent its pastors, who are the custodians of its teachings, articulate the Bible teachings as the standard for their conduct in relevant issues of life, especially during Christian festivals.

The executive council of Assemblies of God, according to Livingstone and Cross, assume leadership position through the process of election.<sup>119</sup> Ibe Kalu corroborates this by saying that the electoral system which AG uses in choosing its leaders at all levels does not give room for campaigning, but accredits eligible voters and contestants, utilizes balloting, shuns rigging or malpractice through straight forward and open counting of votes by experts who serve as the tellers committee to

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<sup>116</sup> G. Wayne. 1994. *Systematic theology*. U.S.A: Zondervan Publishing House. 920.

<sup>117</sup> G. Wayne. 1994. *Systematic theology*. 920.

<sup>118</sup> B. David. 2001. *World Christian encyclopedia*. London: Oxford University Press. 16 -18.

<sup>119</sup> Cross and Livingstone. *Dictionary of Christian church*.

determine the winner of an election.<sup>120</sup> In that sense, AG's mode of choosing leaders is democratic, in which eligible voters are allowed to exercise their rights, to determine who will become their leader(s). While we do not dispute the fact that the Church's mode of choosing its leaders has some democratic benefits, we do not believe that such a process has no disadvantages with some attendant consequences that were not addressed by the previous scholars. This we see as a gap needed to be filled through our work.

Hondmann avers that while there are deeply committed pastors within AG's fellowship, there are also few preachers who are confused by emphasis on healings and signs, including false teachings.<sup>121</sup> Although Hondmann was not really specific as to the nature of such false teachings he found among the few preachers in AG, we are interested in knowing if there are manifest of such teachings among them during Christian festivals. Do they stay clear from such tendency during the conduct of Christian festivals? If not, what is (are) the effect(s) of this on the religious dispositions of such pastors and their members? Hondmann failed to address this, thereby, leaving behind the gap yet unfilled.

Livingstone and Cross discuss the system of administration in AG, positing that the oversight of each local church is under the Section, District and General Council. As such, money flows from the local church to the headquarters.<sup>122</sup> To confirm the above, the office report of AG's worldwide research experts indicates that the church's missions' programme is designed within the context of self-propagating, self-governing and self-supporting.<sup>123</sup> The research office further addresses the church's vital role in the society, especially to the religious sector by affirming that as at 2006, it had constituencies in 212 countries, recording about 5000 converts per day, having 859 Bible Schools, 1131 extension programmes and 39 seminaries outside U.S.<sup>124</sup> The Wikipedia encyclopedia lends credence to this submission. It unveils that Assemblies of God, Nigeria, provides ministerial credentials to more than 11,650 pastors that cut across the (ordained, licentiates, exhorters and Christian workers), including more than 50 missionaries in over nine countries and territories of the

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<sup>120</sup> K.C. Ibe Kalu, 2013. "We don't "Sack" pastors" in Testimony News, Abuja, scribe publishers' Ltd, 12.

<sup>121</sup> S.M. Hondmann. 2013. What is the Assemblies of God, and what do we believe? Retrieved June 15, 2013, from GotQuestions. Org.

<sup>122</sup> Cross and Livingstone. *Dictionary of Christian church*.

<sup>123</sup> Assemblies of God World Research Office, AGWM currents facts and Highlights. 2007.

<sup>124</sup> Assemblies of God World Research Office.

world.<sup>125</sup> Ibe – Kalu corroborates the above by indicating that the church has more than 14,000 pastors and 14,000 churches in Nigeria, with a University (Evangelical University), several secondary schools under the supervision of its Board of Education, a bank (A.G. Homes), Television Station and several business outfits such as the Aba Press.<sup>126</sup>

We are interested in the issues raised by the above writers, because of their relevance to our work. For instance, we want to know if the policy of self-sponsorship of each AG's local church contributes meaningfully to the overall welfare of majority of the pastors, especially in terms of their financial life. If the Headquarters would leave the small struggling, or newly founded church to run itself without financial assistance, to what extent could this affect the pastors economically, especially during festive periods? This remains a question which the previous works failed to address of which we are interested in investigating, with the aim of proffering relevant solutions.

On the issue of appointment and termination of pastors in AG, Ibe Kalu accentuates that pastors are not sacked, but there are structures and procedures to be followed to determine when to relieve a pastor of his pastoral function, or get him assigned to a pastorate. He indicates that for every set in order church, it usually takes the winning of vote of confidence of the full members every 3 years for a pastor to have his services continue in the church. This, according to him, agrees with democratic process and articulates check and balances to avoid a pastor becoming high handed and running of the church carnally.<sup>127</sup> He further adds that the remuneration of each pastor is calculated relatively to his church's income.<sup>128</sup>

We see the issue of pastors' salaries as a problem of which Ibe Kalu seems to be quite equivocal in his approach, for failing to say if the remuneration policy of the church is really favouring the majority of the pastors or not. If the remuneration of each pastor is calculated relatively to his church income, what then becomes the fate of one who is pastoring a small church, or any of those churches in economically disadvantaged areas? Furthermore, what becomes the fate of a pastor whose members are non-natives, majority of who are to travel for certain Christian festivals, and the

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<sup>125</sup> Wikipedia, the free Encyclopedia. Retrieved June 15, 2013.

<sup>126</sup> K.C. Ibe Kalu, 2013, "We don't "Sack" pastors". 12.

<sup>127</sup> K.C. Ibe Kalu, 2013, "We don't "Sack" pastors"

<sup>128</sup> K.C. Ibe Kalu, 2013, "We don't "Sack" pastors"

church income invariably drops due to the fact that those who travel could not pay their tithes, which constitute the church primary source of income? Will such conditions indicated above affect the economic and religious dispositions of the pastor or not? These are some of the pertinent questions that our work aims at investigating as we assess the impact of Christian festivals on AG's pastors in Ogun State, in order to determine their economic and religious effects on them.

Iruoma posits that the issue of remuneration in the ecclesiastical circle is nothing to write home about.<sup>129</sup> He avers that this position is borne of at least six erroneous views. First, that God who calls the pastors should be the one to remunerate them. Second, if pastors are salary earners as other secular workers, their desire for effectiveness and efficiency would dwindle, thereby setting their minds on the earthly things. Third, if they are fatly paid, they would make little input, but if given little they would make much contribution by learning to lean on or trust God. Fourth, if they are fatly paid, they would rub shoulders with their leaders and hardly abide by the leadership instruction. In addition, stressing further on the wrong views, Iruoma posits that, for the leader to attract attention and respect from pastors under them, those leaders should be financially better than they, since money is power and whoever that controls it, controls the government and her activities. Lastly, that a leader should wink at the remuneration of his pastors, so that he might be able to wield power over them as his subjects.

Iruoma stresses further that some presidents and founders of churches see their churches as their private companies whose survival demands much money and, as a result, their pastors are given stipend so as to conserve money for the continuum of the church. He discloses that there is need that remuneration principles be imbibed by church leaders, because whatever is deducible in order to justify poor remuneration of a pastor is contrary to biblical injunction on remuneration (I Tim. 5:18).

In order to assist the church in the above direction, Iruoma discusses five remuneration principles in church administration. First, we have equality principle which sees everybody as being the same and does not favour people regardless of their family size, gravity of workers needs, years of service, hierarchy, education, effort and contributions of any individual in the organization, but sees every worker

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<sup>129</sup>I.H. Iruoma. 2003. *Church administration*. Owerri: Okson Publishers. 191-198.

as having equal share or remuneration. Those who favour this principle according to him, holds that every activity has its own place of importance and it is unique in itself. The activity that seems to be neglected cannot be neglected but is worth considering in the organization for which an appointment is made. As such, it is as relevant as those activities that are apparently seen in the organization. While this principle has both merits and demerits, it depends much on workable environment before it can be result oriented. Second, there is the centrality principle, which stresses the need to look for those that perform harder than others or those that make more contributions than others and remunerate them accordingly. He avers that this operates with the sole aim and purpose of encouraging labour and productivity through adequate compensation which agrees with Paul's position that "elders who do good work as leaders should be considered worthy of receiving double pay, especially those who work hard..." (I Tim. 5:17).

Third, there is the universal principle, which considers what happens in the society, especially how the civil servants and workers in private establishments are being compensated. In it, pastors are regarded as part of the society and are seen as being affected by it. As such, it aims not only at retaining them or keeping them from unnecessary hardship, but equally to prevent them from leaving their pastoral work in search of greener pasture. While he stresses that opponents of this principle indicate that it could breed hirelings into church work, Iruoma refutes it by indicating that there are already hirelings in church work in the absence of it, hence, the universal principle of remuneration is not the root cause but human nature who under any condition would display what is in him no matter what principle is in practice.

Fourth, he posits also that we have the subjectivity principle, which is a faith activity on the side of the workers (pastors) under this arrangement. Since it is faith based, rationality plays no role and the pastor in question does not claim to be working and should not be bold to count himself a worker. Where this principle is put in place, Iruoma maintains that much would be accomplished at the first stage, but with elongation of time, only little will be accomplished. Although Iruoma does not give any example of churches that are disposed to this arrangement, we, however, see it as the true picture of what obtains in AG, Nigeria. For instance, our investigation reveals that the constitution of AG, article X, section 7(2) indicates that each pastor is

not an employee of the church, and that there exists no contract of employment between him and his church.

Lastly, Iruoma avers that there is the communism principle, which refers to the meeting of people's needs according to their levels or gravities. It does not consider how much contribution the partaker or beneficiary makes into the common purse as to have his needs and that of others met. Unlike equality principle, it takes cognizance of family size, level of sickness, and other social needs. While it has its own merits, Iruoma posits that it is bound to infect discouragement and unfaithfulness among the workers, especially where the purse becomes lean and people try to say what may not be real as to attract higher remuneration

The above work is relevant to the present research in that one of the issues of concern to us during Christian festivals is the nexus between AG's remuneration policy of its pastors and the economic effects of such festivals on these pastors. In other words, we tend to know, whether or not the remuneration policy favours the majority of the pastors in Ogun State during such festivals. If not, what should be done in order to assist them, so that they do not suffer economic hardship during such occasions?<sup>130</sup> While Iruoma's work has bearing on our research, the fact that he neither addresses issues within the bearing of AG pastors, nor gives answers to the above pertinent questions calls for the need for our work to fill the existing gap.

We have benefited indeed from each of the works reviewed, as all provided good materials for us as useful and indispensable sources. We, therefore, do not find ourselves delving or exploring into an enterprise of which previous works do not show any interest. Nonetheless, none of these works has been able to harness all the points garnered within the bearing of what obtains in our research setting, especially in relation to our problem area (assessment of the impact of Christian festivals on pastors' financial and spiritual lives in Assemblies of God, Ogun State, Nigeria). Are pastors always benefitting during the course of any Christian festival? Or are there factors that may not allow this to be their experience? What are their moral or religious dispositions during such occasions? Do they articulate relevant Christian principles to guide their actions during such occasions? Or do they disregard such principles? If this is the case, what factor(s) is or are responsible? And what result in

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<sup>130</sup> I.H. Iruoma. 2003. *Church administration*.

the process, including the panacea to correct such tendencies? We see the above pertinent issues or questions as not properly addressed by the authors we consulted in the course of this work, and it becomes a vacuum yet to be filled. This, therefore, in the final analysis, justifies the need for our work being used as a means to fill the existing gap in scholarship.

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## CHAPTER THREE

### DESCRIPTIONS OF THE SELECTED CHRISTIAN FESTIVALS IN OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

#### 3.0 Introduction

We have selected three of the Christian festivals for discussion in this chapter. These are Christmas, Easter and Harvest Thanksgiving festivals. While there are other ones celebrated by some churches, these three are the ones observed in Assemblies of God, Nigeria, hence our concentration will be only on them.

Festival is a day, period or season of festivity, merry making, celebration, etc. The term festival transcends mere visual sceneries, activities of merriments, music, dancing and cultural displays. It involves a plethora of complex ideas, thoughts, religions, rituals, experiences of human history and activities over a long period of time. According to Walter, a festival is an occasion of public or private rejoicing to commemorate some significant event or personage. The element of celebration has a special meaning in the cycle of religious occasions and the rites and ceremonies that are associated with the particular day.<sup>1</sup>

Certain works consulted indicate that the earliest Christians encouraged the observance of holidays (festivals) as a way of reminding oneself of important spiritual things. Origen, for instance, is said to have verified the observance of several holidays, and explained their usefulness to the Christian believers in this quotation:

We ourselves are accustomed to observe certain days. For example, there is the Lord's Day, the preparation, Easter, and Pentecost...The majority of those who are accounted believers... require some sensible memorials to prevent spiritual things from passing completely away from their minds. For they are either unable, or unwilling to keep every day in this manner.<sup>2</sup>

Notwithstanding, it is paramount to indicate that the early church fathers did not fail to emphasize that there was need for the Christian holidays to be observed in a way that is very unlike pagan holidays. In this sense, they were to be done with solemnity and decorum, to enliven their being in contrast to the riotousness of the pagan celebrations. To this end, Origen advanced a defense for Christianity:

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<sup>1</sup> A. E. Walter. 1995. *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible*. Grand Rapid: Baker House. 1:783.

<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia free Encyclopedia, Origen (C. 245), ANF 9. 428, Retrieved June 29, 2013.

Compare the festivals that are observed among us... with the public feasts of Celsus and the pagans. Would you not say that ours are much more sacred observances than those feasts in which the lust of the flesh runs riot and leads to drunkenness and debauchery?<sup>3</sup>

What is said in the definition given earlier by Walter finds bearing within the context of each of our selected festivals discussed extensively in the following sub-headings:

### 3.1 Christmas festival

#### 3.1.1 Meaning of Christmas festival

Christmas is the annual festival, in which Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus by the Virgin Mary as a fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah.<sup>4</sup> Our investigation reveals that there are two accounts in which the Bible describes the event that surrounds the birth of Jesus Christ. These are found in the Gospel of Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 1:26 to 2:40. These accounts indicate that Virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus in the city of Bethlehem, and was assisted by her husband, Joseph. The birth took place in a stable, surrounded by farm animals. Thereafter, he received visits both from wise men that came from the East, and certain Jewish shepherds. These visitors were guided by a star and an angel respectively. A popular tradition which does not strictly follow the Biblical record holds that the three Kings or wise men who visited the baby Jesus at his birth were by name Melchior, Caspar and Balthazar. The Biblical account, however, does not specify the number of these men, or astrologers, who brought as gifts to the infant Jesus, gold, frankincense, and myrrh. To commemorate this visit of the magi, Gerza indicates that some churches celebrate the feast of Epiphany on January 6.<sup>5</sup>

With regard to the mystery surrounding the birth of Jesus as recorded in the Bible accounts, our investigation revealed that there are certain pagan comparisons. For instance, the Hindu gods Krishna, Gantama Buddha<sup>6</sup> and Zoroaster were reportedly said to be the products of virgin births. Alexander the Great, Constantine

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<sup>3</sup> H. Hanegreaff. 1993. Is Christmas Christian Festival? *The Christian Research Newsletter* 6: 5. Christian Research Institute. [http://www.ichet.org/pub/resources/text/crri/crri-nwsl/com\\_0056a.txt](http://www.ichet.org/pub/resources/text/crri/crri-nwsl/com_0056a.txt)

<sup>4</sup> V. Gerza. 2006. *The nativity: history and legend*. London: Penguin, 22.

<sup>5</sup> The Real Story of Christmas. Retrieved June 18, 2012, from <http://www.christmas.com>

<sup>6</sup> Retrieved Nov. 12, 2012, from [www.nairaland.com/193520/there-many...](http://www.nairaland.com/193520/there-many...)

and Nero equally claimed to have virgin births. In the ancient world, virgin birth was a sign of distinction.

The 25th of December recognized for the birth of Jesus is not derived from the Bible. This date was celebrated worldwide for thousands of years before Jesus was born. It was officially recognized on Roman calendar about 336 A.D, through the decree of Pope Sylvester in 320 A.D. to coincide with the sun-god feast, Saturnalia. It is generally recognized, however, that if the visiting shepherd had been out of the fields with their flocks (as reported by Luke in the New Testament, Lk 2:6), the birth of Jesus would have been in December.

Scholars consulted indicate that one of the early references to the date of the nativity as December 25th was the chronograph of 354 A.D, which was an illuminated manuscript compiled in Rome.<sup>7</sup> Christmas received acceptable recognition in the Christian East as part of the revival of Catholicism after the death of the Pro-Arian Emperor Valens at the Battle of Adrianople in 378 A.D. It was introduced to Constantinople in 379 A.D, and later to Antioch in about 380 A.D. Its celebration, however, disappeared after the resignation of Bishop Gregory of Nazianzus in 381 A.D., but was reintroduced by John Chrysostom in about 400 A.D.<sup>8</sup>

The precise year of Jesus' birth is unknown; however, some historians placed it between 7 and 2 B.C.<sup>9</sup> According to scholars, western Christianity had placed the birth of Jesus, celebrated by Christians on December 25th by the early – to mid 4<sup>th</sup> century. This date was equally adopted in the East.<sup>10</sup>

The word “Christmas” originated from a compound word meaning “Christ’s mass”, taking root from the Middle English Cristemasse, which also derived from old English Cristesmasse, literally mean “Christian Mass”. Apart from the word “Christmass”, other names used to describe the birth of Jesus include “Mid winter”, used by Anglo-Saxons, “Nativity”, meaning “birth”, “Yule” which refers to the period corresponding to January and December, and “Noel”, from old French Nael, meaning the day of birth.

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<sup>7</sup> G. Wainwright, K. B. Westerfield. 2005. *The oxford history of Christian worship* .Oxford University Press. Google .com. Retrieved March 3, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> C.C. Martindale 1908. “Christmas” The Catholic Encyclopedia. New York: Robert Appleton Company. 3.

<sup>9</sup> C.C. Martindale 1908. “Christmas” The Catholic Encyclopedia.

<sup>10</sup> C.C. Martindale 1908. “Christmas” The Catholic Encyclopedia.

Scholars indicate that Christmas, by nature, has a lot of personal and collective controversial opinions regarding its being either a Christian or pagan holiday.<sup>11</sup> Those who hold that it is of pagan origin favour its rejection and that it should be ignored by enlightened citizens of the contemporary world. Conversely, to those who support it, it is a set of nice stories and traditions about love and giving, that are worthy of being emphasized once in a year. To its critics, it is just a very aggressive business strategy to get millions of people to buy and give lot of goods.

Equally, Christmas is held by some writers<sup>12</sup> to be a hotchpotch of celebrations, personal behaviours and attitudes, rituals or worships, the selling, buying of a lot of gifts, a public and private gathering, that are brought together from ancient pagan festivals, a variety of ethnic traditions, and biblical stories of Jesus' birth, historic religious traditions and practices and beliefs, and secular business strategies that are all focused around December 25<sup>th</sup>.

### 3.1.2 Etymology and history of Christmas

Some scholars traced the origin of the date Dec. 25th in which the birth of Jesus is celebrated to Roman pagan holiday of Saturnalia. Such writers believed that Christianity imported the Saturnalia festival with the hope of taking the pagan masses in with it, and that this resulted in conversion of many of them who were promised that they could still continue this celebration if they became Christians.<sup>13</sup> Where this is true, one may ask if it is morally appropriate to use such strategy to bring in prospects into the contemporary Church. While we believe that the church can utilize strategies to expand its fold, we do not think it is morally appropriate to use the above means to solicit converts into its fold, for the products of such strategy could be highly far from genuine conversion. We gathered through our investigation, that this may be the brain behind the nature of the contemporary church, where the percentage of those genuinely converted in its membership is no match with that of the unconverted. This, without doubt, may be a reason for the increase in societal evils, despite an unprecedented proliferation of Churches.

In 245 A.D, Origen of Alexandria, while writing about Leviticus 12:1-8, indicated that the scripture indicates that only sinners celebrated their birthdays,

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<sup>11</sup> G. North. 2012. The humbug affair. Retrieved Nov. 12, 2012, from Clilnegreria.com/./clil-hotch-porch/.

<sup>12</sup> G. North. 2012. The humbug affair.

<sup>13</sup> G. North. 2012. *The humbug affair*.

namely Pharaoh, who hanged his chief Baker (Gen. 40:20-22), and Herod, who beheaded John the Baptist (Mk. 6:21-27), and that certain saints, namely Jeremiah and Job, cursed the day of their birth (Jeremiah 20:14-15, Job 3:1-16).<sup>14</sup> In a similar way, in 303 A.D., Arnobius ridiculed the idea of celebrating the birthdays of gods.<sup>15</sup> However, since Christians do not celebrate Christ's birth as God, but as a man, this is no valid evidence against the celebration of Christmas.

According to Patrick, the celebration of Christmas witnessed oppositions and counter oppositions in different ages. For instance, during the middle age, while the prominence of Christmas Day increased gradually after Charlemagne was crowned Emperor on Christmas Day in 800 A.D., King Edmund the Martyr was anointed on Christmas day, in 855 A.D. and its gifts-giving was usually between people with legal relationships, such as tenant and landlord<sup>16</sup>.

The reformation period, on the other hand, gave a great challenge to its survival. Following the protestant reformation, the group known as puritans condemned Christmas celebration strongly. It was considered to be a Catholic invention and the "trappings of popery" or the "rags of the Beast".<sup>17</sup> The Catholic Church, however, responded promptly to this allegation by promoting it in a more religiously oriented form. Hence, King Charles I of England gave directives to his noblemen and gentry to return to their landed estates during midwinter in order to keep up with their old style of Christmas generosity. However, due to the parliamentary victory over Charles I during the England civil war, the England's puritan rulers banned Christmas celebration in 1647A.D. The puritans' vigorously attempted to remove the pagan elements, such as Christmas tree, mistletoe, holly wreath and Yule logs, they claimed were in Christmas. As they led English parliament, they considered it "a popish festival with no biblical justification" and a time of wasteful immoral behavior.<sup>18</sup>

The Wikipedia Encyclopedia indicates that the restoration of King Charles II in 1660 A.D. ended the ban on Christmas celebration. Notwithstanding; many

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<sup>14</sup> Origen. Levit, Hom. Viii, Migne P. G., xii, 495. Retrieved June 29, 2013.

<sup>15</sup> G.McCracken. Arnobius of Sicca: the case Against the Pagan, 2: 83 and G. Brunner (1936) "Arnobius eine zuege gegen weilinachtsfest? J.L.W 13, 178-181.

<sup>16</sup> P. McCireary, Patrick. 1990. Place in the American Christmas. (JSTOR). *Geographical Review*. January, 80: 1: 32-42, Retrieved September 10, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> C. Durston. 1985. Lords of miracle: the puritan war on Christmas 1642-60. *History Today*. December, Pg7-14. Archived at the internet Archive.

<sup>18</sup> Christmas in the colonies time. Retrieved December 25, 2011.

clergymen still became disenchanted with this festival. What we glean from the above is that opposition with regard to celebration of Christian festivals, precisely Christmas, has been from time.<sup>19</sup> In that case, the need to discuss the moral appropriateness, or otherwise, of its celebration is fundamental issue of consideration to our work. Most of our respondents saw nothing wrong or immoral in Christmas' celebration. According to them, the idea of Christmas' celebration is a noble one, nonetheless; they affirmed that those celebrating it must ensure that they allow their actions during such occasions to conform to what the Bible teaches for moral approval. This is what we believe would make the celebrants to meet the expectation of the functionalist theory that emphasises that religion unites members of the society to affirm their common beliefs and values

### 3.1.3 Christmas controversy

There are two important controversies trailing the event of Christmas, according to our findings. First, we have the one that borders on the date of Jesus' birth. Second, the one that addresses issue of whether or not the festival should be celebrated by the Christians.

The Wikipedia Encyclopedia indicates that popular myth puts the birth of Jesus on December 25<sup>th</sup> in the year I B.C.<sup>20</sup> However, the New Testament writers do not give a specific date. Moreover, St Mark's Gospel, which was the earliest, written about 65 A.D., begins with an adult Jesus, which is an indication that the earliest Christians did not bother much, nor did they celebrate the birth of Jesus.

Investigation from the works of Scholars consulted indicates that in the earliest century of Christianity, there was no specific date associated with the birth of Jesus. Various dates were proposed and January 6 prevailed initially at least in the East, until December 25<sup>th</sup> eventually won worldwide acceptance. In spite of this, there are still some Christians who are not obliged to acceptance of this date, claiming that it is a historical fact that Christmas is not the day or the season when Christ was born, which doing so, to them, implies observing a day that is a lie. For instance, the God's Kingdom Society (G.K.S) and the Church of Christ are among those who do not

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<sup>19</sup> Wikipedia free Encyclopedia. *Origin of Christian festivals*. Retrieved June 29, 2013.

<sup>20</sup> Wikipedia free Encyclopedia. *Origin of Christian festivals*.

celebrate Christmas. Such ones, according to our investigation, are however in the minority.

The second controversy borders on whether or not the celebration is pagan oriented. A school of thought holds that the December date was chosen as a transfer of date of pagan's celebration of Sol Invictus to the bearing of Christianity. For instance, Paul Ernst, a German scholar, argued that Christmas was placed on December 25th to correspond with the Roman Solar holiday Dies Natalis Solis Invicti and was, therefore, a paganism that debased the true church.<sup>21</sup> In the same way, it is believed that certain customs associated with Christmas celebration, such as Christmas tree, Mistletoe, Gift-giving and Santa Claus have pagan origins. Further, in 245 A.D., the theologian Origen of Alexandria was quoted as saying "only sinners (like Pharaoh and Herod)" celebrated their birthdays.<sup>22</sup>

Some of the auxiliary points used to back up the above position are; first, that it cannot be found in the Bible, and that Christ did not instruct his disciples to observe or celebrate His birthday. This argument indicates, according to this school of thought, that it makes no sense to keep a religious holiday that is not biblical, which Christ never sanctioned. It goes further to say that since Christians are not clearly authorized by the Bible to celebrate Christ's birth, we should have no celebration or even special services purposed to commemorate it. On the other hand, it stresses that the Bible explicitly tells the Christians to remember Christ's death in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, and Christians are to celebrate His resurrection by assembling each first day of the week, but account showing precedence for celebrating His birth is completely not available in the Bible.

Second, we gathered that it is argued that Santa Claus (Father Christmas) is a lie that some teach their children every year. The implication of this is that it is false, because it has nothing to do with Christ or His birth. It is, therefore, said that it makes no sense to keep a religious holiday that promotes lying to children. Third, it is said that Christmas is now commercialized and materialistic. In other words, because the birth of Christ has been commercialized and secularized, the real meaning of the season has been lost. It is argued, that business people who make most of their profits

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<sup>21</sup> Wikipedia free Encyclopedia. *Origin of Christian festivals*.

<sup>22</sup> D. C. Pack. 2009. The true origin of Christmas. Retrieved June 18, 2012, from <http://www.christmas.com>



during this period of the year have greatly promoted Christmas celebration. Commercialization, therefore, plays an important part in keeping the festival alive and kicking. Furthermore, it is argued that well meaning people plunge into debt during the festival, while attempting to give gifts to others, which in turn motivates such beneficiaries for reciprocation.

Equally, it is maintained that celebrating Christmas violates at least the first three of the Ten Commandments in the Bible, with the use of such passages like Col. 2:16-17 “ Let no man therefore judge you ...in respect of an holiday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days....”. It is stressed that the scripture forbids it by warning against the observance of special months, seasons, days and religious festivals. However, proper exegete shows that what this Bible passage forbids is the celebration of religious seasons or holy days when they have been prescribed as religious duty and necessary for holiness and spirituality. In the absence of such prescription, those who observe special days are said to be doing so unto the Lord “He that regards the day, regards it unto the Lord...and gives God thanks.” (Rm. 14:6 ).

The idea underlying the position of the above critics of Christmas festival is that Christians should not celebrate it. However, S.E. Hijmans,<sup>23</sup> whose work we also consulted, maintained that “while they (Christians of Rome) were aware that pagans called the same day chosen for celebration of Jesus’ birth, the “birthday” of Sol Invictus, this did not concern them and did not play any role in their choice of date for Christmas. To add to this, Roll Susan argues that contrary to the view that the choice of Dec. 25th date is rooted in pagan invention, the Emperor Aurelian, who in 274 instituted the holiday of Dies Natalis Solis Invicti, did so partly as an attempt to give a pagan significance to a date which the Roman Christians already considered of importance to them.<sup>24</sup> In that case, there is no connection between the festival and pagan’s pervert. Hence, Christians should celebrate it. In doing so, they are not involved in idolatry, but practice that does not run contrary to the beliefs of their religion, according to the expectation of the functionalist theory of Emile Durkheim. Most of our respondents in the focus group discussion and the oral interview agreed

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<sup>23</sup>S.E. Hijmans. Sol the sun in the Art and religions of Rome, Retrieved June 18, 2012, from <http://www.chriastmas.com>

<sup>24</sup> W. J. Tighe. 2009. “Calculating Christmas”, 10 – 31. Retrieved 18 June, 2012, from [http. // www.christmas.com](http://www.christmas.com)

that there is nothing immoral in the observance of Christmas festival because in doing so, one does not go contrary to the teachings of the Bible.

### 3.1.4 Features of Christmas celebration

Scholars reveal that Christmas is celebrated as a major festival and public holiday in many parts of the world, including some countries that are not dominated by the Christian population. Among notable countries in which the festival is, however, not a public holiday, we have People's Republic of China<sup>25</sup> (except Macao and Hong Kong), Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Japan, Iran, Turkey, North Korea and Thailand.

The celebration of Christmas usually witness highest annual church attendance. Church services are held on Christmas day, in which, sermon on the essence of the birth of Christ is preached from the pulpit. The period of Christmas witnesses family reunion and exchange of gifts among other things. In Ogun State, especially in Assemblies of God, we observed that the following features characterize the Christmas season:

#### 1. **Christmas decoration**

The practice of Christmas decorations, according to Miles, has a long history. For instance, in 15<sup>th</sup> century, it was the custom for all churches and houses to be decorated with whatsoever the season of the year afforded to be green, for Christmas colour is green<sup>26</sup>. In various towns of Ogun State, our investigation revealed that Christmas lights are hung in streets, churches, banks and other public places and commercial houses. Christmas trees are equally found in other prominent places like schools, government and private establishments. Hence, the aesthetic that characterizes the environment usually exceeds what obtained at the pre-Christmas season.

#### 2. **Music and carols**

Christmas carol and music form an integral part of Christmas season worldwide. In church services, various Christian hymns are sung. According to

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<sup>25</sup> Christmas in China: How to Celebrate in Mainland, Hong Kong, Macau. Retrieved Sept. 10, 2011, from [www.travelchinaguide.com/tips/Holidays in Chinaon](http://www.travelchinaguide.com/tips/Holidays%20in%20Chinaon) .

<sup>26</sup> C.A. Miles. 1976. Christmas Customs and traditions. London: Courier Donver Publication. 272.

Forbes, the songs we know specifically as carols were originally communal folk song during celebrations, such as “harvest tide” as well as Christmas.<sup>27</sup> With time, carols began to be sung in the church. It is on record that some reformers, like Martin Luther, wrote carols and encouraged their use in church worship, and Charles Wesley equally understood their importance in the same direction. The best known Carol song, “Hark! The Herald Angels sing”, according to the work of Dudley consulted, was originally entitled “Hark! How All the Welian Ring ?”.<sup>28</sup>

While AG Church does not forbid the use of music and carol during Christmas festival, we gathered that the percentage of those parishes investigated that actively organized the Carol service was relatively small when compared to those who did not. This was attributed to the smallness in size of most of its parishes in Ogun State. Among the parishes in which our research revealed that such service occurs annually, we have Ayegbami and Sabo 1 in Sagamu, Ondo road in Ijebu-Ode, Ibara and Adedotun in Abeokuta, Ifo and Sango 1 in Sango/Ifo. Respondents disclosed that the scenario during such service refreshes their minds with what the Christmas season commemorates, and boosts their psychological and spiritual dispositions positively.

### 3. **Christmas cards**

Christmas cards are illustrated messages used to exchange greetings between friends and family members during the Christmas season. Among the people of Ogun State, Christmas cards are purchased in considerable quantities, bearing feature of artwork, beautifully designed with relevant Christmas season’s messages. Unlike what is the case among members of some Christian denominations, our investigation revealed that the use of Christmas Cards is not very common among members and pastors of AG in Ogun State. This, we learnt could not be unconnected with the fact that majority of them are semi-literate. Hence, they do not attach serious importance to this aspect of Christmas celebration. Nonetheless, we discovered that some of the Church leaders, such as the District Superintendents, prominent Sectional leaders and pastors use this annually as a means of communicating their goodwill messages to their pastors and members during the season.

### 4. **Father Christmas**

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<sup>27</sup> B. C. Forbes. 2007. Christmas a candid history. California: University of California Press. 68 – 79

<sup>28</sup> S. Dudley. 1987. A flame of love. London: retrieved 8 June, 2012, from [http:// www.christmas.com](http://www.christmas.com)

This is a jolly, well nourished, white-bearded man who represents the spirit of good cheer during Christmas. Scholars are of the opinion that the practice of Father Christmas predates the Saint Claus character, having first been recorded as early as 17<sup>th</sup> century in England.<sup>29</sup> In Ogun State, particularly among AG's members, according to our findings, the Father Christmas show has been associated with the act of giving of gifts to children during the Christmas period. It adds colour to the season, as this show features in schools, churches, media houses and other places of interest.

Most children in Ogun State look ahead to Christmas period in our research setting, especially because of this feature of Father Christmas show. Although many parents around the world participate in taking their children to the Father Christmas show, some have come to reject this practice. They consider it to be deceptive and exploitative in that what the children are given may not commensurate with what they pay. This thereby makes the show a commercial, rather than philanthropic enterprise.

Our investigation revealed that, unlike what used to be the case in the past, in which AG's pastors and members regarded the Father Christmas show as a sign of worldliness, with carnal tendency, their interest in this aspect of Christmas celebration has increased. Few of the parishes that are financially viable now at times, organize the show, primarily as publicity strategy, to promote the church before their community, especially to bring in the children to the parishes, hoping that through this their parents can become members later.

##### **5. Gift-giving**

The previous works<sup>30</sup> indicate that an integral aspect of modern Christmas is exchange of gifts. This practice makes the season to be the most profitable time of the year, for business men and women, especially retailers in Ogun State. Some hold that this practice is traced to the tradition that associates it with Saint Nicholas. Others, however, believe that it could be traced to the Magi who visited the baby Jesus with gold, frankincense and myrrh after his birth.

We observed in the course of our investigation, that the way this integral aspect of the Christmas festival occurred within AG's parishes in Ogun State was relative to their membership composition. While considerable number of the members of parishes dominated by the indigenes, for instance, Adedotun in Abeokuta claimed to

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<sup>29</sup> H. Douglas. 2001. Christ online Etymology Dictionary. Retrieved 16 November, 2010, from <http://www.christmas.com>

<sup>30</sup> Miles. *Christmas customs*. 272.

have benefited immensely from such camaraderie's gesture, those in parishes with greater proportion of the non-indigenes, like the case of Sango 1, recorded lower participation, owing to mass traveling of the members during the season. The above situation also determined the way each pastor benefitted in the Gift giving exercise. Whereas in the former the pastor benefitted much, in the latter it was comparatively lower.

#### 6. **Christmas eve/Christmas service**

Some churches conduct special evening services at the eve of the Christmas day. At such services, carol songs feature among other things. Christmas masses at times; may be solemn or buoyant, depending on the particular culture where it is conducted.<sup>31</sup> Investigation revealed that Assemblies of God parishes do not attach serious meaning to the conduct of Christmas Eve; rather, all focus is on the main Christmas day service.

On the very day of Christmas celebration, each member of the Christian families dresses in new clothes, specifically bought to celebrate the occasion, in high festive mood. Services are held in all churches. Our investigation revealed that some of the members of AG that had not been regular in the church come to such services held on Christmas day, including some neighbours who have not been attending any church before then. However, in parishes dominated by the non-natives, the result of this condition was betrayed by mass traveling of some members to their home towns for the celebration. The sermons that proceed from the pulpits from the pastors or clergies on Christmas day focus on the significance of Christ's birth. This gives opportunity for the Christians to re-evaluate their relationship with the Saviour whose birth is being celebrated. At the end of such services, individual Christians return to their homes for festivity, visit to friends, neighbours, tourist centres and recreation.

#### 3.1.5 **The significance of Christmas**

Christmas, to the Christians, is very significant. Its significance according to Scholars and our respondents can be understood, apart from other things, in the following ways:

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<sup>31</sup> Retrieved June 8, 2012, from [http:// www.thereligiousaspectofxmas.com](http://www.thereligiousaspectofxmas.com)

First, it is a celebration of reminiscence, that through the birth of Christ, the Old Testament's messianic prophesy became fulfilled. Like the Christians hold, this implies that the Bible's record, especially those portions with eschatological implications are valid and reliable. For if Jesus was born by a virgin, as predicted, against the natural possibility of man's reasoning, by implication, those other prophesies in the Bible yet to be fulfilled are also going to be fulfilled at their due course.

Second, as much as the festival commemorates the birth of Jesus into the world, it equally serves as a symbol of deep significant truth of the spiritual life. Although He was born into a world where ignorance, greed, hypocrisy and other vices were extolled and purity and morality rejected, Jesus lived a life that brought transformation to the lives of people. This becomes the real essence of Christmas, when the Divine element takes over to get expressed in the heart of man.

Third, both the time and manner of his birth portray a vital significance. He was not born in a palace, or into a very wealthy or learned family. Rather, His birth took place in a simple lowly place and to a humble and poor couple, who had no material wealth to boast of but their life of purity. Hence, Christ's birth is significant in that it teaches humility. This quality of humility, according to previous research, is one of the most integral aspects of the occasion.<sup>32</sup>

Going by the record of the Bible, the basic message of Christmas is to announce the coming of God, the Creator of the universe to the world in human form, through the process of incarnation. This is why the account of John the Apostle indicates that though no man had seen God before, the coming of Jesus, the Son of God, who is the God that came in human form, has made man to see God in the form of humanity (Jn 1:18). Added to this, as some traced the practice of Gift-giving during Christmas to the gifts of the Magi to Jesus as they demonstrated their worship, this should assist us to know that the primary and most important gift is God's gift of His only Son (Jn 3:16), who has been sent to save the world (Jn 3:17). The above points simply show that it is the incarnation of God in human flesh and the gift of His Son, Jesus, for the salvation of the world that made Christmas celebration to be distinct from other

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<sup>32</sup> Retrieved June 8, 2012, from <http://www.TheSignificanceOfChristmas.com>

secular festivals among the available human's calendar of annual holidays. It is through this that we have true peace and joy in human's heart.

Unfortunately, the greatest challenge during this celebration, as we gathered through our respondents, is that very few people ever pause to consider the above intrinsic values of the Christmas festival. Many who are excited about preparations for the celebration would prefer not knowing about its real significance that would have made their celebration meaningful beyond what obtains in the contemporary world. Majority of our respondents, both in the focus group discussion and oral interview attested to this fact, that where the celebrants would translate the truth of the season to practical living, our society, especially the church, would have been better in terms of moral living. They agreed that the presence of most of the vices of our time, especially among pastors and their members, is a product of the absence of this essential element that could have aided Christmas in generation of impact to affect people's religious and moral life positively. And so, celebrating Christmas in the way that brings its significance into focus, according to our respondents, is the best way to make the festival to become essentially meaningful.

## **3.2 Easter festival**

### **3.2.1 Meaning and origin of Easter festival**

Easter is the season in which Christians commemorate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Writers indicate that it is regarded as the most important of all Christian festivals. As such, the Christians hold that Jesus' resurrection is the central focus of Christian faith. He is believed to have died for the sin of humanity; while at His resurrection He promised eternal life to all who believe in Him.

The origin of Easter festival is trailed with controversy. For instance, some scholars believe that the name "Easter" originated with the name of an ancient goddess. Venerable Bede (672- 735 CE) affirmed in his book, *De Rotione Temporum*, that this festival was named after Eostre, or Eastre, who was the great mother goddess of the Saxon people in Northern Europe.<sup>33</sup> He added further, that the Teutonic dawn goddess of fertility was originally known as Ostre, Ostara, Ostern, Eostra, Eostre. This goddess name was derived from an ancient word for spring,

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<sup>33</sup> Easter: its pagan origins. Retrieved May 7, 2012, from <http://www.originofeaster.com>.



“eastre”. It was from this, according to Bede and scholars in his school of thought that the word Easter, originated.

Another school of thought holds that among the names given by the Frankish church to Jesus’ resurrection’s festival we have the Latin word “alba”, meaning white, referring to the white clothes that Christians wore during the festival. The word “alba” is also interpreted to mean “sunrise”. In the course of translation into German language, the meaning “sunrise” was selected in error, and became “Ostern” in Germany. Hence, Ostern has been proposed as the actual origin of the word “Easter”. This constitutes one of the reasons why some do not celebrate Easter Festival. Easter festival, by nature, is dichotomous. This is reflected in its celebration, on one hand it is regarded as a tribute to the resurrection of Jesus, while on the other hand, some hold that it heralds the advent of the spring season.

### 3.2.2 **Reasons why some do not celebrate Easter Festival**

Although Easter is regarded as the most important of all Christian festivals, Scholars advanced certain reasons for its non-observance by some Christian denominations. Some of these are:

#### 1. **Easter traditions are regarded as recycled pagan celebration**

Bede (a 7<sup>th</sup> century Christian scholar) says Anglo – Saxon Christians adopted the name Austron, the Anglo Saxon goddess of fertility and sunrise, including many of the celebratory practices for their mass of the resurrection of Christ.<sup>34</sup>

#### 2. **Easter is regarded as a traditional Catholic celebration**

Some hold that Easter is Roman Catholic in its origin and that it was primarily established by the 4<sup>th</sup> century council of Nicea. While those who are with this opinion may have nothing against Catholic as individuals, they claim that they are not Catholic and therefore, should not participate in Catholic celebrations.<sup>35</sup>

#### 3. **The claim that materialism drives the contemporary Easter celebration**

New dresses and suits, new shoes and the likes are said to be the outstanding features of the celebrations by some Christians. All of the materialism and sentimentalism driven passion of Easter are said to have their roots in what the Bible

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<sup>34</sup> B. Ben. The History of Christmas. Retrieved August 23, 2012, from [http. //www.benbest.com // history/xmas.htm](http://www.benbest.com/history/xmas.htm).

<sup>35</sup> B. Ben. The History of Christmas.

calls the roots of all evils,<sup>36</sup> the love of money (1Tim. 6:10). In contrast, it is said that Jesus tells his followers that “if anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me” Matt.6:24.

#### 4. **The assertion that the date of its celebration is wrong**

According to the Critics who are opposed to the chosen date, Easter is not the date of the Messiah’s resurrection.<sup>37</sup> It is held that He rose three days after the Passover (Hebrew Pesach). The Passover falls on the same Hebrew date every year, Nisan 14. Messiah, therefore, resurrected on Nisan 17th. The official date of Easter is the first Sunday, strictly after the “Paschal full moon”. If the Paschal full moon falls on a Sunday, Easter is, therefore, the following Sunday, Messiah’s resurrection is keyed to the date of the Passover rather than the date of the week. It is said that there is one circumstance when the two may overlap, when Passover falls on Wednesday.

It is further argued that the current calendar date for Easter celebration was chosen so as to avoid celebrating the event on the scriptural festival of Passover. Those in the first few centuries after Christ who continued to observe Passover as the date of the crucifixion were said to have been excommunicated from the Catholic Church.

#### 5. **God’s condemning of pagan customs**

It is equally held that God condemns the use of pagan customs to worship Him.<sup>38</sup>

Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee, and that thou inquire not after their gods, saying, how did these nations serve their gods? Even so will I do likewise.<sup>39</sup>

With the above scripture, the advocates of non-observance of Easter by the Christians hold that this festival is a pagan custom and that those observing it are practicing what God has condemned. This implies that they derailed from God’s demands, which to them attracts serious consequences.

#### 6. **The claim that Easter is no where mentioned in the Bible**

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<sup>36</sup> B. Ben. The History of Christmas..

<sup>37</sup> B. Ben. *The history of Christmas.*

<sup>38</sup> B. Ben. *The history of Christmas.*

<sup>39</sup> Deut. 12:30.

It is held that the Bible never records any instance in which Jesus' disciples celebrated Easter or those traditions associated with it.<sup>40</sup> This argument presupposes that if this festival were what the Christians should observe, there would have been a recorded instances by the early disciples to which the contemporary Christians could draw a reference. They regard the absence of such information as valid ground why the Christians should dissociate themselves from it.

#### **7. That the traditions of Easter obscure God's plan for mankind**

It is held by the critics, that the focus throughout the Bible is Christ's sacrificial death, burial and resurrection which is encapsulated in the theme of redemption. However, it is said that by focusing on all of the pagan traditions associated with Easter, such as eggs, gifts and other non-Christian focused traditions, one loses the sight of the Messiah. The belief held is that the mixing of pagan tradition with the Christian faith, (syncretism) damages the Christian witness and hinders those who may be saved, which consequently, obscures God's plan.<sup>41</sup>

#### **8. The claim that Easter is a tradition of men**

Our investigation also reveals that some do not celebrate Easter because they regard the festival as a tradition of men.<sup>42</sup> They indicate that Jesus Christ spoke strongly to condemn those whose transgression came as a result of upholding the traditions of men (Mtt.15:2-6). In other words, Easter is a tradition, since it is not commanded or even mentioned anywhere in the Bible. It is, therefore, asserted that the celebration of it, while ignoring the holy days that God has commanded humankind, implies a heaping on oneself, the same condemnation of hypocrites "that Christ gave in Matt. 15.

Scholars with different opinion have, however, written in strong defense of the moral appropriateness or justification for the observance of Easter festival. Some of these argued, for instance, that the fact that in subsequent centuries symbols of some other spring rites, such as bunnies and eggs, have encroached into the Easter celebration does not in any way make the holiday pagan. Contrariwise, many of such symbols depict expression of new life, which certainly fits with what Easter stands for.<sup>43</sup> This was the position favoured by most of our respondents in the course of our

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<sup>40</sup> Retrieved August 23, 2012, from <http://www.4tp40.com/culture/index.asp//p-Easter>.

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.4tp40.com/culture/index.asp//p-Easter>.

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.4tp40.com/culture/index.asp//p-Easter>.

<sup>43</sup> The "Pagan roots" of Holidays. Retrieved June 29, 2013.

investigation. This assertion to our respondents validates the moral appropriateness of the observance of this festival by Assemblies of God's pastors and members.

### 3.2.3 The time of Easter celebration

Unlike Christmas, a festival that has fixed date for its celebration, Easter Sunday, according to Clendon, may occur from 22nd March to 25th of April and take an extended period of 5,700,000 years to make a complete cycle through the dates in the Gregorian?<sup>44</sup>

### 3.2.4 The place and significance of Easter festival

Easter festival occupies the most important place among all Christian festivals. Scholars indicate that it is regarded as the focal or central point of the Christian faith. Among the reasons suggested in the works we consulted and responses from our respondents as necessitating its vital importance we have:

1. It is through the event that the festival commemorates that many Old Testament prophecies of the Bible, especially those that were predicted concerning Jesus' death and resurrection became fulfilled. Hence, we see that Easter is not an afterthought in the context of God, the Creator, but something He planned for and worked out according to his intention.
2. It is through the event that this festival commemorates that we see Jesus being pictured as the perfect model of what it means to die to self in order to exemplify perfect obedience and faith in God. Jesus, according to the Bible, died horrendous death, but in doing so, he did not sin (Heb. 4:15).
3. It was through his death that Jesus Christ paid for the penalty of all those who believe in His name. This was possible because among men, going by the teaching of the Bible, He was the only one who was pure, perfect and deserved not to die (Gal. 4:15).
4. The resurrection of Jesus from the death proves His divinity, and is a guarantee that He has power to save from sin and for eternity those who commit themselves to him.

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<sup>44</sup> Crequer and Clendon, Easter: Moving Holidays, retrieved February 15, 2012 from <http://www.Easter.com>

5. Christians believe that Christ's resurrection guarantees their own resurrection as well (1 Cor. 15:20-23). This makes the festival put in place to commemorate this unique incidence to be of great and enduring significance to them.

### 3.2.5 Process of Easter celebration

Easter celebration lasts for four days annually. These are from Good Friday to Easter Monday. Prior to this time, some Christian denominations, for example, Anglican and Roman Catholic observe a forty-day fasting, otherwise known as lent. Our investigation revealed that in Assemblies of God, this is not the practice. The members of this denomination are not obliged to go into such spiritual calisthenics, for the belief held is that Christ did not intend that Christians should take this as a rite instituted for continuous observance, like the case of water baptism and Holy Communion. In the same way, while some Christians refrain from eating meat or any blooded animal, AG members do not subscribe to that.

Church worship is a common feature during Easter Sunday. Members conglomerate for Easter Sunday service in most churches. The officiating minister preaches sermon on Christ's resurrection to aid the Christians' recapitulation on this focal truth of their faith. Merriment may commence thereafter, in individual family, as the case may be.

In Assemblies of God, with particular reference to Ogun State, the Easter service takes a little different form from the way most Christian denominations observe it. Although service is held to commemorate Easter, this is not only on Easter Sunday. All AG's parishes in each District are closed from the eve of Good Friday to Easter Monday, for a joint worship at the Easter retreat camp.

Our findings revealed that the National Easter Retreat commenced in AG Nigeria in 1986 as an annual spiritual event to celebrate Easter. In it, all the pastors and members of the church are expected to withdraw from their familiar environment and engagement to designated places for the purpose of spiritual renewal. During such programmes, selected speakers are chosen from among the clergy and the laity and assigned to preach. They also teach the truths of the Bible to people in attendance. The sermons and teachings during the ministration cut across various areas of needs, such as spiritual, marital, economic, social and psychological. The overall purpose of this, as we gathered from our respondents is to empower the participants by giving

them the needed enhancement for their continuous relevance in their society, including being heavenly focused. This programme continues until Easter Monday when the participants depart to their homes.

### 3.3 Harvest Thanksgiving

#### 3.3.1 Meaning and origin of Harvest Thanksgiving

A Harvest Thanksgiving festival is an annual celebration which occurs around the time of the main harvest of a particular region. Due to the differences in regional climate and crops, Scholars revealed that Harvest Thanksgiving can be found at various times throughout the world. Usually, this festival features feasting, both family and public, with foods which are produce from crops that are mature around the time of the festival. The two central features of this festival are ample food and freedom from the necessity to work on the fields<sup>45</sup>.

Harvest thanksgiving is the festival used to celebrate and appreciate God's providence over one's life's endeavour during the year. According to Oboh,

by Thanksgiving, we are looking at all offerings one gives to God in appreciation for a specific thing the Lord has done for him. People thank God for child birth, for blessing upon their marriages, for keeping their lives in terms of marital fulfillment and fruitfulness, protection, promotion and a host of other things.<sup>46</sup>

Scholars indicate that the idea of giving thanks for a plentiful harvest through traditional ceremonies and feast is dated back to ancient times, and still continues till today. Accordingly, the belief held by farmers in ancient times was that the fruitfulness or unfruitfulness of crops was caused by spirits, and that these spirits were released during harvest. Consequently, such spirits would attempt to revenge on the farmers who harvested such crops, and should be destroyed. It is their defeat that was then celebrated through harvest festival. On the other hand, the approach employed by ancient Egyptian farmers to prevent the spirits' anger was to pretend to be sad and weeping during the period of harvest<sup>47</sup>.

Scholars have written to prove that almost every culture in the world has celebrations of thanks for plentiful harvest. For instance, the Greeks, Romans,

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<sup>45</sup> The true harvest festival? Retrieved August 24, 2012, from <http://www.yahsaves.org>.

<sup>46</sup> E. Oboh. Discover the secret of divine Prosperity. Lagos: Faith Realm Publishers. 103.

<sup>47</sup> Harvest festivals around the world. Retrieved Oct. 11, 2011, from [www.harvestfestivals.net/](http://www.harvestfestivals.net/) harvest festival

Chinese, and Korean have held and do hold celebrations of thanks for a plentiful harvest.

Scholars revealed that among the ancient Greeks<sup>48</sup>, many gods and goddesses were worshipped. Prominent among these gods and goddesses was Demeter, the goddess of corn and of course all grains. He was honoured during the festival of Thesmophoria at each autumn. The custom of the festival was to build leafy shelters and furnish them with couches made with plants. This possibly has connection with childbearing and raising of crops. The second day was used by them for fasting, while on the third day a feast was held, including the giving of offerings of corn, cakes, fruit, and pigs to the goddess Demeter. The underlying belief held was that through this act, their gratitude to the goddess would make them receive bountiful harvest during next season.

The Romans also celebrated a harvest festival which they called cerella. It was through this, that they honored ceres, their goddess of corn, from which the word cereal originates. This festival occurred on 4<sup>th</sup> of October each year. It entailed the offering of the first fruit of their harvest and pigs to ceres. Music, parades, games, sports and a thanksgiving feast constituted parts of this celebration. This ceremony lasted for 8 days, climaxing with great chariot races, presided over by the plebeian audiles. They wore white robes at the games. There was a release of foxes into the circus, with flaming brands attached to their tails, which was one of the symbolic rituals of the occasion.

The Chinese observed Harvest festival of which no one is sure of its origin<sup>49</sup>. This is Harvest Moon festival, equally known as the Mid-Autumn festival. The origin was, however, romanticized by the story of Chang Er, of whom tradition holds that she took a pill, became fairy and got flown to the moon to escape from the pursuit of her husband. Among the Chinese, the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 8<sup>th</sup> month of the lunar calendar is the starting day of their Harvest Moon festival.

Among the Korean, the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 8<sup>th</sup> Lunar month is used to observe Chusok, also known as the harvest moon festival. The Korean honoured their ancestors during the festival. Offerings were made of newly harvested foods, Sang Pyan, crescent shaped rice cakes stuffed with sesame seeds, chestnut paste of beans,

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<sup>48</sup> Harvest festivals around the world.

<sup>49</sup> Harvest festivals around the world.



are believed to be the favorites of Chusok. It was the practice for families to visit the graves of their ancestors, whereby they bow and keep the area clean against the coming winter.

The works of Scholars consulted show that African continent is also permeated with the observance of harvest festival. Almost every indigenous group of the continent has a festival that is parallel to what we have discussed above. For instance, Egypt, Ghana and Nigeria observe harvest festivals.

The ancient Egypt celebrated their harvest festival in honour of Min, the god of vegetation and fertility. This festival was held at spring time, which was the Egyptians' harvest's season. In it, there was a parade in which Pharaoh participated. At the end of this, there was a great feast, including music, dancing and sports<sup>50</sup>.

Among the Ghanaians, the Harvest festival is christened 'Homowo festival'<sup>51</sup>. The word Homowo actually means making fun of hunger. An oral tradition of the people holds that long ago, there was a time when rain stopped. This was accompanied by a severe famine throughout Southern Accra plains, which is the home of the Ga people. As a result of a turn around which came later, in which harvest arrived and there was food in abundance, the people resorted into observing the Homowo festival to ridicule hunger. During this celebration, the Ga people eat a marshed corn and palm oil dish called Kpekepele. The Akan people also celebrate a harvest festival called Odwira.

In Nigeria, references could be made to the celebration of the Harvest festival, for instance, among the Igbo, Igede and the Yoruba people. Across the Igboland<sup>52</sup> and among Igbo in diaspora, as we gathered from our investigation, the month of August is designated to celebrate the new yam festival, called iwaji and iriji Ohuru. This festival is usually characterized in pomp and pageantry. It is with deep significance among the Igbo people. The day is symbolic for enjoyment after the cultural season.

The iwaji, new yam festival, is observed as a public function on certain appointed days of the New Year. It is the feast which indicates the breaking of the yam, and harvest is followed by thanksgiving. An offering is put forward and people pray for renewed life as they eat the new yam. During the festival, yam is cut into

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<sup>50</sup> Harvest festivals around the world.

<sup>51</sup> Homowo Festival. Retrieved Sept. 10, 2012, from [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homowo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homowo).

<sup>52</sup> New Yam festival in Igboland. Retrieved Sept. 10, 2012, from [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_Yam\\_festival](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Yam_festival)

some sizes and thrown unto the gods and earth with prayers for protection and benevolence. When the ceremony is concluded, everything is taken home.

Investigation revealed that the Igbo people regard the new yam harvest as a big cultural event and a time to thank God for bumper harvest in yam and other farm produce. It is a period when in-laws, friends and well-wishers are invited to come and join them to celebrate the new yam. It also marks the transition period from old yam to new yam. The oldest man in the community or the king (Eze) performs the solemn role of eating the first yam. The belief held is that their position bestows on them such a high privilege of being the intermediaries between their communities and God of the land.

The new yam or harvest festival among the Igbo people comes up at the end of the raining season in early August. It symbolizes the conclusion of a harvest and the beginning of the next work cycle. In the evening preceding the celebration, the tradition is that all old yams (from the previous year's crops) are either consumed or discarded. During the harvest day, the food to be served is solely dishes of yam, since the festival is symbolic of the abundance of the produce.

Further investigation shows that among the Igede<sup>53</sup> people of Benue State, Nigeria, we have the celebration of Igede Agba, which is rooted in the belief in being patient. It marks the beginning of the harvest season, and comes up during the first Igede market (Ihigile), in the month of September. The most cherished farm product during Igede Agba is yam. It is a taboo to harvest the new yam before the celebration.

Igede Agba festival is an occasion of giving thanks to Ohe, the earth's goddess, who is regarded as the most important local deity, being responsible for fertility and an arbiter of harmony. Essentially, the harvest of yam and the celebration of the deity of the land are rooted in the people's belief in the Supreme deity as the giver of yam and donor of good harvest. Our respondents advanced two reasons as among the ideas behind this celebration apart from showing gratitude to God: first, that one must have one's own farm from where to harvest, therefore, encouraging industry and hardwork. Second, one should learn to conserve and preserve foodstuff, including diversifying one's land for other uses apart from planting of yam, so as to avoid being in hunger before the next yam harvest.

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<sup>53</sup> Celebrating Igede Agba (New Yam festival Today). Retrieved Sept. 13, 2012, from [www.nigeriavillagesquare.com/](http://www.nigeriavillagesquare.com/) John-i.

The Igede Agba celebration features such interesting things, like free and fair competition. In the competition, award and honour is given to the best farmer with the biggest yams in his barns. Equally, there is peace, reconciliation and sharing during the festival. It is the practice that none eats alone during the celebration, therefore, encouraging enthusiastic exchange of food and gifts.

Our findings revealed that a great lesson one can learn from Igede Agba festival is that it is irrational to live each year without having achievements, job expansion, including logical plan for a better future. Hence, everyone is to cultivate a saving culture, either yam products or money as the case may apply to one's chosen profession. For instance, those who are in civil service should avoid spending all their salaries before the next pay, in the same way that the Igede farmer would cope with what he harvests till next harvest period.

Our respondents indicated that the festival has taught the people to be good food processors and develop numerous preservation methods for yams, so as to have seedlings for next farming season. Equally, the competition which is an integral part of it stimulates diligence and development. However, marriages and funerals are not permitted to hold in the communities where Igede Agba is celebrated during the festival period. The festival has always been a means of uniting Igede communities through celebrations of harvest and giving thanks for plentiful growing season.

Further investigation revealed that the Igede people constitute significant percentage among the members of AG in the State, especially in Abeokuta and Ijebu Districts. Furthermore, we discovered that these Igede people in Diaspora still observe the Igede Agba festival, their religious affiliation notwithstanding. This underscores the great significance they attach to it whether at home or abroad.

According to our findings among the Yoruba people, the "Egbe Onisin Eledumare<sup>54</sup>", meaning the group of worshippers of Almighty, celebrates the new yam festival to close one year and usher in yet another. This practice of closing and opening the year through rituals and ceremonies is common with many societies. The "Egbe Isin Eledumare" calls their ceremony "Odun Ijesu", the festival of eating yam.

Our respondents revealed that the above festival gives room for the re-covenanting with the celestial powers. "Ebo" (sacrifice), drums, song, dance, food,

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<sup>54</sup> Retrieved Oct. 12, 2012, from Yorubasacredsciencecentre.wordpress.

and entertainment are significant aspects of what constitute the festival. During this celebration, many items are offered as appreciation for the prosperity and well-being received by the people during the previous year and also in anticipation of the prosperity and well-being of the incoming year. Among the items offered are; fowl, ram, goat, alligator pepper, bitter kola, kola-nut, yam and other farm products.

Investigation we carried out revealed further that Orisa Oko is the deity that is primarily focused during the above festival. Its spirit is invoked for the purpose of enhancing farm productivity. Usually, the festival ends the rainy season and the harvest of the yam. Prayers are offered during the celebration, both for personal and community interest, including that of the nation as a whole.

The people of Alara town, in Ifedore local Government Area of Ondo State, are a good example of the Yoruba people who are rich in the culture of observance of the new yam harvest festival till date, especially in the way depicted above. Among this people, the festival comprised several rituals that last for several weeks. According to tradition, none is permitted to eat the new yam until after the festival. They believe that disobedience to this is a great taboo with serious consequences. Anyone who breaks the rule would not live to celebrate the next festival.

Scholars have written to indicate that to the Christians, the origin of Harvest Thanksgiving dated right from the Old Testament era, precisely during the time of Moses, according to Ex. 34:22 “ And thou shall observe the feast of weeks, of the first fruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year’s end”. In Exodus chapter 34, Israel was expected to observe three feasts unto the Lord, as Yaweh’s covenant people. These are the Passover, in remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt (Ex. 34:18-20); the feast of weeks, that is, Pentecost, which comes up seven weeks after the Passover feast and the feast of ingathering at the end of the year, which is regarded as the feast of Tabernacle (Ex. 34:22).

According to Kenneth, the third feast mentioned above, is the Harvest Thanksgiving feast or festival.<sup>55</sup> Macleren<sup>56</sup> indicates that each of these feasts has a reference to agriculture, with two of them (Passover and Pentecost) also having a reference to natural deliverance. This fact, posits, therefore, that each of them,

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<sup>55</sup> K. Barker and Kohlenberg. 1994. *N.I.V. Bible Commentary. O.T.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1: 106.

<sup>56</sup> A. Macleren. 1977. *Macleren exposition of Holy Scriptures.* Grand Rapids Baker Book House. 10: 119-125

especially Harvest Thanksgiving, was in existence before the birth of Moses and, therefore, implies that he (Moses) imposed a new meaning to it as recorded in Ex. 34.

According to Jamieson<sup>57</sup>, Israel's feast of ingathering (Harvest Thanksgiving), which occurs at the end of the year commencing on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh month, and lasting for seven days. It is the appointed time of thanksgiving for the bountiful supply of the various and valuable fruits of the earth, which was the most joyous season, accompanied with demonstrations of hilarity and merriment.

Interestingly, our findings revealed that like most Christian holidays, Harvest Thanksgiving is observed as a secular institution in America, in which its religious meaning is paving way to cultural tradition. The origin of thanksgiving in America as a national holiday has been traced back to 1621, when the pilgrims who came from England in that same year decided to celebrate at the end of the harvest. These men and women, many of whom were members of English separatist church, a puritan sect of Christianity fled England to escape the religious intolerance and oppression in their homeland.

These separatists<sup>58</sup> brought along with them their customs, among which we have two separate celebrations: a secular harvest festival and the tradition of a religious holyday of thanksgiving. Both celebrations, however, had religious undertones. For instance, the secular harvest celebration was done with religious component of thanksgiving to the God of the Christians whom they believed was responsible for the provision of their harvest. Apart from this secular harvest celebration, the separatists equally dedicated a day of thanksgiving, which by nature was purely religious. Hence, they celebrated both the harvest and a day of thanksgiving annually, and in both occasions they rendered their thanks, appreciation or gratitude to the God of the Christians

In sum, what we can deduce from the nature and origin of Harvest Thanksgiving in the light of its historical universality is that it is founded on the notion that as human beings, we have certain things for which we must be thankful and someone to be thankful to. We do not see ourselves as the object of thanksgiving, nor are men expected to bestow their thankfulness or gratitude to any human being. God, the ultimate and Supreme being, is the one to whom thanksgiving is rendered

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<sup>57</sup> F. Jamieson and F. Brown. 1961. *Practical and explanatory on the whole Bible*. Grand Rapid: Zondervan Publishing House. 76.

<sup>58</sup> Thanksgiving (United States). Retrieved July 7, 2011, from [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thanksgiving](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thanksgiving).

during this festival. This God, who is the Supreme Being, is, however, conceptualized in different ways based on diverse ecological milieu of each people approaching Him in their disposition of thanks or appreciation through the festival.

### 3.3.2 **Objections to observance of Harvest Thanksgiving festival**

To indicate that Harvest Thanksgiving festival is universally practiced by all Christians regardless of their denominational differences is to overemphasize the issue, for there are some Christian denominations that are not disposed to this. Such denominations based their opposition on certain objections. For instance, we gathered through our investigation that the God's Kingdom Society (GKS), Redeemed Christian Church of God and the Deeper Life Bible Church are biased against its tradition. The GKS, for instance, advance the following reasons in favour of its objections:

First, the (GKS) argues<sup>59</sup> that Harvest Thanksgiving is not a Christian tradition, and for this reason Christians are nowhere in the Bible commanded to observe it such as we have for water baptism and the communion service. Second, it holds that while harvest was used as a parable by Jesus to teach the truth about the last gathering of those who belong to God's Kingdom, it is not meant to be redefined as an annual event in form of celebration characterized by profiteering, display of affluence, deprivation of the poor, gambling and money merchandize as the case is with the contemporary Harvest Thanksgiving celebration. In other words, the above school of thought holds that it is in the context of a history of the world explained in the form of parable of the time of harvest which has to do with the gathering of the sheep of God into His organization that harvest is of significance to true Christians.

We gathered also that GKS argues that in churches where the festival is observed, the pastor or catechist or some other prominent church members often act as salesmen on such occasions. They describe the goods being sold as having special blessings of heaven, so that they are worth more than any amount of money anyone can offer for them. It is usually a moment the rich display their wealth because the occasions in most cases take the form of an auction where the articles brought for the celebration are sold to the highest of successive bidders. Where a poor may offer a

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<sup>59</sup> G.K.S. Worldwide. They will be done on Jehovah. Retrieved June 6, 2013 from <http://www.christianfestival/html>.

meager amount, the salesman holding an auctioneer's wallet will not let his harmer go down until someone else has offered more money. Consequently, he receives the praises of men as a man of substance. The argument goes further, that granted that such articles have divine blessing, why should they be disposed in such a way to deprive the poor of them? The poor, who are more often found to be richer in faith than the rich. This, according to (GKS), is far from being Christian practice, since there is a clear case in the scriptures of a poor widow who gave a farthing and earned more praise and blessing than the rich when offerings were made in the days of Jesus ( Mk. 12;41-44)

Our investigation reveals further that the GKS equally indicates that gambling is introduced as part of Harvest festival in order to swell the church's purse. It is done in the name of God, so that the church may get funds. They claimed that it is unscriptural for true worshipper of God to take part in what it terms as unchristian practice. Prov. 28:20, 22:21, 1 Tim. 6:6-12, 17-19.

Furthermore, that the early disciples of Jesus Christ did not organize bazaar at any time to raise funds to carry out God's work as is being done in some contemporary denominations in the process of Harvest Thanksgiving festival. The view held by some Christian Pentecostal denominations in Nigeria corresponds with this GKS' position. For instance, our investigation revealed that both Deeper Life Bible Church and the Redeemed Christian Church are opposed to its observance. According to the policy of the latter, "The Redeemed Christian Church of God must not copy other churches in the world especially in their method of fund raising through harvest etc"<sup>60</sup>. The presence of the above objections, notwithstanding, we gathered among the AG's pastors and members in Ogun State that Christians who observe it have valid reasons for doing so.

### 3.3.3 Reasons for harvest thanksgiving

Ayantayo<sup>61</sup> indicates that;

Economic and religious beliefs are to a large extent interrelated. Accordingly, this relationship could be perceived at both individual and corporate levels. People strongly believe that at the individual level a person could be successful in life and economic

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<sup>60</sup> Ordained Ministers Handbook in the Redeemed Christian Church of God. September, 2013, 5,6.

<sup>61</sup> J.K. Ayantayo. 2000. *The Yoruba traditional economy in ethical perspectives* NJEH No 3.



endeavours provided he is destined so, or he receives the favour of the Supreme deity, the ancestors or gods as the case may be.

Ayantayo posits further, that

...it is on the basis of the above religious beliefs that an individual tries to maintain a cordial relationship with the Supreme Being, gods or ancestors, so as to command their assistance for economic prosperity and avoid disaster. Hence, before and after the end of each farming season, the whole community gets involved in performing thanksgiving offering to the gods and ancestors and prayer for prosperity.<sup>62</sup>

Certain reasons are advanced in favour of the celebration of the Harvest Thanksgiving festival both by the works of authors we consulted and our respondents during our investigations, especially in the light of the biblical perspective. Adam Clark<sup>63</sup>, while commenting on the Jewish festivals, especially Harvest Thanksgiving, proffers the following reasons:

1. To perpetuate the memory of the specific festival, including the wonders God brought for the nation;
2. To keep the people faithful to their religion through the medium of appropriate ceremonies and the splendour of Divine service;
3. To allow them to have lawful pleasures and necessary rest;
4. To use the medium to give the people instruction, through the reading and explaining of God's law in their gathering;
5. To enhance the consolidation of their social union; whereby they would be able to renew their tribal and family acquaintances. This is so, because during those occasions they come together from different parts of their land to Jerusalem, the Holy city.

All of the above points were confirmed as relevant reasons for the contemporary Harvest Thanksgiving in Assemblies of God, Ogun State according to our respondents. First, our respondents, both during the focus group discussion and oral interview disclosed that through the medium, they, as Christians, are reminded annually of God's great deliverance of them from Satan. In this regard, the wonders

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<sup>62</sup>J.K. Ayantayo. 2000. *The Yoruba traditional economy in ethical perspectives*.

<sup>63</sup>

God wrought throughout the year is equally brought to focus in the course of the celebration.

Second, the festival keeps them as Christians to be faithful to their religion. They recognize how splendid God has been to them as the testimony of His goodness to them is recounted. With this, they see the reason to be more faithful to Him, their benefactor.

Third, through Harvest Thanksgiving, most of the respondents indicated that they are procured lawful pleasures and necessary rest. They affirmed that in their parishes the occasion of the annual Harvest Thanksgiving allows room for Christians to go into merriment in which there is dining and wining. This, however, according to them, is done within the approved Christian Biblical teaching that does not give room for laxness in what is eaten or drunk. In this sense, they all agreed that wining and dining done within the approved biblical standard does not lose the sacredness of one's feast or festival. For according to the Bible, the Lord still delights in His people's feast, "... thus saith the Lord God of Israel, let my people go that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness" Ex. 5:1. This God, who demanded a feast to be observed for Him by His people, in the opinion of majority of our respondents, knew that the idea of dining and wining which is done in the context of relevant moral principles does not invalidate the sacredness of a religious feast

All our respondents also affirmed that the Christian Harvest Thanksgiving, like the Jewish feast of ingathering, equally serves the purpose of giving instruction to them as God's people. An integral part of such element in this direction, according to what we gathered is the teaching or preaching of relevant Bible passages, especially those that address the importance of living a life that is consistent with godliness, to ensure that one's offer meets God's approval. Thus, Harvest Thanksgiving is not only purposed to show one's gratitude or appreciation to God, but equally to make one have a forum whereby one would receive further instructions to live a life that pleases God, the One to whom one is showing his/her gratitude or appreciation.

Harvest Thanksgiving, in the testimony of our respondents, especially during the oral interview, fulfils the role of assisting them as Christians to consolidate their social union, whereby their acquaintances are renewed. For instance, they indicated that in each of the three Assemblies of God's Districts in Ogun State, the contemporary trend is coalition of all members of the women ministries' department

to celebrate God's goodness in form of annual Thanksgiving service. During such occasions they affirmed the acquaintances of the participants get strengthened, and this makes them to see themselves as members of same body, regardless of their parishes of belonging.

Apart from the aforementioned points, especially in the light of information gathered from our respondents, going by the record of the Bible, God equally commands His people to offer their thanksgiving unto Him. The Bible strongly encourages this. For instance, we have such passages as Ps. 67:3, 5 "May the people praise you, O God, May all the people praise you". Also, another Bible portion that supports this says "Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise, give thanks to him and praise his name for the Lord is good and his love endures forever, his faithfulness continues through all generations". (Ps. 100:4, 5).

Based on the above information gathered from our respondents, and explicit and implicit teachings from the Bible passages, our discovery is that most Christians hold that observance of Harvest Thanksgiving is necessary, being a way to obey the divine injunction.

#### **3.3.4 Features of Harvest Thanksgiving**

Treating issues both from Biblical and contemporary perspectives; Harvest Thanksgiving festival has at least five essential features. These are expression of joy and delight by the participants, feasting together before God, giving of one's gift(s) to God, sharing with the needy, and delivering of scriptural injunction by the priest or pastor, or spiritually assigned person as the case may be. A detail discussion of the above is done below:

##### **1. Expression of joy and delight by the participants**

Going by the account in the Bible, we discovered that God explicitly indicates that His people coming to Him with their Harvest Thanksgiving should do so with joy and delight. "And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast" (Deut. 16:14).

According to Excel, religious feasts teach a vital lesson, "Unless religion is based upon joy, and unless God's service is joyous and free, they are impracticable". Consequently, God, who is not a callous master, desires that His people delight in His service. Hence, Israel's Harvest Thanksgiving, which was meant to express their

gratitude to God for the bountiful supply of various and valuable fruits of the earth, was a most joyous season, characterized by hilarity and merriment.<sup>64</sup>

The above situation is typical of what obtains in Assemblies of God parishes according to our findings. For instance, in order to demonstrate this delight and joy, members of each parish investigated rendered special songs in their languages and were involved in singing and dancing during the occasion than what obtains in ordinary church service. To add colour to the joyous occasion, some parishes enjoined their members to appear in their native attires, and gave opportunity for each tribe to present special songs or any interesting features peculiar to them but that are consistent with Christian teachings, which enhanced the aura of splendor of the celebration.

## **2. Eating and feasting**

Our findings indicate that in the Biblical record, people feasted before the Lord, whereby they ate and drank together, in token of their joy and gratitude to God for His goodness.<sup>65</sup> Solomon indicates that “a...feast is made for laughter” (Ecc. 10:19). According to Matthew, we must not let religion become a thing of melancholy, when its solemn services are solemn feasts.<sup>66</sup> In this sense, eating and drinking do not invalidate the sacredness of Christian Harvest Thanksgiving, provided this disposition does not jettison the approved Biblical standard for Christian living. It is like Agape feast, which the early Christians partook preceding the Lord’s Supper (1. Cor. 11:20).

We confirmed that the above was the case in almost all Assemblies of God’s parishes in Ogun State, especially those ones investigated, in which entertainment of people that participated in the Harvest Thanksgiving with food and drinks occurred. This, as affirmed by some of our respondents, made the occasion to be one that most members usually look forward to have, for it made the church fulfill the role of not only being interested in meeting the spiritual needs of the members but also their physical need, especially during such occasion.

While it is true that the idea of feast commonly connotes a banquet with plenty of food, nonetheless, Elwel indicates that this element is not indispensable.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> E. A. Walter. 1995. *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible*. Grand Rapid: Baker House. 1: 783.

<sup>65</sup> H. Matthew. 1998. *Matthew Henry commentary*. U.S.A: Hendricks Publishers. 5: 129.

<sup>66</sup> H. Matthew. 1998. *Matthew Henry commentary*.

<sup>67</sup> Walter. *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible*. 1: 783.

And so, where the participants could not afford feasting, their inability does not in any way invalidate the effectiveness or acceptance of their Harvest Thanksgiving before God. This situation we observed was common with smaller parishes of Assemblies of God in Ogun State, unlike the bigger ones. The reason for this is obvious; the financial inability of such parishes deprived them of getting actively involved to such extent. However, like Elwel indicated above, our respondents affirmed that the inability of any parish to plan to such extent does not invalidate the divine acceptance of their Thanksgiving, for to them it is not this feeding aspect that is most essential but the spirit of gratitude to God demonstrated by the people concerned.

Equally, our respondents confirmed that, at times, the parish may not get involved to the point of feeding the members, regardless of the fact that its problem is not lack of fund to execute it to such extent. They indicated that where the pastor and his members decided to be frugal in spending or want to use their money for something lucrative and more essential; this may result in their taking to the policy of not feeding people during Harvest Thanksgiving. Furthermore, some of the respondents who participated in the FGD indicated that such policy occurred in their parishes, because their pastors and deacon boards decided not to place too much financial burden on them. Considering the fact that it is the members that ultimately foot the bills, through voluntary donations and levies whenever the Harvest Thanksgiving programme will take such a dimension.

### **3. Giving of gifts to God**

Those who participate in Harvest Thanksgiving are to come to God with gift(s) in appreciation to Him for their success in life endeavour, protection, and preservation, and so on in the outgoing year. Our findings revealed that in the Old Testament, God explicitly indicates that none among the Israelites must appear before Him empty. According to Matthew:

They must not appear before God empty. Some freewill offering or other, they must bring, in token of their respect and gratitude to their great benefactor and as they were not allowed to come empty-handed, so we must not come to worship God empty-hearted. Our souls

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must be filled with grace, with pious and devout affections, holy desires towards Him, and dedication of ourselves to Him, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.<sup>68</sup>

Our investigation confirmed the above in all AG's parishes investigated, where the "giving to God" constituted an integral aspect of the Harvest Thanksgiving festival. It is equally important to indicate that while God's people are to bring their gifts during Harvest Thanksgiving, both the Bible and the works of several authors consulted teach that the quality of what should be brought is very fundamental. People are not to think that whatever they bring to God, in appreciation for what He has done for them, He is obliged to take it without questioning<sup>69</sup>. According to Oboh, the exegetical appraisal of Mal. 1:6-8 indicates that the controversy in which God rebuked the priests of Israel is that they were bringing whatever they liked to Him as offering or sacrifice, and God interpreted their action as dishonour to Him. Hence, God deserves the best and not what dishonours Him.<sup>70</sup> Equally, it is not the size of what is brought that matters, the heart (motive) with which one does the presentation is crucial and most important. This is because God judges the motive with which one does whatever is done. Deut. 17:1.

We also gathered through our investigation that as much as one knows that God delights in what is given during Harvest thanksgiving, the principles that govern right giving must equally be observed in order to be passed for appropriate moral consideration. Respondents and previous research consulted gave five of such principles: One, what is offered must be pure. That is, God does not expect one to bring his/her gifts from wrong source, such as stealing, embezzlement, and so on. Two, it should be the best one can afford. In other words, it should proceed from the deepest mood of appreciation that is not withholding the capacity with which one has been blessed. Third, it should be as God has prospered one. As a result of that, God does not expect unhealthy competition during the giving. People are not equally blessed, especially in terms of material possession. As such, what one gives must be determined by the capacity within which one has been blessed by God. This agrees

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<sup>68</sup> Matthew. Matthew Henry commentary. 5: 129.

<sup>69</sup> Oboh. *Discover the secret of divine prosperity*. 103.

<sup>70</sup> Oboh. *Discover the secret of divine prosperity*.

with Jesus' evaluation of the widow who gave her mite, but was adjudged as giving the best beyond the rich that gave more than her mite. She gave her all, but the rich gave their some; hence, the widow was regarded as giving the best among all (Lk. 21:1-4).

Furthermore, the motive with which one gives should be right. It should be borne of the willingness to appreciate God or show gratitude to him for the blessing he gave. This rule out the issue of stunt, or unhealthy competition in one's disposition. The issue is to impress God, who judges the motive with which an action is performed. It should not be to please men, so that one does not become a men pleaser.

Lastly, it should be given cheerfully, not grudgingly. The joy that one is giving to God, who in His providence has benefitted one, should be demonstrated in the process. This makes the person concerned not to have a feeling of loss or regret through giving the best to God. We were involved in empirical study, to ascertain the extent at which AG's pastors in the parishes investigated allowed the above enumerated principles to guide their activities and those of their members during Harvest Thanksgiving, and our findings are documented under the discussions of the data analysis.

#### **4 Sharing with the needy**

According to our findings, while it is true that the idea of a banquet with plenteous food and drinks may not be questionable during Harvest Thanksgiving, sharing with the needy is very integral and fundamental. According to Ronald:

The feasts and festivals of Israel were community observances. The poor, the widow, the orphan, the Levite, and the sojourner or foreigner were invited to most of the feasts. The accounts of these feasts suggest a potluck type of meal, with some parts of the meal



reserved for the priest and the rest given to those who gather at the Temple or the altar for worship.<sup>71</sup>

The above comment clearly indicates that God makes provision for the care of the needy as well as those of the pastors during the festivals of His people. In other words, the same principle that governed the feasts of Israel is still relevant in the contemporary time as confirmed by our respondents. They indicated that, implicitly, in agreement with the above biblical provision, God expects each church to have the programme of collective charitable outreach in the course of her Harvest Thanksgiving, with which she could demonstrate concern to the needy. Our respondents confirmed that it can never be in the idea of God that the needy should be forgotten or neglected in the process. Our Focus Group discussants suggested that this is expected to be in the policy of every church denomination, so that it could serve as a means whereby God can meet the needs of such ones in the process. For instance, Assemblies of God Church's constitution stipulates that one third of the Harvest Thanksgiving's proceeds of every parish, both cash and kind, should be for the purpose of demonstrating charity to the needy members of the society.

In the same way, most of those that we interviewed disclosed that, the idea of God instructing the nation of Israel to remember the strangers and foreigners in their feast simply implies that they should not limit their humanitarian or collective charitable outreach to the needy that are from their nation, especially at the time of their festivals. Their concern should transcend this, but must equally embrace those that are foreigners. That being the case, implicitly, with this kind gesture, the respondents agreed that God expects the nation of Israel to witness to the foreign nations not only through their words, but more practically through their works. The possibility is there, that some who may not see the need to embrace the God of Israel through what is taught in the Torah may find it difficult to resist the need to do this, if His people extend their charitable gesture to them during their feasts.

According to what we gathered from our respondents, the above divine injunction is both relevant and applicable to the contemporary church, especially as we treat issues from the point of our research interest, which is the impact of Christian festivals on AG's pastors' financial and spiritual lives in Ogun State. Our respondents agreed that God expects the church, under the aegis of its pastors to

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<sup>71</sup>E.Y. Ronald. 1995. Nelson I. *New illustrated Bible dictionary*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers. 59.

witness, not only through her words, but more practically by her humanitarian services. Such services are to be extended to the poor, the widows, orphans, prisoners, the sick, etc. both within and without the church congregation. Oniya indicates that prayer alone is not enough to demonstrate our faith as Christians. We must back such prayers up with good deeds, like the work of mercy and compassion to our poor fellows.<sup>72</sup>

Relating what has been said above about the nation of Israel to the contemporary church, our respondents indicated that whereas it is possible to have those who may not embrace the gospel being presented by the Christians through what they (the Christians) say, however, the possibility is there that some could be won through the good works of the Christians, especially through generosity to the needy during the Christian Harvest Thanksgiving. It was therefore, agreed that it is not proper to limit the church's concern during Harvest Thanksgiving to the needy in her fold. As much as these ones are to be catered for, our respondents affirmed that provision should also be made for the needy ones outside the Church. This is imperatively an effective evangelism strategy.

Our respondents who participated in the focus group discussion drew inference from the Bible account that Jesus' teachings amplify the above, especially in the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:31-46). In this passage, based on Jesus' teaching, those that should benefit in the church's humanitarian services are addressed. These are the hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick and the prisoners. By implication, these categories of people are the contemporary needy, such as the widows, orphans, sick, poor and prisoners, including strangers who are not members of the church. From the above issue raised; the care of the indigent, both within and without the church confine, forms vital area of interest to us in the course of our investigation. We tried to know how committed AG's pastors in Ogun State are in this direction, especially in mobilizing their members to take advantage of it to meet the needs of this set of people, thereby alleviating their sufferings. Our discovery has been documented in the discussion that comes under the data analysis

##### **5. Scriptural admonition**

Our findings revealed that since one of God's purposes or reasons for instituting festivals is to enable His people have a forum in which they receive divine

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<sup>72</sup> G. Oniya. 2004. *Poverty alleviation: a role for the church*. Osogbo: Christian Religion Publications. 2.

instruction, scriptural admonition is, therefore, an integral feature of Christian Harvest Thanksgiving. God's intention is to have the priests, or pastors to get engaged in using the avenue to teach His people the appropriate way of living; so that they might be morally sound both in their personal and inter personal relationship and in turn bring glory to Him and blessings to their fellow men. Hence, the reading and interpretation of the word of God becomes an integral element. This is the case in all AG's parishes investigated in the course of this research. In those parishes apart from permitting the people to have physical food, they are also taught the word of God through the pulpits' sermon during the occasion.

### 3.3.5 Blessings of Harvest Thanksgiving

Harvest Thanksgiving undoubtedly is a means whereby Christians receive blessings. Although it is possible to place this within subjective premise, the fact that the practice is welcome from time to time and, of course, is taking greater and better dimension in the contemporary time, is a point to prove the reality of the above assertion.

Many scholars and Christians have written or testified to the reality of the blessings that come through Harvest Thanksgiving. For instance, Ogunsanya indicates that when one engages in Harvest thanksgiving, he obeys the commandment of God (Ps. 50:14). It opens doors for more blessings (Ps. 50:14) and is playing his part for providing for the progress of God's work.<sup>73</sup>

The report we got through oral interview of personal involvement of our respondents in Harvest Thanksgiving confirmed what Ogunsanya said. Christians are very passionate, especially in the light of the first point indicated above. They believe that all human's success and achievement in life rests in proper relationship with God. And since they see Harvest Thanksgiving as a way to obey God's commands, their obedience is interpreted in the light of spiritual exercise that paves the way for other blessings. Going by the responses of our respondents, most Christians who practice it believe they can contact blessing, both spiritual and physical in the process. Thus, according to this opinion, one can receive divine healing, fruit of the womb, grace to get connected with job or lucrative employment, promotion, financial breakthrough, victory over battles of life and other blessings which are inexhaustible. Hence,

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<sup>73</sup> T. A. Ogunsanya. 2000. *The place of money in the worship of God*. Lagos: Bible Pattern Publishers. 47 – 50.

according to Oboh, one can attract prosperity from God as a result of having large heart to give to Him during Harvest Thanksgiving. On the other hand, stinginess during this festival can attract a curse.<sup>74</sup>

For empirical confirmation of the above, most of those who participated in the focus group discussion testified that they were sure they had contacted certain grace at one time or the other through their participation in the Harvest Thanksgiving, and would not agree that what they experienced was unreal. Testimonies were given to affirm their position. For instance, some of them agreed that there were instances in which certain things that appeared not to be working in their favour before their participation in previous Harvest Thanksgiving later had a better dramatic turnaround in their favour. They agreed that such instances were not products of coincidence, but an evidence of divine grace upon their lives as a result of their participation in the festival. To strengthen this position, testimonies were given by people which, both around fruits of the womb, employment, healing, and divine enablement for success in life's endeavours in some of the parishes during our participant observation.

In order to attract the blessings of Harvest Thanksgiving, writers, however, indicate that what one offers should be given with the understanding that it is unto God. One's focus should transcend the human agent(s) who officiate(s) during the process. One should not think that God has no interest in the things being offered. They should not hold the opinion that it is man who will use it. According to Oboh<sup>75</sup>, although God did not eat some thousands of bullocks offered by Solomon (2 Chr. 7:4-7), He, however, took the glory in what he offered. By implication, the material or cash given during Harvest Thanksgiving are not expected to be used or consumed by God, but men. However, as one does this, he becomes a channel whereby God meets the needs of certain individuals, which makes God happy through the gift. In that sense, the gift properly presented during Harvest Thanksgiving can endear one before God, which consequently, becomes a seed planted which would be harvested in its due course. Some of the respondents during the oral interview confirmed that the efficacy of Harvest Thanksgiving in generating blessing upon one's life is related to one's perspective about divine involvement in the participation. According to them, one who regards his participation as sacred, with proper understanding that God

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<sup>74</sup> Oboh. *Discover the secret of divine prosperity*. 108.

<sup>75</sup> Oboh. *Discover the secret of divine prosperity*.

is involved will experience the grace that accompanies it. On the contrary, those who regard the exercise as natural or mere perfunctory exercise would be deprived of experiencing divine power that accompanies it.

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## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **IMPACT OF THE SELECTED CHRISTIAN FESTIVALS ON PASTORS OF ASSEMBLIES OF GOD IN OGUN STATE, NIGERIA**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, attempt is made to discuss how the selected Christian festivals impact Assemblies of God's pastors in Ogun State, Nigeria. Our approach to this has not undermined how such impact symbiotically relates to their members, because of the existence of interconnectivity between what affects the former and the latter, especially during the time of such festivals.

Christian festivals generate tremendous impact on the individual Christian, families and community as a whole. This underscores their importance to the pastors, since the clergy are also individual Christians, with their own families, and constituting a part of the community where they are. This, therefore, explains a reason for the continuous relevance of Christian festivals, especially in Assemblies of God in Ogun State. Among the areas in which their impacts are felt on AG's pastors in our research setting as we gathered in our research, the following are worth mentioning:

#### **4.2 Spiritual formation and growth**

Christian festivals generate spiritual formation and growth of the Christians, especially the AG's pastors. What is meant by this spiritual function is that they have incorporeal and sacred effects on the Christian community with particular reference to the pastors. This spiritual enrichment is a necessary part of festivals, whereby the needs of man that are not terrestrial, physical or corporeal are met. Human being is a creature that consists, not only of the corporeal or physical entity but also of the spiritual entity, whose need, if not met, would hinder his complete fulfillment.

Every human being, including each pastor, possesses a spiritual need that is as fundamental as the need for food. True spiritual fulfillment is an aspect of our spiritual need that is as vital as our physical need for food. Therefore, choosing to live by God's standard elevates one's life and contributes to real peace of mind, since it spares us from the plague of a guilty conscience. Jesus says, "Man must not live by

bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4). This is a fact that there is a craving in man, a longing, whose need could only be met spiritually. This issue is also related to the intellectual and higher endowment of man’s mind, making him to become highly formed and reformed as the case may be, in thought or feeling. It is the proper understanding of this tendency in man that made Robertson to say:

... the connection between us and Christ is not of the body that passes, but of the spirit which endures. It is spiritual and in such a connection may be seriously perverted by the interference of sense and of bodily sensation and on the whole, it is well that our spirit should be allowed to choose its eternal friendship and alliance by what is specially and exclusively its own, so that the choice cannot be mistaken as the choice sometimes is, when there is a mixture of physical and spiritual attractiveness.<sup>1</sup>

Each of our festivals selected for this research, according to the investigation we carried out, assisted both the AG’s pastors and members in spiritual formation and growth. At Christmas for instance, respondents affirmed that the pastors and their members were assisted in recapitulating the main significance of this festival, which is God’s love demonstrated practically to humankind by the sending of His Son for their salvation. In this case, the season offers the pastors and their members the opportunity to assess the way they demonstrate their love, both to God and their fellows in their community. The importance of this love can be clearly understood in the sense that Jesus’ synopsis of the Ten Commandments hangs on love. He indicates that the way to fulfill the Decalogue is:

Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind... And the second is like unto it, Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets<sup>2</sup>.

In the same vein, our respondents during the FGD indicated that the season of Christmas aids the pastors in practicalizing self-giving, both to the service of God and better commitment to seeking the unconverted members of their community through evangelistic programmes in forms of Christmas rally, mass evangelism and crusades

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<sup>1</sup> N. W. Robertson. 1956. *The Expositors Bible*. Grand Rapids Eerdman’s Publishing Co. 5: 198-201.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew. 22:37-40.



in an unprecedented way. For instance, 61.7% of the pastors we interviewed affirmed that the 2010 Christmas' evangelistic outreach invigorated their soul winning passion which revived them away from spiritual apathy on conversion of souls that characterized their life before the season.

Respondents confirmed that the spiritual effect which Christmas celebration has on the pastors is a means of making them becoming heavenly conscious and also earthly relevant. This spiritual consciousness helps them to know they are responsible to God in their lives' dealings, and the fact that they are still in the terrestrial world necessitates their living a life that will equally profit them and others on earth.

At Easter, we gathered that the spiritual calisthenics aura that characterized the retreat conducted for this festival's celebration kindled the prayer life and commitment of the pastors to the cause of their members. For instance, 55.0% of the pastors that constituted a part of our respondents affirmed that the spiritual calisthenics aura of 2011 Easter retreat revived them to better prayer and pastoral commitment for their members. In the same vein, the Harvest Thanksgiving was said to aid them in kindling their trait of concern to the less fortunate members. For instance, 48.3% of the pastors affirmed that the 2011 Harvest Thanksgiving proceeds enabled them to actively demonstrate pure religion, through cash assistance given by them to 49 AG's widows for their children's school fees. In some cases a part of the hospital bills of some of these widows and their children were paid by them. The significance of this can be seen in the light of what the Bible says should characterize pure religion and undefiled:

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world<sup>3</sup>.

Our investigation revealed further that Harvest Thanksgiving, to the Christians, especially those pastors who understand its real significance, points to the last day's harvest, when God will sever the righteous from the wicked. According to Nwokoro, the festival points to the great harvest when God shall say "Gather the wheat into my barn"<sup>4</sup>. It will be a time when the angels of God will come to reap the world. Thus, proper understanding of this will make someone to live a life that will command

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<sup>3</sup> James. 1:27.

<sup>4</sup> I. N. Nwokoro. 1999. *Prosperity: God's desire for his children*. Kogi: 78, 79.

God's moral approval, so as to get qualified for being among the righteous when this great event will take place.

#### 4.3 Moral development

Our findings revealed that Christian festivals result in developing the pastors and their members morally. The term moral simply relates to the principles or consideration of right and wrong action or good and bad principles. The period of each Christian festival was confirmed by our respondents as one of the means in which individuals in the society, especially AG's pastors are brought in contact with an effective means, of understanding of the principles or consideration of right and wrong action or good and bad character.

Going by the contribution of our respondents, the need for moral enrichment in our contemporary society, especially in Ogun State, such as could be generated in the course of Christian festivals cannot be over-emphasized. Moral lapses obviously are seen as the order of the day. There is a general obdurate condition, in which some persist trenchantly, shamelessly and impenitently in things that do not have moral approval within the standard set up in the society. This situation affects all sectors of our society: religion, economy, politics, social, and so on. As such, the need for the inculcation of moral enrichment becomes inevitable. To this need, the conduct of Christian festivals becomes a means of meeting this challenge.

According to our respondents, there are ways in which Christmas festival, for instance, enriches the individual pastor, the church and each community morally in Ogun State. Among these, the messages preached by religious priests, pastors, and so on, in Churches, radio and television during this festival are of importance within the matrix of morality. With this, religious' custodians address interpersonal relationships, emphasizing that such actions that are ethically or morally approved are those that do not take the way they affect their fellow humankind for granted. Respondents confirmed that the Christians in the State, with particular reference to AG's pastors are taught to love their neighbours, since the emphasis of Christmas is love of God, such as is expected to be exemplified in Christian living. Therefore, such teachings that amplify the golden rule, "Do unto others as you would want them to do unto you", are accentuated. This helps in making obedient Christians, most especially

the AG's pastors, to shun moral vices that could have made the lives of others unpleasant and unbearable in the social order.

Some of the pastors we interviewed confirmed that since the teaching of Christian religion articulates that its adherents must put into practice what they are taught, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (Jam. 1:21), this becomes a great impetus to inculcation of morality in their mode of conduct. Those pastors and members who had drifted into moral lapses get opportunity offered in the course of such teachings, during Christmas, to revitalize into moral uprightness. As this is the case, the result becomes positive influence on the society.

As confirmed by our respondents, Christmas, the period in which the birth of Christ as the Saviour sent to the world is remembered, is also a time in which Christians, especially the AG's pastors, take stock of their lives, to know whether or not God's purpose of sending His Son has bearing with the way they live. In it, while appreciating God for sending His Son, they regard sin as inimical, an object of hatred to them and something not to condone.

Conversely, our investigation confirmed that the indebtedness that increases as a result of unusual craving for the festival's goods and services, borne, at times, through intense desire to fulfill family's demand and unhealthy competition among contemporaries. Apart from the fact that unhealthy competition among them creates economic and social problems during Christmas, it also constitutes negative moral effects among the AG's pastors in Ogun State.

#### **4.4 Boosting the pastors' morale**

Christian festivals assist in boosting the morale of the Christians, especially the AG's pastors in Ogun State. The presence of stress, distress, anguish, depression, fear and the likes, such that characterized some pastors' lives before the occurrence of Christmas, explicates the expediency of this role.

One of the ways in which Christian festivals boost pastors' morale, according to the contributions of our focus group's discussants, is the interaction that occurs among people who participate in the festivals. At such times, according to our respondents, the scenario of tranquility and companionship become enhanced, in place of loneliness and individualistic tendency. Such interactions heal the pains people, especially the pastors, had before the time of each festival.

Some of the pastors we interviewed confirmed that the period of either Christmas or Easter festival equally becomes a means whereby their members use the holiday opportunity they get to share with them their life experiences and are given useful advice or counsel over related issues of life. Considering the fact that attendance during church programmes increases during Christmas, except for the identified problem peculiar to churches with greater non-native membership composition, there is acceleration in the involvement of some of the pastors in their counseling role. For instance, the fact that during Christmas some members or converts are not in their businesses or places of work usually makes some want to use the opportunity offered through the season's holiday to seek for pastoral counseling in their problem areas of life. This makes the pastors to be more involved in the counseling work in which their spiritual advice and prayer assistance serve as great solace to people confronting challenges of life. Consequently, some of these people receive invisible sustenance that could keep them on the go with courage and confidence after Christmas celebration. About 45% of the pastors interviewed confirmed that this was a true picture of what obtains annually, during Christmas in their parishes. This makes each affected pastor to realize his relevance among his members, especially those who as a result of the nature of their work kept distance from him in the pre-festival season.

On the part of the members, the sermons delivered by their pastors during festivals imbue in them psychological stability. For instance, such sermons that address the reality of God's love, which is the focal point of Christmas message, make members to know that they are in God's caring hands in the midst of their life's problems, frustrations and challenging confrontations. Some of the pastors who constituted a part of our respondents disclosed that this positive disposition of the membership directly aids their pastoral duty, because the commitment and dedication it kindles in the members affect the psychological wellbeing of each pastor concerned.

Added to the above, before the coming of each festival, our investigation revealed that some pastors and their members were facing depression, stress, and so on, about their survival, as a result of insecurity arising from their poverty or social crisis in the community. However, at the instance of this festival, people gather and relate together. Those with whom they have not been relating before come to

celebrate with them, and so they gain courage, confidence and develop positive thinking and rapport among neighbours. The atmosphere of friendliness generated in this process helps in instilling cordiality. This gives rise to peaceful co-existence.

It has also been discovered that the presence of Christmas displays or decorations, such as Christmas tree, can generate self-assurance, joviality and a general positive mood to those who celebrate Christmas, especially pastors, above those who do not. On the other hand, the decorations may threaten the sense of self, depress the mood and engender the feelings of alienation and exclusion to the non-celebrants. This discovery was made from Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, which is based on the honors thesis conducted by Michael Schmit, Kelly Davies, Mandy Hung, and Stephen Wright.<sup>5</sup>

Our respondents maintained that the fact that Christian festivals boost the morale of those celebrating them is also overtly evident through the effects of the frill and thrill that characterized each of the seasons. Most people, especially the AG's pastors, are naturally happy during festive period, a disposition which the respondents confirmed usually come, for instance, through the aesthetic environmental influence of Christmas. Most of the pastors that featured in our focus group discussion disclosed that it is natural for them to have psychological boost during Christmas, such that surpasses what occurs, either before or after Christmas festival.

The season of Easter generates psychological influence on both AG's pastors and their members, especially as we treat issue within the context of the Christian community. Assemblies of God, as a Christian denomination organizes retreat during the period, in which, topics considered during preaching and workshops effectively influence the lives of the participants psychologically. Thus, in the process, such sermons that address the significance of Jesus' resurrection to the Christian living result in bringing hope awakening and confidence renewal to the depressed and lethargic participants, especially those of the pastoral stratum. Usually, most of the pastors who attend with such dispositions go home with courage and confidence. As a confirmation of the above, 55.0% of the pastors, who constituted a part of our respondents, confirmed that the spiritual calisthenics aura of 2011 Easter retreat revived their prayer and pastoral commitment to their congregational members than

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<sup>5</sup> T. L. Stawar. Can Christmas decoration be psychologically harmful. Retrieved July 12, 2012, from <http://www.psychologicalimpactofchristmas.com>

what obtained in the pre-Easter period. Apart from the sermons or teachings during the seminars, worship and prayer, either collectively, or on individual basis, during such programmes, were confirmed as what equally generate psychological solace to those of them who were initially discouraged and depressed. With this, they gain more courage and confidence, with the understanding that all hope is not lost regardless of their life challenges.

Harvest Thanksgiving festival in some AG's parishes is at times characterized by feasting, in which people wine and dine. Solomon says a feast is made for laughter (Prov. 10:19), which by implication means the moment is a time of joy. It is natural to find people, especially the AG's pastors, becoming liberated from the life of stress, discouragement, frustration that earlier characterized their living before the time of this festival. The scenario of joy that comes to play during this festival, in which people dance, sing and testify to the goodness of God, according to our investigation, serves as a healing therapy to the psychological imbalance in the lives of most of the pastors. This makes what Excel says to have bearing within the context of psychological effects of Harvest Thanksgiving on AG pastors. For according to him, "unless religious feasts are based upon joy, and unless God's service is joyous and free, they are impracticable".

#### **4.5 Increase in financial earnings**

Among the parishes investigated, we gathered that Christian festivals generate positive economic effects on some AG's members, which in turn increased the financial earning of their pastors. By positive economic effects, we mean these phenomena have bearing on the production, distribution and consumption of commodities. As such, each of the selected festivals has practical or industrial significance, uses and application. With this, individuals and corporate establishments generate funds for use, especially for livelihood and profiteering. Among ways our respondents disclosed in which the above effect of festival occurs and which in turn boost pastors' earnings are the services rendered and sales of items needed during the festivals' seasons.

Christmas, for instance, as we gathered from some of the past research consulted, generates the largest annual economic stimulus for the economy of those nations

celebrating it.<sup>6</sup> With it, sales and profits increase dramatically, especially in most retail shops, as people are busy purchasing gifts, decorations, and other supplies that are needed by them and their visiting guests during the festival. It is a common trend for shops to introduce new products which would be sold at premium prices, and customers use this situation to take advantage of marketing opportunities at their disposal.

In Ogun State, according to investigation, Christmas shopping season starts as early as October. A great percentage of personal spending takes place during this holiday shopping. Furthermore, employment in retail businesses increases, as more hands are needed to assist in attending to the needs of customers, who have come for holiday shopping.

Investigation also revealed that AG's members in Ogun State are actively busy during Christmas, because the season accelerates the sales of the business persons. As such, some who are unemployed before the season do get at least casual job because some of the businessmen and women would need their services during the period to cater for the higher demand of people for their goods and services, especially during the few weeks that precede the Christmas day. As such, the season generates employment for some of those who had been without job before the festival. This ultimately has bearing on the church's income, with its attendant positive effect on the pastors' salaries.

Our focus group discussants disclosed that some industries depend so much on Christmas, for it is during this time that their products are in high demand. For instance, the movie industry, in which the Christmas holiday makes people to be at home and enjoy greater pleasure and relaxation. Such a situation makes people to demand more films than what obtained at the pre-Christmas period. The same could be said of industries and retailers of Christmas decorations, Christmas trees, Christmas light, clothes, shoes, food and drinks. The demand for these products skyrockets, resulting to higher income to industries dealing with them. AG's members who are into the above or related businesses, according to our respondents, are benefitted. Those of them who are generous had more money to assist their

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<sup>6</sup> M. Verga. Retrieved Nov. 12, 2011, from [http:// www.womeninbusinessanswers/a/w.b-Answers –What- is-the-Definition of Christmas-Creen htm](http://www.womeninbusinessanswers/a/w.b-Answers-What-is-the-Definition-of-Christmas-Creen-htm).



pastors financially, apart from fulfilling other church's monetary obligations in terms of tithes and offerings.

With regards to the above positive economic effect of Christmas, our investigation revealed, however, that this is usually the case when the parish in question is dominated by the natives. In other words, this is the condition when the percentage of members who travel for celebration is comparatively minimal. For instance, the information supplied by the pastor indicates that Adedotun-Abeokuta parish had about 58% increases in income during December 2011 above the normal average of monthly income. This, as said above, was made possible because the composition of the parish's membership, unlike the case with most AG's parishes in the State, are indigenes that did not need to travel out of their parish's location for the festival celebration. Conversely, we gathered that in those parishes dominated by non-natives, for instance as we gathered from the senior pastor of Ayegbami parish in Shagamu, the Christmas traveling reduced the composition of the financial members, whereby there is usually a drop in the church's income and, consequently, the pastors' salaries. This was because some of those who traveled did not pay their tithes, which constituted their parishes' primary source of income.

Additionally, some pastors, according to the feedback we got, both from the FGD and the oral interview, gave in to certain dispositions with serious negative economic consequences during the season. For instance, some spent most of what they have been saving from the beginning of the year during the period. As such, new clothes, shoes, jewelries and other items are purchased for the festive period, both for them and their family members. The practice of self denial that possibly characterized the individual Christian before Christmas was confirmed to have been jettisoned in a bid to make the festive period outstandingly impressive. Our findings revealed that some of the pastors and their members whose financial disposition did not favour having it in grand style found it difficult to resist the temptation of spending the way their neighbours and colleagues were doing, especially when faced with pressure to do so by their spouses or other family members. As such, in Ogun State, we have cases in which some AG's pastors spent excessively on luxury, traveling and merriment at the expense of affordability. There were some who confirmed during oral interview that they actually went into debt as a result; in which case, they had to start the New Year with a struggle of how to pay off the debt incurred in the process.

Furthermore, based on the information received, the Christmas day is probably the least active day of the year for business and commerce. Almost all retail, commercial and institutional businesses are inoperative. Also virtually all industries close down for the festivity. As a result, our respondents, who are businessmen and women affirmed to making no profit on the Christmas day. About 62% of them confirmed that where the thought ever comes to carry out their business activities whenever the Christmas day does not fall on Sunday, some see this as odd, with the thought that the norm is for them to be at the church service, and dedicate the day for festivity, making it entirely a work-free day. 38% equally agreed that apart from what others may say, they also felt it is not normal, religious-wise, for them to engage in active business activities on Christmas day. Hence, the assumption is that it is normal for the day to be business-free.

One of the economic implications of Easter which resultantly had effect on AG's pastors as confirmed by our respondents, is the joint Easter retreat organized annually at the District level to celebrate this festival. Those pastors who are assigned as the retreat's speakers are given honorarium, which boosts them financially. In the same way, those that served as the planning committee are appreciated financially at the end of the exercise

While the above indicate the positive economic effect of Easter on AG's pastors in Ogun State, investigation revealed that extreme emphasis on fund raising during Easter retreat generated negative economic implications on them and their members. For instance, those pastors who placed such extreme emphasis on fund raising were viewed within the context of display of avarice, filthy lucre, greed and materialism. Equally, since Assemblies of God's pastors' salaries are determined by the amount of income the church make, the closure of all their parishes on Easter Sunday, to celebrate Easter, through the joint retreat at the camp, had adverse effect on the pastors' salaries during the Easter week. For instance, our investigation revealed that the closure of all parishes on Easter Sunday during the four days joint Easter retreat organized between 2009 and 2011 accounted for a significant decrease in pastors' salaries in 86.7% of the parishes investigated, where salaries dropped from an average of N20,000.00 to about N14,500. This, according to our respondents, would be a sharp contrast to what occurred in denominations with a similar programme, but whose pastors' remuneration is determined by using graduated scale of salaries.

As regards how Harvest Thanksgiving affects the financial lives of AG's pastors in Ogun State, almost all the pastors of all the parishes investigated indicated that the effect is always on the positive end. Most of the parishes prepared the minds of their members ahead of time through teachings from the Bible that God does not want His people to come to Him with empty hand during the festival. Everyone must have something to give. This teaching simply presupposes that God expects that each concerned Christian has a source of living from where he brings the gift(s) with which he or she wants to show his gratitude to God during the festival. This has resulted in the spirit of hard work, diligence and industry among the members, whereby they are economically empowered to support the church financially in consequence of which their pastors' salaries were boosted. Apart from the above, investigations revealed that the church's constitution made provision for the pastor of each parish to be entitled to one third of the Harvest Thanksgiving's proceeds, both cash and kind. For instance, we gathered during the interview that in 2010 this provision resulted in economic boom of pastors, whereby an average of N23, 000 was received by each in those parishes investigated.

The increase in income of the pastors of the research area confirmed the position of various writers who posit that Harvest Thanksgiving could be a means by which Christians can contact grace for prosperity.<sup>7</sup> As much as there are various dimensions in which prosperity could appear, the very one of interest to us here is financial, especially as it relates to AG's pastors who form our research interest.

#### 4.6 Reunion of members of families

Christian festivals assist in bringing about reunion of members of the Christian families in Assemblies of God in Ogun State, especially among the pastors. While this appears not to be so evidenced during Harvest Thanksgiving, our observation confirmed that it is particularly the case with both Christmas and Easter festivals, in that there is public holiday declared to mark each occasion. For instance, the effect of such holiday makes the working class pastors' wives to stay at home, away from their working places.

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<sup>7</sup> E. Oboh. 2004. *Discover the secret of divine prosperity*. Lagos: Faith Realm Publishers, 108, and T. A. Ogunsanya. 2000. *The place of money in the worship of God*. Lagos: Bible Pattern Publishers. 47-50.

The above point simply attests to the fact that both Christmas and Easter festivals generate lawful pleasures and necessary rest to individual participants. Those who might not spend more than one hour with one another, especially with their spouse or family members are brought into the condition of staying together during the festive season. Our investigation, through the FGD, revealed that this could be of both advantage or disadvantage, depending on the perspective from which one sees it and the people in question. For instance, it could aid in settling grievances or discussing issues that could move the family forward. However, where the staying at home is not made to result in benefit, it could result in domestic abuse. A research conducted on Christmas, for instance, confirmed that calls to the Whales Domestic Abuse helpline increase during this festive period as tension at home sometimes boil over into abuse.<sup>8</sup>

Although one may agree that the traveling of many of the AG's members in parishes dominated by the non-natives in Ogun State to their home towns to celebrate Christmas is a problem that reduces the attendance of the local parishes in the State and consequently both the Church and pastor's income. Our respondents however, indicated that this often helps pastors and their families who are involved in such traveling to consolidate their social union in their hometowns. They are likewise able to renew their tribal and family acquaintances and cement such relationships. This is because during such occasions of their coming together from their different places of residence they found themselves in their hometowns and were able to use the medium to consolidate, synergize and jointly do what concerns them as members of such communities before returning to their places of residence. Some of the pastors we contacted during the oral interview, who were involved in such traveling confirmed that they had benefitted in this regard.

#### **4.7 Social integration**

Apart from aiding reunion of the immediate family members, Christian festivals also assist AG's pastors and their members to get better integrated into their larger community. By this, we mean such festivals assist in combining and coordinating separate and diverse elements or units of the society into a unified whole. In other words, their conduct results in bringing about the unification and mutual adjustment

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<sup>8</sup> Retrieved July 12, 2012, from <http://www.socialimpactofchristmas.com>

of diverse groups of the society into a relatively, coordinated, and harmonious culture.

This role of Christian festivals is obviously indispensable, considering the complexity of our contemporary society whose trend tends to disintegrate than integrating people into unified and harmonious relationship. According to those who participated in the FGD, the process of interaction is an active means whereby each of our festivals of interest articulates social integration.

An undeniable fact, attested to by our respondents, whereby the articulation of social integration occurs during Christian festivals, is the coming together of people of different tribes and cultures, for celebration. For instance, Christmas brings people of different cultures together as a unified whole, for harmonious and peaceful relationship. In such occasion, interaction occurs, with people who see themselves as members of same community, regardless of their cultural and status differences. They come to learn that what affects others is equally of interest to them. The season is characterized with gift-giving, in which friends and family relations exchange gifts with one another, this facilitates better relationship, culminating in friendliness, peace and affection for one another. As such, the scenario of camaraderie generated continues to aid harmonious and peaceful coexistence in Ogun State after the celebration might have been over. Assemblies of God's pastors benefit from such scenario of friendliness and calmness, for it instills a sense of tranquility and peace in them and their members.

Responses from our respondents also indicated that apart from the adults and youths, children, especially those from pastors' homes, are not left out in the socio impact generated through this festival. The Father Christmas show, which most children look forward to, has both socio and psychological effects on them. With it, they interact with other children who have come to see Father Christmas. They receive gifts from him and are happy with the incidence that takes place in the process. In addition, the season affords them opportunity for carnivals and visits to tourist places. It is the season in which their parents buy new clothes, shoes and other things they need for celebration. In short, the socio impact generated by Christmas is esoteric, touching all and sundry regardless of the age.

We gathered through oral interview that the Easter retreat enables AG's pastors and their members to get to know others better and make new acquaintances. In

addition, at the retreat, issues that bother on the pastors' families, marriage and their youths are among the topics that feature during the preaching or teaching topics chosen for the programme. With this, marriages receive synergy and the youths receive moral instruction that will enhance their social and spiritual life. Such a forum, according to our respondents, enables the youths to receive teachings that enhanced good values, inculcate good culture of respect for themselves and others, including love for their country and fear of God.<sup>9</sup> They equally benefit from it in terms of acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes whereby they become self-sufficient and are able to contribute meaningfully to the development of their society. Moreover, the youths, according to our investigation, also benefit in terms of proper mate selection. For instance, some of our respondents, especially those from pastors families confirmed that when they were youths they benefited in this direction, whereby they got their future spouses during such gathering.

In the case of Harvest Thanksgiving, responses from our respondents show that as a corporate celebration, both the pastors and their members are brought together, to express their gratitude to God their benefactor. This confirms Robertson's<sup>10</sup> position, that God instituted Israel's Harvest Thanksgiving, apart from other things, for certain social impact: keeping up a national sense of religious and public uniformity in worship, creating a bond of unity and also to promote commerce among His people.

All of the above points indicated by Robertson are relevant to what obtains in Harvest Thanksgiving of the Christians, who are regarded as God's New Testament Israel or nation of God. Our observation in the parishes investigated revealed that as a corporate celebration, the people involved, especially in each parish, had a national sense of their religion, regardless of the different races to which they belong. Similarly, there is an expression of uniformity in their worship as they come to show their gratitude to God.

The social integrative effects of the above festival on the pastors, according to our investigation, is obvious in that through it some of them were enabled to coordinate their members for collective charitable outreach to meet the needs of the poor, widows, strangers, orphans, prisoners, etc. Ronald<sup>11</sup>, for instance, opines that

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<sup>9</sup> G. Oniya. 2006. *Christian youth camp: forum for character molding*. Osogbo: Christian Religion Publications. 6.

<sup>10</sup> N.W. Robertson. 1956. *The expositors' Bible*. 5: 261.

<sup>11</sup> E.Y. Ronald. 1995. *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 32.

during this feast as observed by the nation of Israel, the poor, the widow, the orphan, the Levite and the sojourner were invited. Our respondents disclosed that in Assemblies of God, when the implication of the Church's constitutional provision is rightly applied, allowance is made for such spiritual demonstration of the concern God expected the nation of Israel to show to the less fortunate members. One third of Harvest Thanksgiving's proceeds of each parish is meant to be used to address the needs of the poor. Such a step makes these less fortunate ones to know that the church, especially the pastor, cares and could be a means of presenting the gospel to them through actions rather than words. As a confirmation of the above, 48.3% of the pastors we consulted through oral interview confirmed that the 2011 Harvest Thanksgiving's proceeds they received enabled them to assist 49 AG widows. At the end of the event, cash assistance was given to them, to pay their children's school fees and medical bills.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **HIGHLIGHT OF THE PROBLEMS OF PASTORS IN ASSEMBLIES OF GOD IN OGUN STATE, NIGERIA**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, we highlight the problems of Assemblies of God's pastors in Ogun State, Nigeria. Our findings revealed that discussion on Christian festivals showcases one of the problems among AG's pastors. AG's pastors are beset with multifarious problems, and each of these has bearing with their moral and spiritual life. Owing to the fact that the pastors witness certain problems during the period of the selected Christian festivals, our study, therefore, does an assessment of the impact of the selected festivals on our targeted pastors in section 5.2.2 in order to unveil the issues involved before highlighting other related problems they encounter in section 5.3. This position becomes necessary due to the discovery made during our pilot study. Moreover, the chapter analyses the data gathered from the field and discussed the findings. The research design and techniques adopted to achieve the study objectives were enunciated in this chapter. Specifically, the methodology that we employed was designed primarily to improve the reliability and validity of the data



generated. The specific research methods used in this design are inferences drawn from empirical information gathered through In-depth interview, personal observations, questionnaire and Focus Group Discussions. The adoption of this research design has helped greatly in the generation of both quantitative and qualitative data.

## 5.2 Data information and interpretation

As both quantitative and qualitative data were generated in the study, thus, data interpretation requires both descriptive and inferential analysis. Content analysis method was used to analyse data from In-depth interviews and FGDs. This was done after tapes had been transcribed by the research assistants. Essential quotations and expressions by the respondents were reported verbatim to enrich the quantitative data from the cross section survey.

### 5.2.1 Section A. Respondents' bio-data

**Table 5.1. Education**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Below S.S.S.C	60	22
S.S.S.C.	158	58
NCE/O.N.D/BA & above	55	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>100</b>

From the above table, a total of 60 people, who represent 22% of the respondents have education level that is below S.S.S.C. A total of 158 people, who represent 58% have S.S.S.C; while 55 of the respondents, who represent 20% have N.C.E. and above. By implication, majority of the respondents have educational exposure that is not less than S.S.S.C, who are 58% + 20%, which equals 78% of the total number of the respondents. This further implies that majority of our respondents are literate enough as to understand the impact of the selected Christian festivals and the appraisal of the same in their communities, especially on their pastors.

**Table 5.2. Sex**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	180	66
Female	93	34

<b>Total</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>100</b>
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Table 5.2 shows that 180 people, who represent 66% of the total number of the respondents, were males, while 93, who are 34% were females. Information on the sex of the respondents shows that 66 percent of them are males, while 34 percent were females. This shows that the stratification technique adopted in the methodology was followed during the stage of data collection. Specially, the research methodology was out to interview more males than females, since AG pastoral stratum and deaconry were male dominated.

Although the number of the female respondents is lower, it is not insignificant. This gives the true picture that the male composition of AG pastoral fold and deacon boards are more than their female counterparts. By implication, both sexes were significantly represented as to allow the interest of each sex on the issue of the financial and spiritual impact of Christian festivals on pastors in Assemblies of God, Ogun State to be objectively discussed within their own context.

**Table 5.3. Age**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
18 – 20	27	10
21 – 30	79	29
31 – 40	44	16
41 – 50	60	22
51 – 60	41	15
61 – and above	22	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>100</b>

From the above table, 27 people, who represent 10% of the total respondents, are between the ages 18 – 20, while the remaining respondents were above age 20. By implication, most of the respondents were adults. Although we believe that the youths could as well contribute meaningful on the issues regarding the financial and spiritual impact of Christian festivals, we are of the view that the experiences of the adults will enhance better outcome of the project, considering the fact that they must have been involved in the conduct of these festivals for long and could compare what they knew this to be in the past with what it is in the contemporary time.

**Table 5.4. Occupations**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Students	27	10
Civil Servants	19	7
Businessmen/Self-Employed	167	61
Pastors	60	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 5.4 above shows that both the pastors and members were represented in the appraisal of the financial and spiritual impact of Christian festivals on pastors in Assemblies of God in Ogun State.

A total of 27 of the people, who represent 10% of the respondents, were students who are members of the deacon board of those parishes that are not so viable or non-set in order, according to AG's nomenclature. 19 people, who represent 7% of the total respondents, were civil servants. The businessmen and self employed persons form the majority, being 167, who represent 61% of the total respondents. 60 people, who represent 22% of the total respondents, were pastors. That being the case, we believe that the contributions obtained came from people of different occupations, making each set of people in their specific occupation to contribute meaningfully within their own perspective relevant to their professions. The fact that the businessmen and self employed persons had the highest figure confirmed that they are more in the membership of Assemblies of God in Ogun State, Nigeria.

**Table 5.5. Categorization of the respondents**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Pastors	60	22
Parish Secretary/ Treasurers	213	78
<b>Total</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>100</b>

From the above table, 60 people, who are 22% of the respondents, are pastors, 213 people, who are 78%, are in the category of parish Secretaries/Treasurers. We infer from this that the respondents cut across the needed stakeholders in the various parishes. This, we believe, aided the effectiveness of our appraisal of the financial and spiritual impact of the selected Christian festivals on AG's pastors in Ogun State.

## **5.2.2 Assessment of the impact of Christian Festivals on AG's pastors in Ogun State**

**Research question 1: On whether it is morally appropriate for AG's pastors to observe Christian festivals?**

Answers to the above question are presented in Table 6 below:

**Table 5.6. On whether it is morally appropriate for AG's pastors to observe Christian festivals?**

<b>It is morally appropriate for AG's pastors to observe Christian festivals because neither the Bible nor the church's constitution and by-law teaches anything to the contrary</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Agree	256	94
Disagree	-	-
Undecided	17	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>100</b>

An appraisal of the respondents' responses shows that most of them are disposed to the moral appropriateness of AG's pastors observing Christian festivals. The result indicates that a total of 256 people, who are 94% of the respondents, agreed that "It is morally appropriate for AG's pastors to observe Christian festivals since neither the Bible nor the church constitution and Bye-law teaches anything to the contrary". None of the respondents disagreed, while 17 people, who are 6% are undecided. We infer from this that it is morally appropriate for pastors, including their members to observe Christian festivals. Any moral problem bothering on the issue of conduct of Christian festivals does not stem from the idea of putting such festivals in place, but elsewhere, which we believe lies in the actions of the participants.

To confirm the above position, most of those who participated in the oral interview and (FGD) indicated that though it is an uphill task to apply biblical teachings to certain circumstances in which Christians find themselves, the insight of the Bible is to be implemented or applied with wisdom and grace, and not that one attempts practicing imposition in place of exposition, whereby "yoke that neither our ancestors, nor we have been able to bear" is brought to people's bearing - Acts 15:10. This, according to them, will save one from the problem of subjectivism during moral consideration, especially such that bothers on the conduct of festivals. The respondents also indicated that since proper exposition of biblical teaching shows that the scripture, nowhere condemns the conduct of Christian festivals, those who think Christians should not conduct them are practicing imposition rather than exposition.

While most of those who participated in the (FGD) attested to the fact of evidence of introduction of African traditional elements, such as cultural displays,

songs and use of traditional attires in the course of these festivals in some of AG's parishes in the state, they disclosed that this does not in any way make the festivals to be idolatrous. They agreed that such disposition could not be regarded as unchristian and that it would be wrong to regard the act of participating in Christian festivals as what is not unto the Lord. This position, according to the respondents, does not, however, approve of the use of hotchpotch strategies to bring in prospects or generate money during Christian festivals.

**Research Question 2: On the economic effects of Christian festivals on AG's pastors in Ogun State.**

Indicate through your response whether or not Christian festivals generate the following economic effects on AG's pastor(s) in your parish.

**Table 5.7. On the economic effects of Christian festivals on AG's pastors in Ogun State.**

S/N	Characteristics	Agreed		Disagreed		Undecided	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1.	Pastors enjoy unusual economic boom during most Christian festivals.	104	38	112	41	57	21
2.	There is usually a reduction of pastors' salaries in my parish during Christmas and Easter	102	37	120	44	51	19
3.	Harvest Thanksgiving is the most favourable festival to the pastors in my parish in terms of financial boost.	235	86	30	11	8	3

From the above table, a total of 104 people, constituting 38% of the total respondents, agreed that AG pastors in the state enjoy unusual economic boom during most Christian festivals. 112 people, who are 41%, disagreed, while 57 people, who constituted 21%, are undecided. What we infer from this is that those who disagreed came from those parishes where there was mass traveling of the members during festivals periods, due to the greater non-native composition of the membership. For instance, 70% of the pastors of the parishes investigated confirmed during the oral

interview that Christmas traveling affected an average of 32% of their non-native members between 2009 and 2011, in which case, their church's income obtained through tithes, which constituted their parishes' primary economic strength, was reduced. Consequently, their average salary dropped from ₦20,000.00 to about ₦12,000.00. Similarly, the closure of all parishes on Easter Sunday during a four day joint Easter Retreat accounted for a significant decrease in pastors' salaries in 87% of the parishes investigated where salaries dropped to about ₦4,500.00.

The responses of the respondents to the question "Harvest Thanksgiving is the most favourable festival to the pastors in terms of financial boost" indicate that 235 persons, who are 86% of the respondents, agreed. Only 30 people, who constituted 11%, disagreed, while 8 people, who are 3%, are undecided. By implication, almost all the respondents vividly saw the positive economic effect of Harvest Thanksgiving festival on their pastors. To strengthen this position, our investigations, both through the focus group and oral interview confirmed that the Harvest Thanksgiving's proceeds resulted in economic boom whereby an average of ₦23,000.00 was received by each pastor in the parishes investigated.

**Research Question 3: On the religious effects of Christian festivals on AG's pastors in Ogun State.**

Indicate through your response whether or not Christian festivals generate the following religious effects on AG's pastor(s) in your parish.

**Table 5.8: On the religious effects of Christian festivals on AG's pastors in Ogun State.**

S/N	Characteristics	Agreed		Disagreed		Undecided	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1.	Evangelistic outreach during Christmas festival invigorates pastors' passion for souls.	264	97	-	-	9	3
2.	The spiritual calisthenics aura during the Easter retreat revives pastors' prayer life and commitment to their members.	160	69	75	27	38	14

3.	Harvest Thanksgiving grants pastors financial enablement to assist widows, orphans and the sick, thereby, helping them to demonstrate pure religion	152	55.5	89	32.5	32	12
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The above table indicates the responses of the respondents on the religious effects of Christian festivals on AG's pastors in the state. A total of 264 persons, who are 97% agreed that the "Evangelistic outreach during Christmas invigorated pastors' passion for souls". None of the respondents disagreed, while 9 people, who are 3%, were undecided.

Equally, 160 people, who are 69% of the respondents, agreed that the "calisthenics aura during the Easter retreat revives pastors' prayer life and commitment to their members". 75 people, who constituted 27%, disagreed, while 38 people, who are 14%, are undecided.

In the same vein, a total of 152 people, who constituted 55.5% of the respondents, agreed that the "Harvest Thanksgiving grants pastors financial enablement to assist widows, orphans and the sick, thereby helping them to demonstrate pure religion". 89 people, who are 32.5%, disagreed, while 32 people, who are 12% are, undecided.

We infer from the above table that the religious effects of Christian festivals are obvious to most of the respondents, as those who agreed to each effect indicated in the table were more than those who either disagreed or were undecided. Our investigation during the oral interview further strengthens the above position, in that 61.7% of the pastors affirmed that the 2010 Christmas' evangelistic outreach invigorated their soul winning passion, and 55% of them affirmed that the 2011 Easter retreat's calisthenics aura revived them to better prayer and pastoral commitment for their congregation. Likewise, 48.7% affirmed that the 2011 Harvest Thanksgiving's proceeds enabled them to actively demonstrate pure religion through cash assistance they gave to 49 AG's widows for their children's school's fees and hospital bills.



**Research Question 4: On moral dispositions of AG's pastors during Christian festivals.**

Indicate in your response if each of the following depicts the moral disposition of AG's pastors during Christian festivals.

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**Table 5.9: On moral dispositions of AG's pastors during Christian festivals**

S/N	Characteristics	Agreed		Disagreed		Undecided	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1.	Pastors satisfactorily articulate relevant Christian principles, guidance of the Holy spirit and prayer in their actions.	102	37	146	54	25	9
2.	Pastors refrain from using the members as means to their ends.	116	42	122	45	35	13
3.	Justice and integrity characterized pastors' actions during the sharing of festivals' proceeds, for instance, Harvest Thanksgiving.	130	48	136	50	7	2
4.	Pastors demonstrate frugality, affordability, moderation, temperance and self-denial	135	49	125	46	13	5
5.	Pastors demonstrate strong courage and will to resist doing unethical things others do	126	46	142	52	5	2
6.	Most appeals by pastors to promote generous giving are borne of sincere motive for expansion of God's work and not self gratification	116	42.5	135	49.5	22	8
7.	Pastors do not use illegal or unethical means to generate fund for themselves	120	44	145	53	8	3
8.	Pastors do not permit profiteering, commercialization, deprivation of the poor, display of affluence and money merchandize.	155	57	92	34	26	9
9.	Manifest of materialism, such as craving for new dresses, suites, shoes do not drive the pastors	98	36	173	63	2	1
10.	Pastors do not overburden their members through financial demand.	71	26	195	71	7	3
11.	The principles of right motive and purity are not jettisoned by pastors in their bid to make the members give generously	78	29	187	68	8	3

Table 5.9 above shows that the moral disposition of the pastors during Christian festivals falls below expected standard; considering the fact that they are supposed to serve as models to their members. The responses of our respondents show that 102 people, who are 37%, agreed that pastors satisfactorily articulate relevant Christian principles, guidance of the Holy Spirit and prayer in their actions during festivals. 146 people, who are 54%, disagreed, while 25 people, who are 9%, are undecided.

With regards to the question “pastors refrain from using the members as means to their ends”, a total of 116 persons, who are 42%, agreed. Those who disagreed were 122 persons, who are 45% of the respondents, while 35 people, who constituted 13%, were undecided. Since those who disagreed were more than those who agreed, we infer that most of the pastors in the state used their members as means to arrive at their ends during Christian festivals. According to our investigation during the oral interview, this unethical conduct manifested through using the avenue of their preaching to deliver sermons geared towards meeting their personal needs, including influencing the deacons directly or indirectly in the same direction during such occasions. The fact that these actions are done craftily and clandestinely makes it immoral because they are all against pastoral code of ethics, especially as expected of AG church. According to those who featured in the focus group discussion, the Bible indicates that it is possible for one who is morally bankrupt to get blindfolded through earthly possession against the reality of his true spiritual state “Because you said, I am rich, and increased with wealth, and have no need of anything, and does not know that you are wretched, and answerable, and poor, and blind, and naked” Rev. 3:17. In that sense, it is not material possession that one should pursue to the detriment of one’s spiritual wellbeing, “for what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul” Mtt. 16:26

The responses of our respondents to the question “Justice and integrity characterized pastors’ actions during the sharing of festivals’ proceeds” indicate that 130 persons, who constituted 48% of the respondents, agreed, while 136 persons, who are 50% disagreed. Only 7 persons, who are 2%, were undecided. We infer from this that in as much as some pastors displayed justice and integrity during the sharing of the festivals’ proceeds, there were those who did not abide by these principles. Our investigation during the focus group discussion( FGD) indicated that whereas the

constitution of the church stipulates that the sharing of the proceeds of the annual Harvest Thanksgiving (both cash and kind) shall be one third to the ministerial staff, one third to the needy, and one third to the local church, some pastors, however, restricted the sharing of this festival's proceeds to only the cash items, whereby those items that were not in form of cash were taken by them without consideration given to the Church and the indigent who were expected to have benefited from them .

In another dimension, it was gathered that while some of the pastors permitted that a third of the non-cash proceeds be shared to the needy, they took the remaining two third of such items, thereby, contravening the church constitutional provision which stipulates that the church is also entitled to one third. In that way they regarded themselves as being synonymous to the church, and as such thought that whatever ought to be given to the church is for their personal use. This, our respondents indicated does not demonstrate justice and integrity that should characterize the pastors who are expected to affirm their religious beliefs and values according to the Emile Durkheim theory of functionalism. Rather, it showcases greed, which contravenes the Bible's teaching. Greed is a trait the Bible expects every Christian, especially the pastors to shun. It indicates that it can generate murder, "...so are the ways of everyone that is greedy of gain, which takes away the life of the owner" Prov. 1:19, brings trouble or stress "He that is greedy of gain troubles his own house; but one who hates gifts shall live long" Prov. 15:27. That the greedy is insatiable and lack proper understanding "... they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and the shepherds that cannot understand" Isa. 56:11.

As to the question "pastors demonstrate frugality, affordability, moderation, temperance and self-denial", the responses of the respondents indicate that while more people agreed, notwithstanding, the percentage of those who disagreed was not insignificant. As such, while 49% agreed, 46% disagreed. Some of those who participated in the oral interview actually confirmed that some pastors jettisoned the principles of frugality, affordability, moderation, temperance and self-denial in their bid to have the best during the period of the festivals. While it is not wrong to decide to go for the best, the respondents disclosed that such desire should not undermine one's financial capability. As such, they disapproved such dispositions that made pastors to spend above their means, run into debt or spend most of their savings during the period of the festivals. For instance, cases were cited of those who spent all

their savings or became indebted during the period of Christmas and ended both the outgoing year and starting of the new one with financial struggle. Respondents affirmed that such disposition to live in debt is ethically wrong because debtors can hardly help being liars, for they promise to pay when they know they cannot, and when they have made a lot of false excuses for their failure to pay their debt, they keep on being found in the web of lie more and more. Our respondents disclosed that while there are exceptions, especially when one is hit by serious sickness or heavy losses, a pastor should not make it a rule to be a debtor. The scripture says, "Owe no man anything", which does not mean pay your debts, but never have any to pay. Our respondents disclosed that this situation does not agree with the biblical injunctions that demands that Christians should 'let their moderation be made known to all men' (Phil. 4:5) or "whose adorning let it not be outward..." 1Pet. 3:1. Hence, there is evidence of failure to affirm their beliefs as expected by the functionalist theory of Emile Durkheim.

With regard to the question "pastors demonstrate strong courage and will to resist doing unethical things others do", the responses indicated that 126 persons, who constituted 46%, agreed, while 142, people who are 52%, disagreed. Only 5 people, who are just 2%, were undecided. We infer from this that majority of the pastors found it difficult to demonstrate such courage and will to resist those things others do that were morally wrong during Christian festivals. The issue, according to our focus group discussants, is that where such things could yield material gains to the pastors, some of them found it difficult to demonstrate the courage and will not to join the trend. Some of the pastors confirmed that they were aware of some unethical methods employed by some of their colleagues, but which they felt did not agree with their own consciences, such as putting the membership in different groups and giving them financial and material target to be met during Harvest Thanksgiving programme rather than allowing them to give or donate voluntarily. Those of them who found it easy to trade away the promptings of their consciences engaged in the act of employing such methods to craftily swell their purses. God's people, both in the Old and New Testaments, however, gave according to their ability, without coercion or compulsion, as recorded in the Bible, Lev. 14:30, Ezra 2:69, Acts 11:29, 2 cor. 8:12. It imperatively means that the divine principle that should guide the giving of God's people does not agree with such methods like coercion, manipulation, exploitation or

compulsion. Such methods negate the condition of cheerful giving, which the Bible indicates God cherishes "... God loveth a cheerful giver" 2 Cor. 9:7

Other unethical strategies identified by the focus group discussants, which some of the pastors employed, are the use of fake prophecies and wrapping of items like egg, garden egg or piece of cake in wrapper and calling the individual members to pick and disclose an amount they are willing to pay for such items. Such pastors craftily indicated that such items are regarded as having special graces, like favour, financial breakthrough, divine health, and so on, and that those who participated in them would receive these divine blessings automatically. Our respondents confirmed that since each participating member was coerced into disclosing what he was to pay publicly, some of them were afraid to mention meager amount, otherwise, they risked being ridiculed by those watching them, as such, the scenario forced them into disclosing an amount which were above their financial capability.

The responses of our respondents to the question "most appeals by pastors to promote giving are borne of sincere motive for expansion of God's work and not self-gratification" indicated that 116 persons, who are 42.5%, agreed, while 135 persons, who constituted 49.5% disagreed. By implication, those who disagreed were more. To back up this position, some of those contacted through oral interview disclosed that the backdrop of such appeals could not be divorced from what the pastors envisaged could be given to them from such proceeds. Since the church's constitutional provision is that one third of the Harvest Thanksgiving's proceeds, both cash and kind will go to the pastoral staff, it sounds logical to see that the more a pastor is able to persuade his members to give during such occasions, the better for him in terms of what would be his own share at the end of the whole exercise. While some of the pastors claimed that this did not inform their own motive, they, however, disclosed that the possibility is there for some of their colleagues to have such tendency. The Bible teaches the fact of Christian accountability, and as such, no Christian should think that he or she is free to do whatever he likes regardless of the moral disposition of his or her actions "...so everyone of us shall give account of himself to God" Rm.14:12.

About 41% of those who participated in the focus group discussion are of the opinion that the financial hardship generated through the unfavourable remuneration policy is among the factors responsible for reasons why some of the pastors who are

not disciplined are using unscrupulous means to generate funds for their personal enrichment. Some of these methods, according to our respondents, are: turning wedding anniversary, birthday, house dedication, burial of deceased spouses, graduation from a programme of study and the likes to fund raising. The whole thing is wrapped clandestinely in the gap of deceit, in that those who are invited are not told that such programmes are to be used as avenues for money generation for their personal gain. Equally, investigation revealed that cases abound in which some of the pastors used the avenue of revival or crusade services for same purpose. In this sense, the invited revivalists or evangelists are told ahead of the programme to look for means whereby the people in attendance would be told to sow seed into the ministry of the host pastor, so as to get connected with divine blessings, breakthroughs, and miracles. Respondents confirmed that the above problem is eating deep and the fact that some of the leaders appear to be sitting on the fence with regards to the issue made the possibility of arresting it to be a utopia.

The responses of the respondents to the question “pastors do not permit profiteering, commercialization, deprivation of the poor, display of affluence and money merchandize” indicate that 155 persons, who are 57%, agreed, while 92 people, who constituted 34%, disagreed. Going by this, we infer that while the problems did not occur in some of those parishes investigated, these tendencies were found in others. The case already cited above on the sale of items, such as wrapped eggs, garden eggs or pieces of cake are clear evidences of the manifestation of profiteering, commercialization and deprivation of the poor. These dispositions, according to our respondents, render the real significance of these festivals of lesser value. Most of those who featured in the ( FGD ) disclosed that the early disciples of Jesus Christ did not commercialize or engage in profiteering to raise fund to carry out God’s work. They disclosed that the Jews who brought trade into the house of God in the days of Jesus Christ had an experience which should serve as a lesson to stay clear from the acts of buying and selling as a part of Christian festivals, especially Harvest Thanksgiving. Furthermore, the Bible teaches the fact of Christian accountability, and as such, no Christian should think that he or she is free to do whatever he likes regardless of the moral disposition of his or her actions “ ...so everyone of us shall give account of himself to God” Rm.14:12.



The responses of the respondents to the question “manifests of materialism, such as craving for new dresses, suites, shoes do not drive the pastors” indicate that 98 people, who are 36%, agreed, while 173 people, who constituted 63%, disagreed. By implication, passion for materialism is very pronounced among AG’s pastors in Ogun State during Christian festivals. Some of those we interviewed confirmed that this case is more pronounced during Christmas than other Christian festivals. For instance, they affirmed that some of the pastors would want to use any means at their disposal to get money, so that they might complete their personal projects, especially building. And so, there is a kind of mad rush of wanting to complete such projects before the Christmas period, in which case, some do employ unethical means to make the funds available through their members. For instance, revival services, aimed at making the members sow seeds into the ministry of the pastors are planned during which visiting ministers were craftily brought to assist them in actualizing this goal. As such, the members are overburdened through such financial demands.

With regard to the question “The principles of right motive and purity are not jettisoned by pastors in a bid to make the members give generously”, 78 persons, who are 29%, agreed, while 187 persons, who constituted 68% of the respondents, disagreed. We infer from this that the tendency to disregard these principles pervades the activities of the pastors in their dealings with their members during festivals. Our investigation revealed that while it is good to motivate the members to give generously, the Bible indicates that what is brought should be backed up with good motive and purity. Conversely, our respondents indicated that cases abound in which there were displays of stunt in order to receive the praise of men during giving. Equally, the moral life of each giver is often overlooked, as pastors’ interest centered more on what the members give than the way they live and the sources of their gifts. These cases contravene the biblical teaching that indicates that what Christians do should be to God’s glory (1 Cor. 10:31) and that one should “not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the Lord...” (Deut. 23:18). The position of the Bible is therefore, clear regarding the type of sacrifice acceptable to God. It indicates that certain sacrifices are unacceptable to God, e.g. the one given by the wicked (Gen. 4:5; Prov. 15:8; Isa. 1:11). In this sense, such acts that do not articulate ethical or moral appropriateness are regarded by it as wickedness. Conversely, it indicates that righteousness must be the ground of acceptance of one’s

sacrifice, giving or offerings. Isa. 1:16,17; Jer. 6:20, "... but let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream" Amos 5:22-24. Therefore, the position of the Bible is clear as we find in its record the sacrifices (offerings) which command divine approval. Lev. 1:4, what one does with his hands matters if one would offer his sacrifice to God. What is given should be an odour of a sweet savour, symbolic of holy living and righteous practice, Heb. 13:16, 1 Pet. 2:5. In other words, there must be a proper articulation of the spiritual implications for one's offering or gift to command God's approval.

In the final analysis, our investigation revealed that most of the AG pastors did not allow their moral disposition during Christian festivals to articulate the biblical principles, which Emile Durkheim's functionalism expected them to affirm, implying that their moral dispositions during such occasions falls below the expected standard.

**Research question 5: On AG's pastors maximizing the impact generation capacity of Christian festivals to demonstrate pure religion.**

Indicate in your response if AG's pastors are satisfactorily committed to collective charitable outreach to the indigent, both within and without their church during Christian festivals.

**Table 5.10: On AG's pastors maximizing the impact generation capacity of Christian festivals to demonstrate pure religion**

<b>AG pastors are satisfactorily committed to collective charitable outreach to the widows, orphans and other indigent, both within and without their parishes during Christian festivals.</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Agree	126	46
Disagree	139	51
Undecided	8	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>100</b>

From the above table, 46% of the respondents agreed that AG's pastors are satisfactorily committed to collective charitable outreach to the widows, orphans and other indigent people within and without their parishes during Christian festivals". That means that through Christian festivals, they were enabled to demonstrate pure religion which the Bible enjoins. 51% disagreed, while 3% were undecided. It is obvious that those who disagreed were more than those who agreed. We can assume from this, that majority of those who agreed were the pastors, while most of those who disagreed were the laity.

While we do not dispute the fact that some AG's pastors engage in assisting the needy during Christian festivals, we infer through the responses of those who disagreed that this tendency was not being maximized. Those who disagreed must have observed certain things which, to them made the involvement of the pastors in this direction to be less than being satisfactory. The research question 7 therefore, assisted us in probing into the real problem involved.

**Research Question 6: On Why AG's pastors were adversely affected financially and exploited Christian festivals for their personal gains.**

Indicate through your response whether or not the following are reasons why AG's pastors were adversely affected financially during Christian festivals and exploited such festivals for their personal gains.

**Table 5.11: On Why AG's pastors were adversely affected financially and exploited Christian festivals for their personal gains**

Characteristics	Agreed		Disagreed		Undecided	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Festival's traveling of members resulted in lesser income generated from tithes, culminating in reduction in the pastor's salary	185	68	78	28.5	10	3.5
The remuneration policy does not favour most pastors, resulting in reduction in their salaries and making some of them to exploit Harvest Thanksgiving for their personal gain.	248	91	22	8	3	1

From the above table, a total of 185 people, who constituted 68% of the respondents, agreed that "festival's traveling of members resulted in lesser income from tithes, culminating in reduction in the pastor's salary". 78 people, who are 28.5%, disagreed, while only 10 people, who constituted 3.5% were undecided. What we infer from this is that the traveling of members during Christian festivals affected most of AG's parishes investigated in Ogun State. Only few of the parishes were not seriously affected by this incident. Our investigation, through the oral interview, confirmed that the parishes with greater non-native membership composition were the ones seriously affected by such traveling, especially during Christmas festival. Given that cultural ties occasioned such mass traveling of members to their hometowns, investigations from the District secretaries' reports confirmed that about 32% of AG's

16,272 members in Ogun State who were non-natives were not available for the Christmas celebrations in 2009, 2010 and 2011. Consequently, this reduced the church's income obtained through tithes, which constituted the parishes primary economic strength, and resultantly led to a drop in the pastors' average salary from ₦20,000.00 to about ₦12,000.00. Most of those who featured in the (FGD) agreed that any attempt at curtailing Christmas travel of members, or increasing the native membership composition through intensive evangelization, and also a review of the church remuneration policy of the pastors, would be the right things to do to alleviate the financial hardship experienced by most AG's pastors in Ogun State, especially during Christmas festival.

Almost all the respondents agreed that the remuneration policy does not favour most pastors, resulting in reduction of their salaries and making some of them to exploit Harvest Thanksgiving for their personal gain. This is confirmed by 248 people, who agreed, and who are 91% of the respondents. Only 22 people, who are 8%, disagreed, while 3 persons, who are 1% are undecided. The implication of this is that, while there are pastors who are favoured by the remuneration policy, such ones are, however, few, possibly those who are privileged to be pasturing the few financially viable churches, who may not be so disposed to wanting a review of such policy.

Most of those we interviewed also confirmed that some pastors exploited the Harvest Thanksgiving for their personal gains. Accordingly, they indicated that such pastors engaged in unjust profiteering, commercialization and levying their members for the purpose of making the proceeds to be more than what could have been, with the ultimate purpose of increasing the one third of it to which they are entitled to have. They indicated that these actions portray unethical traits and as such, are immoral, making the festival to become a money generation venture rather than its spiritual purpose. Hence, according to the respondents, the pastors made the festival to lose its main purpose, owing to their avarice and greed.

The issue of avarice, according to our respondents, is no where condone by the Bible, especially as it affects the life of a pastor, e.g. "As the partridge sitteth on eggs and hatches them not, so he that gets riches and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool" Jer. 17:11. Furthermore, it says "for the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have

erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. The Bible therefore, warns against avarice, for according to it, it leads to apostasy. The scripture therefore, disapproves desire for gain through exploitation of the poor “Thus saith the Lord. For three transgressions of Israel,... I will not turn away the punishment therefore, because they sold the righteous for silver and the poor for a pair of shoes”. Amos 2:7

The hardship brought to their bearing by the remuneration policy, according to our respondents, constitutes the primary reason why some of AG's pastors are disposed to the use of unethical means, such as calling for self-motivated sowing of seed, profiteering and commercialization, aimed at exploiting their members. This simply shows that the backdrop of why AG's pastors are adversely affected financially during Christian festivals and why they demonstrate unethical actions during such occasions is their unfavourable remuneration policy. It presupposes therefore, that it is impossible to separate the moral disposition of AG's pastors from their economic life. The fact is that some of the unethical things found among them are products of the economic hardship generated by the unfavourable remuneration policy. Thus, as confirmed in the course of oral interview, any attempt at reviewing the remuneration policy to reflect the reality of the economic needs of the pastors in the contemporary society will go a long way towards curbing most of the ethical problems associated with AG's pastors in Ogun State during Christian festivals. While the interviewee agreed that pastors should demonstrate strong will against the practice of unethical conduct and that they are not morally justified for demonstrating such conduct regardless of their lives situations, they maintained equally that an attempt at placing them in an environment that would not expose them to such financial temptation is in the right direction, since they are human beings that are fallible, hence, their need for favourable remuneration policy.

Considering the fact that majority of the respondents do not favour the present remuneration policy, we infer that the policy is unfavourably to AG's pastors, and therefore, needs to be reviewed. This agrees with the functionalist theory, which interprets every aspect of the society in relation to its contribution to the stability of the whole society. As such, the society is more than the aggregate of its aspects or parts. To the contrary, each part of it has its functions for the whole society. Where all goes well, all the different parts of the society will produce order, stability and

productivity. If on the other hand, things do not go well, there would be need for the different parts to adopt a new order, stability and productivity. As a micro society, AG Nigeria is beset with the problem of remuneration policy of its pastors, which overtly indicates that all do not go well hence, there is no stability and productivity. In that sense, there is need for the church to adopt a new policy, which would generate order and enhance stability and productivity among its pastors.

**Research Question 7: On reasons why AG’s pastors could not maximize the impact generation capacity of Christian festivals to demonstrate pure religion prescribed in the Bible.**

Question – Indicate through your response on why AG pastors could not maximize the impact generation capacity of Christian festivals to demonstrate pure religion prescribed by the Bible during such occasions.

**Table 5.12: On reasons why AG’s pastors could not maximize the impact generation capacity of Christian festivals to demonstrate pure religion prescribed in the Bible.**

<b>Pastors could not maximize the impact generation capacity of Christian festivals to demonstrate pure religion prescribed in the Bible during such occasion because of</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Poor moral background	13	5
Indiscipline	28	10
Financial frustration	192	70
Manipulation from evil forces	13	5
Ignorance of relevant biblical principles	11	4
No response	16	6
Total	273	100

From the above table, a total of 13 people, who constituted only 5% of the respondents, agreed that poor moral background was the factor responsible for pastors’ failure to “maximize the impact generation capacity of Christian festivals to demonstrate pure religion”. 28 persons, who are 10%, indicated that indiscipline factor is the major reason, while 192 persons, who are 70%, regard financial frustration as the main cause. 11 persons, who are 4%, agreed that ignorance of relevant biblical principles generated the problems, while 16 persons, who constituted only 6%, gave no response. We infer from the above that the issue of poor moral background could not be a strong factor, since most of the pastors were brought up in an environment of sound moral teaching before they received the approval of their

relevant authority to proceed for pastoral training. In the same vein, the theological training they received enhanced their understanding of relevant biblical teachings that could serve as aids to them, especially in moral decision to demonstrate pure religion. For instance, the scripture injunction in James 1v 27 “pure religion before God...is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction...” we confirmed, is well understood by all of the pastors we interviewed. However, most of them claimed that their problem is that they lacked the financial will to translate this understanding into practical demonstration. Hence; the inability of most of the pastors to maximize occasions of Christian festivals to generate positive impact.

Those who participated in the (FGD) equally agreed that while it is true that indiscipline could affect the moral disposition of a pastor in terms of whether or not to be actively involved in demonstrating pure religion to the less fortunate members of the society during occasions of Christian festivals, the issue is not all that problematic as the financial frustration most of the pastors encounter. Furthermore, they indicated that most of these pastors are not ignorant of relevant biblical principles stipulating the need of demonstrating pure religion as they often come across these in the Sunday school manual, and at times, teach and preach these principles through their sermons. However, the financial frustration they encountered made them to dispel such knowledge and see the avenue of certain Christian festivals, especially Harvest Thanksgiving, as an aid in ameliorating the financial plight that characterized their lives before the coming of such occasions. The presupposition of the respondents is that where the financial hardship of pastors is alleviated it would serve as an encouragement to boost the possibility of their practical involvement in demonstrating pure religion than what obtains at present.

**Research Question 8: On results of pastors’ exploiting occasions of Christian festivals for their personal gains and not maximizing them to demonstrate pure religion.**

Indicate through your responses whether each of these constitutes an effect of AG’s pastors’ exploiting Christian festivals for their personal gains and not maximizing the festivals to demonstrate pure religion.

**Table 5.13. On results of pastors’ exploiting Christian festivals for their personal gains and not maximizing the festivals to demonstrate pure religion.**



Characteristics	Agreed		Disagreed		Undecided	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
People perceive the church as primarily for meeting the pastors' and church leaders' material needs than the Spiritual development and related wellbeing of the members	221	81	46	17	6	2
The church's image is not being enhanced before the community	240	88	24	8.6	9	3.4
The growth of the church is comparatively slower than expected	262	96	0	0	11	4

An appraisal of the responses of the respondents to the above question on “Results of AG’s pastors exploiting Christian festivals for personal gains and their non-maximizing the festivals for impact generation” shows that majority of the respondents, 221 people, who are 81% agreed that “people perceive the church as primarily for meeting the pastors’ and church leaders’ material needs than the spiritual development and related wellbeing of the members’”. Only 46 people, who constituted 17%, disagreed, while 6 people, who are 2%, are undecided. By implication, the general opinion of the respondents is that the unethical dispositions of some AG’s pastors in form of unjust profiteering, commercialization and greed, and their failure to maximize the possibility of festivals’ seasons to generate impact gave rise to disenchantment of members of the community to embrace the gospel message of the church, and those who are members of the church also discover great loopholes, whereby they see lesser concern demonstrated to their spiritual wellbeing when compared to the passion and enthusiasm shown by the church over what could generate material gains for the pastors and their ecclesiastical leaders. Some of the deacons that were interviewed attested to the fact that the passion demonstrated by their pastors and their ecclesiastical leaders over the financial plight of the individual members, especially during crisis or life appears to be far below expectation when one looks at it from the perspective of interest shown to what affects the pastors and the church leaders at all levels, sectional, District and General Council.

A total of 240 people, being 88% of the respondents agreed that the church’s image is not being enhanced before the community. 24 people, who constituted only 8.6%, disagreed, while only 9 people, who are 3.4% were undecided. The implication of this is that unethical disposition of AG pastors in the state during Christian

festivals and their failure to maximize the impact generation of such festivals actually hindered the enhancement of the church's image. This is a noted fact, especially as we treat issues from the point of view of the parishes investigated. Most of the members interviewed indicated that unlike other Pentecostal churches, like Redeemed Christian Church and Winners Chapel, those in their community regard the name of Assemblies of God as something strange to them. The opinion held is that where AG's pastors are disposed to ethical conduct during Christian festivals and also ensure that their parishes extend their festivals' benevolence to those outside their fold, AG's image would be better enhanced than what obtains at present. This will go a long way in projecting the church's image before the public, removing it from its present state of obscurity.

A total of 262 people, who are 96% of the respondents, agreed that "The growth of the church is comparatively slower than expected". None of the respondents disagreed, while only 4% were undecided. We infer from this that the unethical conduct of some AG's pastors in Ogun State coupled with their lesser demonstration of pure religion during Christian festivals constitute some of the ways whereby the rate of the church's growth is comparatively slow. Considering the number of years it has been in the state, since 1960s, as at 2011, the church could only boast of 17,687 members in Ogun State, while its sister denominations, such as Redeemed Christian Church are having more members and their names do not sound strange in any community where they are found within the State.

**Research Question 9: On the need for a review of AG pastors' remuneration policy to make them benefit financially, maximize the impact generation capacity of Christian festivals for pure religion and demonstrate ethical behaviours during such festivals.**

Indicate in your responses to the following, if there is need for a review of AG pastors' remuneration policy in order to help them benefit financially, maximize the impact generation capacity of Christian festivals and demonstrate ethical behaviours during such festivals.

**Table 5.14. On the need for a review of AG pastors' remuneration policy to make them benefit financially, maximize the impact generation**

**capacity of Christian festivals for pure religion and demonstrate ethical behaviours during such festivals.**

S/N	Characteristics	Agreed		Disagreed		Undecided	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1.	Pastors would benefit financially, become empowered to assist the needy, both within and without their parishes, shun profiteering and commercialization of Christian festivals, if they have favourable remuneration policy.	250	91.6	15	5.5	8	2.9
2.	The economic hardship pastors suffer during Christian festivals is not an issue to be given concern since they are called servants of God.	98	36	153	56	22	8
3.	It is proper to disregard economic hardship pastors suffer through a reduction in their salaries orchestrated by the remuneration policy.	51	19	222	81	-	-
4.	Pastors' quest for a review of their remuneration policy is tantamount to carnality and materialism since they are not professionals.	53	19	216	79	4	2
5.	The present policy of pastors' remuneration should be retained as it is.						
6.	The pooling of centralized system should not be considered because it would introduce a civil service mentality to our pastors, thus affecting the work adversely.	65	24	201	73.5	7	2.5
7.	The pooling or centralized system should not be considered because it would breed unfaithfulness in local church financial reporting.	62	23	207	76	3	1
8.	The pooling or centralized system would lead to curbing such problems like politicking, unhealthy competition, financial frustration, transfers and promotion tension among pastors.	210	77	58	21	5	2
9.	The present policy of pastors' remuneration should be reviewed upwards only at the lower levels, so as to reflect, to some extent, the national minimum wage.	152	56	88	32	33	12
10.	The present policy on pastors' remuneration should be changed to a pooling or centralized system so that all levels of pastors should be paid from the	155	57	82	30	36	13

	centre.						
11.	There should be graduated scale of salaries for all pastors. This will serve as an encouragement to pastors, irrespective of time of the year, and where they serve across the General Council, or in the foreign field.	175	64	81	30	17	6
12.	Graduated scale of salaries should be influenced by such indices as pastors' year of service, position held, educational qualifications, standard of living in service area, etc.	205	75	33	12	35	13
13.	At best the graduated scale of salaries should be proactive so that its implementation should start with those newly recruited into the pastoral ministry.	60	22	201	74	12	4

The above table shows that while the respondents are differently disposed on the need for a review of AG pastors' remuneration policy, majority of them tend towards favouring its review. For instance, while a total of 250 people, who are 91.6% of the respondents, agreed that "pastors would benefit financially, become empowered to assist the needy, both within and without their parishes, shun profiteering and commercialization of Christian festivals, if they have favourable remuneration policy". 15 people, who are 5.5%, disagreed, while 8 people, who constituted 2.9%, are undecided. It is obvious, that the percentage of those who agreed significantly exceeds both those who disagreed and undecided. We infer from this that AG's pastors' financial plight during Christian festivals would be solved if there is favourable remuneration policy. This would get them empowered to assist the needy, both within and without their parishes, and as such, able to maximize the impact generation capacity of such festivals. Added to this, the pastors would be assisted to imbibe ethical conduct in terms of shunning unjust profiteering and commercialization of Christian festivals. It follows, therefore, that the bane of such unethical conduct is the remuneration policy that does not favour most of them. In the course of the FGD, respondents confirmed that it was an attempt to find solution into financial hardship of the pastors that made them to use exploitation, profiteering and commercialization of Christian festivals. Although the respondents agreed that

pastors are not morally justified in wanting to use this medium to compete favourably with their economic challenges, notwithstanding, they affirmed that workable remuneration policy would assist the pastors in ethical approach to financial issues during Christian festivals and other related issues of life. They are also of the opinion that the religious life of the pastors would be practically boosted when right financial policy is put in place on their behalf by the church. Hence, according to our respondents, an attempt to address the financial plight of pastors becomes an indirect way of boosting their religious and moral wellbeing

Also, while 98 people, who constituted 36% of the respondents, agreed that “the economic hardship pastors suffer during Christian festivals is not an issue to be given concern since they are called servants of God”, 153 people, who are 56% disagreed, while 22 people, who are 8%, were undecided.

Equally, while 53 people, who are only 19% agreed that “pastors quest for a review of their remuneration policy is tantamount to carnality and materialism since they are not professionals”, 216 people, who constituted 79%, disagreed, while only 4 people, who are 2%, were undecided.

Majority of the respondents favoured the pooling or centralized system to determine the pastors’ salaries. For instance, while 65 people, who constituted 24% agreed that “The pooling or centralized system should not be considered because it would introduce a civil service mentality to our pastors, thus affecting the work adversely”, 201 people, who constituted 73.5%, disagreed, and only 7 people, who are just 2.5%, were undecided.

The general consensus of the respondents is that the pooling or centralized system will aid in curbing some of the problems prevalent among AG’s pastors. This is indicated by their responses in option 8 above. 210 people, who are 77%, agreed that “The pooling or centralized system would lead to curbing such problems, like politicking, unhealthy competition, financial frustration, transfers and promotion tension among the pastors”. Only 58 people, who constituted 21%, disagreed, while 5 people, who are 2%, were undecided. Equally, 175 people, who are 64%, agreed that “There should be a graduated scale of salaries for all pastors. This will serve as an encouragement to pastors, irrespective of the time of the year, and where they serve across the General Council, or in the foreign field”. 81 people, who are 30%, disagreed, while 17 people, who constituted 6%, were undecided.

Majority of those who featured in the (FGD) confirmed that it is not that majority of the pastors are not advocating for a review of the policy, but the power that be, and those who have been favoured by the existing system, who of course, are the minority, but have the stronger say in the church polity, being in higher hierarchy, do not want to change the rule of the game. This has made most of the pastors to be poor, while the few fortunate ones are becoming richer and richer, and at times with fleet of cars and mansions.

To strengthen the possibility of a review in the remuneration policy, one of those we interviewed confirmed that in the past, pastors' wives who were civil servants were victimized and instructed to resign from their work, so that they may concentrate their attention on their husbands' ministries. It was also done, so that such women folk might be ready to proceed on transfer with their husbands without any delay whenever the need arises. However, such policy did not make provisions to give these women monthly salaries or allowances to address their families' financial challenges. It is in the recent time that this class of women now refused to be placed under such policy. We believe that if such policy could be reviewed, to permit relevance in relation to the contemporary challenges, by implication, the present remuneration policy could be reviewed if the ecclesiastical leaders meant the good of the bulk of the Pastors, and not to keep widening the gap between the haves and have not.

What we inferred from the above data interpretation is that, apart from the fact that AG's pastors would be financially empowered to assist the needy both within and without their parishes, the remuneration policy is the bane of most problems found within the church's pastoral stratum. Most of those whom we interviewed orally and the focus group discussants attested to this fact. They believe that a step in the direction of reviewing the remuneration policy to favour most of the pastors would assist greatly in ameliorating the pastors' financial difficulties during most festivals, and this would make them tend towards manifesting good ethical conduct during such occasions, which would ultimately culminate in their maximizing the festivals' impact generation capacity.

From the foregoing assessment, Christian festivals obviously assist in reinforcing the fact that AG's pastors, especially in Ogun state, Nigeria are beset with problems militating against their economic and religious (moral) lives, owing to

some issues that bother on the Church polity. Most of the pastors encounter frustration, discouragement, lack of job satisfaction and fulfillment. Their churches remain in obscurity because there is no adequate economic will to empower them to help their non-AG neighbours which would have given their churches better image in their various communities. Their families are made to suffer hardship, while at times, attempt to help themselves address some of their financial challenges, during occasions of Christian festivals often result in use of unethical means of getting money.

Aside from the above, other problems encountered by AG pastors are essential to our work. Some of these provide the basis for the existence of the problems encountered by the pastors during Christian festivals. An attempt is made in the next section to highlight some of the related problems, their causes and consequences as confirmed by our respondents, with the aim of procuring relevant solutions.

### **5.3 The problems of the pastors highlighted**

#### **5.3.1 Poor remuneration policy for AG pastors in Ogun State**

Our respondents disclosed in the course of our investigation that in AG Nigeria, one of the most neglected aspects by the church leaders is the welfare of the pastors. Although the plight of pastors features in the discussion time after time, at best, our respondents indicated that nothing concrete has been done about it. According to what we gathered from some of the pastors during the oral interview, one may be tempted to agree that the comfort enjoyed by the church leaders seems to make them think that all is well with their pastors at the grass root. Those pastors who complain about the reality of their economic hardship are often labeled “lazy and carnal complainants”.

Respondents disclosed that the present day Nigeria and the current global economic crisis which resulted into dwindling of fortune in our country have compounded the predicament of AG’s pastors. Economic oriented issues affecting them, such as children school fees, foodstuff, house rent, and so on, are soaring at alarming rate. In the midst of this, one may be surprised to hear that some of the pastors do not receive more than six thousand naira a month, due to poor remuneration policy of pastors. To worsen the situation, investigation revealed that the agrarian nature of the State, where industries are few has made most of the



members turned farmers, petty traders and the likes. This made the income of the church to be too small to cater for the needs of both the church and the pastor. Most of the pastors in Ogun State are looked down upon by their counterparts in other states as being poor, which has become a serious embarrassment to them. As such, with this condition, a pertinent question to which some of the respondents disclosed needs to be asked is, how can these pastors give their best to the work of their pastorate? Although it is commonly said that no human being can adequately pay a servant of God. However, one of the respondents asked, does this mean that such a pastor who devotes 24 hours on his duty for the seven days in a week should live on stipend? While credit should be given to AG leaders in Ogun State for their effort to pay monthly make-up for pastors, yet such measure, according to majority of our focus group discussants, is not good enough to adequately arrest the dwindling financial condition of the pastors, because what each District realizes per month is meager.

We gathered that the pastors of Assemblies of God Nigeria in general, and Ogun State in particular, are on full-time. Assemblies of God does not practice part-time ministry, such as we have in Redeemed Christian Church, Deeper Life and so on. This means that the pastor is not allowed to combine his pastoral work with secular profession. This view is upheld by the constitution of the church in Nigeria, including the Bye-law of each District. It says:

A pastor is a full time minister of the gospel, who, in answer to personal call of God, has undertaken the prescribed course of study in the Bible school, graduated there, and has been granted the required credential to minister under the Assemblies of God, Nigeria.<sup>1</sup>

Further, Article X section 7(2) of the constitution states that:

A pastor is not an employee of the church. There is no contract of employment between him and the church. However, in his ministry within Assemblies of God, he is responsible to the church and subject to the directives and discipline in accordance with the provision of this constitution.<sup>2</sup>

Our focus group discussants indicated that what we can deduce from the above is that since the pastors are not regarded as employees of the church, and no contract

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<sup>1</sup> The constitution and bye-law of Assemblies of God, Nigeria. 2002. 28-29.

<sup>2</sup> The constitution and bye-law of Assemblies of God, Nigeria.

of employment exists between them and the church, it means that the church has no responsibility, either financially or otherwise towards the pastors. Since the church does not employ them there, it should not pay their salary. The contradictory nature of the above statement is that he (the pastor), is at the same time expected to serve this same church. Obviously, this appears to be the nucleus of the problem besetting Assemblies of God's pastors in Nigeria, especially in Ogun State. He is regarded as a full time minister, yet there is no contract of employment existing between him and either his local church or the national headquarters.

Most of the pastors and deacons whom we interviewed disclosed that going by the teaching of the Bible on how pastors should be cared for, AG, while claiming to abide by the Bible in its way of doing things, does not follow the Biblical principles indicated in the Book of Numbers:

And the Lord spoke unto Aaron, thou shall have no inheritance in their land, neither shall thou have any part among them. I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel. And behold I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance of their service over the service of the tabernacle of the congregation<sup>3</sup>.

According to Spencer and Excell, the Israelites priests were by obligation allocated homes to live when not on duty, since they had no territory of their own like the Jews of other tribes<sup>4</sup>. They stressed further, that in the same way that the priests were God's special possession, so the Lord was the special possession of the priests, and in as much as the whole earth belongs to Him, the portion of the priest was potentially in all the earth<sup>5</sup>. Responding in an attempt to indicate that we need to abide by the Bible's standard on how to care for the clergy of our contemporary time, in order to witness revival, Henry indicates that, magistracy and ministry are two divine institutions of admirable use for the support and advancement of the kingdom of God among men<sup>6</sup>. This implies that in order not to make the pastors become object of ridicule, a firm stand of authority must be maintained by those whom they are called to serve. This position, in the contribution of our focus group discussants, becomes expedient in order to:

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<sup>3</sup> Numbers 18:20-21.

<sup>4</sup> H.O.M. Spencer and J S. Excell. 1981. *The pulpit commentary*. Virginia: Macdonald Publishing Company. 230.

<sup>5</sup> H.O.M. Spencer and J S. Excell. 1981. *The pulpit commentary*.

<sup>6</sup> M. Henry. *Matthew Henry commentary of the Bible*. U.S.A. :Hendricks Publishers. 50.

1. Prevent the pastors from entangling themselves with the affairs of this world, or attempting to enrich themselves with the wealth of this world in a dubious way.
2. Prevent such situation that could hamper or affect their comfort and conveniences of life. Although they are called by God, yet they are not expected to live with empty stomach. This, therefore, calls for their members to provide for them, not out of mere generosity but as a matter of obligation.
3. Allow the pastors to be more addicted and committed to their ministry by avoiding anything that may want to divert or distract their attention from their God-given assignment. This will curb the present trend in which many of the pastors engage in serious farming activities in order to survive, which adversely affects both their spiritual life and those of their members, since they had little or no time for devotion.

Our respondents disclosed that where the income of a church increases gradually much difficulty may not be seen in the present remuneration policy. However, the truth is not far-fetched, that a church could experience a decrease in income for a prolonged time. At such instance, what becomes the fate of the pastor whose salary is determined by the church income? It means his salary would definitely be on the decrease. Such situation affects the commitment of the pastors, causing their attention to be diverted. This is so because pastors are human beings with families, whose economic needs must be met, as the case with those in other professions.

By looking at the above from the premise of factors of production, it is when labourers are adequately remunerated that we have a clear demonstration that the economy is guided by the principles of respect, honesty and sympathy. The employer is obliged to know that he has a moral duty to pay for the services rendered by the employee, while the employee should ensure that the services he is rendering commensurate with the wage negotiated. It is through this situation that the economy interplay between the two parties is honoured according to the terms of agreement.<sup>7</sup> Our belief is that the working environment of pastors must be economically

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<sup>7</sup> J.K. Ayantayo. *The Yoruba traditional economy in ethical perspectives*. NJEH. 130

conducive, so that their potentials can blossom. This, we believe will be made possible through appropriate remuneration policy.

We further gathered that the problem of remuneration policy has direct bearing with the retirement of the AG's pastors. Those who retire in small churches go home with meager retirement package and continue to receive small monthly pension allowance each month, based on certain percentage of the last salaries they received in their last stations. For instance, the average retiree whose last pastorate falls within the category of small churches receives ₦10, 000 per month. One can ask what this amount can buy in the present day of Nigeria for someone who retires at the age of 70, after putting between 40-50 years in the ministry of the church. This problem has made some of the pastors to devise means, whereby they convert service organized during their retirement programme into avenue for money generation. They solicit for financial assistance, to be able to have something to cushion their economic survival after retirement. But in most cases, this has always resulted into making mockery of AG's system, for it makes the people outside the church, who are in attendance to see that things are not alright with the church and that the fate and future of AG's pastors is not safe or guaranteed.

Our respondents indicated that the problem of poor remuneration policy of pastors is with serious religious and moral implications. For instance, majority of those contacted through the oral interview confirmed that this problem makes the pastors to be guilty of the Bible passage of 1 Tim. 5:8 "But if any provide not for his own, and specially, for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel". As such, the pastors are not getting morally and spiritually fulfilled, since the poor remuneration policy deprived them of being able to meet up with the above scriptural injunction. They, therefore, are unable to affirm their religious beliefs and values according to the theory of functionalism of Emile Durkheim.

### **5.3.2 Absence of graduated scale of allowance for the pastors**

Another point indicated by our respondents as part of what compound the problem of AG's pastors is indicated in Article X, section 8 of the church constitution and bye law, under ministers' allowance. It states: "There is no graduated scale of

allowance for the pastors, based on whether they are licensed or ordained. Every pastor is to receive an allowance in accordance with his church's income.<sup>8</sup>

As regards the financial policy of each of the Districts in Ogun State, we gathered through our investigation that each operates on bye-law, and as such, everything permitted to be practiced follows the stipulated provisions of the General Council constitution and bye-law. For instance, the second paragraph of Article X of the General Council states:

All Districts and Areas shall bring their bye-laws and policies into conformity with this financial policy. In the event of any inconsistency between the financial policy of the General Council and those of a District or Area, the General Council policy shall prevail.<sup>9</sup>

In the light of the above, there is no difference between General Council policy and that of each of the three Districts in Ogun State. For instance, the Abeokuta District Bye-law, Article XXVI – Financial policy Relating to pastors, (b) and (c) state; “There is no graduated scale of allowance for the pastors based on his ministerial credentials, every minister is to receive an allowance in keeping with his church income, following the General Council guidelines”.<sup>10</sup>

Since all pastors are on full-time engagement, their sole income comes from the allowance they receive after working of the account at the end of each month. Those pastors whose churches are small and those in rural areas generate meager income that hardly takes care of their running expenses for each month. This situation usually leaves the pastor in terrible financial embarrassment every month.

By implication, the above provision, according to some of the deacons and pastors in the parishes investigated, limits the pastor's income to what the church could generate. If the pastor's allowance is pegged on his income as provided for in the above section of the constitution and bye-law, the respondents disclosed that one may ask, “What becomes the fate of those pastors in rural areas?” What about those with poor members who do not have much to give? How will the concerned pastor and his family cope favourably with their economic challenges? Hence, it becomes

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<sup>8</sup> J.K. Ayantayo. *The Yoruba traditional economy in ethical perspectives*.131.

<sup>9</sup> J.K. Ayantayo. *The Yoruba traditional economy in ethical perspectives*.131.

<sup>10</sup> *The bye-law of Abeokuta district of Assemblies of God, Nigeria*. 26.

obvious, according to our respondents, that the above provision condemns the AG's pastors in Ogun State to extreme poverty and lack.

Our investigation revealed that in AG, discussions centering on the economic plight of the pastors are common and instances of some of its attendant terrible consequences get mentioned frequently among pastors and members. Unfortunately, these are regarded as mere rumour and hear says. They are rarely documented or even investigated. The reason for this pacifism is the fear of being stigmatized as being carnal or un-spiritually minded. The result of this is that most of the pastors suffer in silence, and their quality of life and those of their families is negatively affected.

As a ravaging economic and social phenomenon, our investigation confirmed that poverty gets manifested among AG's pastors in Ogun State through inability to acquire the basic necessities of life for a decent living, low self-esteem and absence of what can bring self-actualization. Our respondents disclosed that possibly the church administrations are generally unaware of the magnitude of the financial plight of pastors. Even, if they are aware, they did not see it as serious enough to impair the effectiveness of their pastors. They rather, regard such plight as the experience that the pastors must learn to live with or that is rooted in divine will. One of the deacons who participated in the FGD's however, vent out his disapproval with the above apathetic disposition that puts the pastors in deplorable economic life and terrible spiritual implication with this statement:

The idea that poverty among pastors is inevitable and that they must develop a thick skin to it through indifference is defeatist. No decent people or group should learn to cope with poverty all in the name of thinking about heaven, it should, rather be resisted through available morally justified means because of its attendant terrible consequences<sup>11</sup>.

Our respondents indicated that, it is not merely an economic or social problem, but is also with religious or spiritual implications to the pastor and the church members. It affects the children of pastors in terms of malnutrition, poor educational background, Child-marriage, parental absence from homes, child labour and home desertion.

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<sup>11</sup> *Comment of one of the respondents during F.G.D.*

Our observations revealed that whereas some of the pastors' children were able to cope with the tertiary education, their parents' financial constraints made it practically impossible for them. In that way, Education that is often regarded as the parents' legacy to their children seems to be far from the reach of the children of some of the pastors.

Due to the inability of some of the parents to fend adequately for their children, some of the female children found themselves being put in family way at an age lacking the commensurate physical, emotional and psychological maturity. Our respondents confirmed cases in which some pastors and their wives were out in search of petty job, which are done at the detriment of their children, who are left on their own while the parents were out. This situation gave rise to wide freedom and exposure to bad children, culminating in waywardness, promiscuity and other anti-social activities.

Some of the focus group discussants and those who featured in the oral interview indicated that the inability of some pastors' families to feed their children exposed some children to the temptation of fending for themselves. This condition made some children of such background to desert their homes for some hideouts, where they are exposed to different kinds of crimes and vices.

Our investigation also confirmed that some pastors' children who are of school age were made to work to earn a living because of their families' struggle for economic survival. We gathered during oral interview that some of these children engaged in hawking and other domestic services, especially at the time their counterparts were in the school studying. This affected their academic performances. It made some to lose interest in education, having being exposed to a means whereby they earned a living at a tender age. Therefore, through exposure to child labour, some of the pastors' children's physical, cognitive, emotional, social and moral development became impaired. The 1959 United States' Declaration on the Right of the child says that "mankind owes it to the child the best it has to give". Equally in April 1984, Pope John Paul II indicates that children are "precious treasures given to each generation as a challenge to its wisdom and humanity". In the same vein, the 1990 world summit for children sets health, education, nutrition as the goals to be pursued in respect of children and women. In addition, while highlighting the Rights of the child, the O.A.U indicates that "Every child shall grow and develop in a free



society in the spirit of understanding, to mutual respect and friendship".<sup>12</sup> According to Ayantayo, the child shall not be admitted to employment before an appropriate minimum age. This presupposes that he should not be engaged in any form of occupation or employment that would result in adverse effect on his health, education, physical, mental or moral development.<sup>13</sup>

Our respondents agreed that it is right time that AG church should be actively involved in formulating and undertaking of specific projects/programmes aimed at alleviating poverty in the society. The church should fight against child labour, especially among the pastors' families because of the future of the children, so that the future of our society might not be jeopardized. It should be actively involved in ensuring that these children have access to basic needs of life, such as feeding, healthcare, shelter and education, so as to contribute meaningfully in putting in place a society characterized by peace and joy.

We also gathered that although AG pastors are expected to get engaged on full time, this has been proven to be unrealistic with the present economic challenges befalling the pastors. So, quite a number of pastors who feel their churches' income could not afford them having enough salaries to fend for their families now engage in some other things, so as to make ends meet. This is the last resort they think could reduce their plight of frustration and ministerial disappointment. Those whose conscience could not permit their taking other part time work still struggle with the problem, and a lot of them grumble and murmur. With this situation, our respondents indicated that a review of the remuneration policy, whereby there will be a graduated scale will end up boosting the pastors' spiritual lives and commitment to their pastoral work.

The moral and religious implication of the above according to those who featured in the FGD is that most AG's pastors are deprived of being remunerated commensurably according to the scripture;

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

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<sup>12</sup>B. Awe. Towards a just democracy in Nigeria: the role of the home. *Orita Journal of Religious Studies*. June and Dec. 1999, xxx 1/1: 118

<sup>13</sup>J.K. Ayantayo. 2011. *Child right in literary genres and religious scripture*. Ibadan: Aflame Publishing House. 14.

For the scripture saith, Thou shall not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And the labourer is worthy of his reward<sup>14</sup>.

AG's pastors are therefore, according to the respondents, confirmed to deprivation in that those pasturing non-viable areas encounter stagnation. They are therefore, not able to compete favourably with their counterparts in viable areas.

### 5.3.3 Appointment, promotion, transfer and termination of appointment of pastors in Assemblies of God

Austine Ukandu argues that one of the banes in any organization is the recruitment of mediocre and totally unsuitable candidates in preference to candidates of high merit.<sup>15</sup> Relating this to the church, it means it should have criteria for selecting pastors or those aspiring to take to the pastoral profession. Such criteria should be objectively implemented, with the primary aim of shortlisting only those who are truly called. In the opinion of Ukandu, the major reason for lack of "objectivity" in pastoral recruitment is "nepotism".<sup>16</sup>

Our findings revealed that the constitution and Bye-laws of AG does not address or indicate any policy toward appointment of pastors in the system. Our respondents, however, disclosed that the appointment or recruitment of a pastor in the denomination can occur in one of the following four ways. First, a bigger church could assign its student or graduated pastor to any branch newly planted. In that case, the screening exercise is done by the Deacon board, headed by the senior pastor. Second, the District presbytery could assign or transfer a pastor to a church as the need arises. Such transfer affects pastors who serve within the District. Third, the National leaders may decide to post someone to a church outside his District of affiliation. This may be as a result of crisis being encountered either by the pastor, or the church to which he is assigned. It is, however, very rare for such to occur. The last method is to permit a set-in order church to elect its own pastor among the list of those who have indicated interest. The above simply means that the first three methods do not permit the congregation to exercise their rights as to who becomes their pastor, and as such, are not by nature democratic.

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<sup>14</sup>1Tim.4:17.

<sup>15</sup>A. I. Ukandu. 1999. *Public administration in Nigeria*. Unpublished Manuscript.

<sup>16</sup>A. I. Ukandu. 1999. *Public administration in Nigeria*.

Ezurike E. Lamech<sup>17</sup> stipulates that the choice of candidates should be based on qualifications or merit rather than on political, family, fraternal, tribal; monetary or any other human connection. Accordingly, if those who claim to have been called of God are recruited on any of these factors, they are likely to be inefficient, since they lack efficiency factors based on qualifications. It is possible to assume that when an unqualified pastor is assigned a church, he would display his qualification which is ignorance of what pastoral duty is all about. Most of our respondents agreed that for effective pastoral work in AG, Ogun State, Nigeria, much value should be attached to attitude and character. This is because pastoral work is character oriented.

It is the duty of the administrative hierarchy to promote workers (pastors) as the case is in AG. To this end, organizational promotions should hinge on competence if the organization is to be functional and efficient in its development. Accordingly, promotions should not be based on mere seniority, tribe, religion, sex, palm greasing and so on, especially, when hard work and efficiency are concerned. As such, in the matter of promotion, the ghost of seniority is to be exorcised and a new criterion of promotion is to be followed. This new criterion should be demonstrated ability to meet the demands of the new post based on evidence of performance and potentiality. In other words, promotion that is based on productivity and performance inherently affects efficiency in the organization. Such arrangement would ginger up the pastor since he knows that his promotion is not based on seniority but efficiency. Contrary to the above writers' opinion, our respondents affirmed the presence of promotion of some AG's pastors based on their relationship with the leadership, ethnicity, sycophancy and the likes, leading to inefficiency, especially among the sectional leaders and pastors assigned to bigger parishes.

In a survey carried out among respondents, 65% believed that leadership/Administrative flaws constitute part of the problems with AG. It seems to the majority of the respondents that people who have been placed in several positions have gone there only to protect the interest of the General Council, the District, Section or even the local church as the case may be. This is to ensure that their own interest too (to remain in office) without leadership skills and vision to move the church forward, might be protected. It is thus, a situation of quid pro quo. With this

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<sup>17</sup>E.L. Ezurike. 2000. *The overview of the civil service*. Unpublished Manuscript.

structure, our respondents disclosed that the incompetent people are at times, put in office they cannot handle.

Ukandu<sup>18</sup> posits that a man's capability can only be demonstrated in the field he knows too well borne of his experience and training. In that case, when a pastor is assigned a church that is above his ability to perform, it means that much is being expected of him than he could deliver. This implies that since those in the position of leadership are vested with the responsibility of posting of pastors, they should know the background of such pastors and so assigned them responsibilities according to their competence. This simple truth is explicated in the words of Paul, that, there are "... Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers" (Eph. 4:11). This, by implication is that God expects those in authority to take the responsibility of determining where their pastors are best suited for administrative purposes. Conversely, some of the pastors and Deacons who constituted a part of our respondents disclosed that there are cases in which some pastors in their Districts were posted to where they did not merit by their ministerial status, and this affected their output and ministerial efficiency. Some were assigned to big churches, not by merit but because of their role in campaigning secretly for the incumbent leadership.

Furthermore, our respondents disclosed the presence of frequent postings as one of the factors affecting the pastors' efficiency and church growth. At times, such pastors go on transfer almost every two years. This period, in the view of majority of our respondents, is too short to determine how efficient or inefficient a pastor is, since some social environmental factors may hinder the growth of his church within that time. Hence, he needs sufficient time to get properly acclimatized with the situation in his new place of posting. Furthermore, the respondents indicated that postings should be achieved rather than ascribed.<sup>19</sup> It should be objectively carried out by merit without attracting any human sympathy, family, political or economic favour.

Investigation further revealed that Teachers in the seminaries and Bible colleges are not out rightly left out of the problem of transfer, owing to unfavourable remuneration policy. Although their basic salary is determined through graduated scales, however, what is given to take care of their transportation, Medicare and hospitality allowances, otherwise, known as welfare package is still generating

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<sup>18</sup> A.I. Ukandu. 1999. *Public Administration in Nigeria*.

<sup>19</sup> O. Obasi. 1999. *Organizational theory*. Unpublished.

serious problem among them. In this case, our informant disclosed that some teachers find it difficult to proceed on transfers where the need arises because what they would be entitled to receive as welfare package in the new place of posting would be lesser than what they are being given in their present place of assignment. If on the other hand, it is to be higher, teachers easily get motivated to move. The fear of being subjected to receiving lower welfare package, coupled with attendant consequences of transfer has often led to protest against transfer. With this, some Seminary and Bible college teachers interpreted the actions of the leaders to be ill motivated, victimization and tribalism, purposed to make them suffer and become frustrated financially in the ministry.

Some of our non-AG respondents made us understand that the issue of transfer of pastors is not peculiar to AG, though theirs may not be as pronounced as we have in AG. For instance, we gathered that in RCCG, issues of transfer of pastors from one church to the other at times causes a lot of scruples due to some factors that are peculiar to each location, environment, and financial capability of the church or members. In addition, stagnation of pastors in rural and remote areas for years without any tangible remuneration and assistance for growth affects pastors. The only thing that makes their case to be a bit bearable when compared with that of AG is that each pastor is placed on graduated scale of salaries, though he may receive far less, in terms of what accrues to him during the monthly thanksgiving and other related financial supports from his members than his contemporaries in the cities.

Our respondents agreed with Okoroafor's position that transfer should not be done as a result of envy or nepotism. They consented to the position that it is wickedness to transfer a pastor to break the jaw of his outstanding popularity, for it breeds rancor and generates cold war.<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, pastors should not be transferred on the basis of their family or tribal relationship with the power that be. This does not agree with the spirit of oneness of the body of Christ, which morally and religious-wise the church and its members should uphold.

#### **5.3.4 Excessive financial demands by the national headquarters**

Investigations revealed that AG's pastors are placed in worse financial uptight due to several financial demands from the General Council for projects. This,

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<sup>20</sup>C. Okoroafor. 2007. *Transfer of pastors*. Umuahia: Lyn-Ress Impression. 16-17.

according to most of those who participated in the FGD, has resulted in the inability of the poor members to be able to take care of their pastors. Since the members have their own family financial problems, compounded by high inflation, the idea of taking care of the pastor and his family is often regarded as a burden.

Our respondents both during the FGD and oral interview disclosed that Assemblies of God as a denomination, looks poor when seen from a distance, yet she is very rich. They disclosed that the problem responsible for false financial image of the church being presented before the world is mainly that the leaders over the years have not come up with workable blue print of what the financial activities within its fold looks like. As a result, we have non uniformity in pastors' pay roll and the greater percentage under paid, the poor development and equipment of the seminaries and slow execution of meaningful projects in most of its local churches. It is, obvious, that the financial burden placed upon the church seems to be responsible for the crippling nature of developmental processes at the grass root.

The issue of leadership and financial policy generate financial strain of the membership as confirmed by our respondents. According to the scripture, there are blessings outlined for generous givers, while those who give sparingly are depriving themselves of divine blessing in that direction. However, we have the problem of the members getting tired of giving their money to the church because they seem to be over-burdened with too much financial requests or appeals from her. Most at times, such appeals do not come from the local assembly but incessant giving necessitated by the various General Council, District and Sectional projects that often do not benefit the local church as such. Among such assorted and incessant giving are levies, annual project assessment, pledges, departmental offerings from the men's ministry, women ministry, young singles, media, royal rangers, social ministries, Hospital ministry, Peniel, Easter Retreat, just to mention a few. In most cases, each offering is taken more than once in a period of time, including other extra offerings meant for the running of the local church that is left to struggle out its existence on its own, as the practice is. While giving is scriptural, as it is taught all through the scripture, the respondents disclosed that God's command, however, indicates that it should be done willfully in order for it to get accompanied with divine blessing. Contrary to the above, what we gathered both from our observations and oral interview is that giving becomes mandatory. Pastors are attacked by the District leadership for failure to

comply. This makes the pastors to treat issue of giving among their members as mandatory. The aftermath of this is that the members become financially drained, having not much to use to assist their pastors financially. To worsen the situations, some members who are not comfortable with the system of multiple and incessant giving, leave AG for other denominations. When this happens, the pastor is at the receiving end since the resultant reduction in the church income consequently leads to reduction in his own income.

The excessive financial demands by the National Headquarters, according to our respondents, generate serious moral and spiritual consequences. First, it makes both the pastors and the members to be less focused on spiritual things. Rather, since the trend is to make them generate funds almost at each gathering, their minds are influenced for material or mundane things. This has given rise to the idea of thinking that all that matters on earth is material wellbeing, and some pastors and their members place this above their spiritual wellbeing. Hence, a lot of the members do not lend the Christian life into practice in their interpersonal relationship.

### 5.3.5 Unfavourable church accounting system

Our respondents disclosed that the Church accounting system also affects the finances of the pastors. In AG, money flows from the local church to the section, to the District and finally to the General Council. Churches are grouped according to their financial strength to determine what financial obligations they are to fulfill to the sections, Areas/District and what to pay their pastors as salaries and remuneration. See tables (5.15), (5.16) and (5.17) below for detail. The inability of the local church to fulfill its monthly financial obligations is not tolerated. In most cases, the pastor suffers the brunt of such action, usually regarded as disloyalty on his part.

**Table 5.15. Grouping of churches according to income generated**

Group	Income (₦)
A	10,000,001.00 and above
B	9,000,001.00 – 10,000,000.00
C	8,000,001.00 - 9,000,000.00
D	7,000,001.00 - 8,000,000.00
E	6,000,001.00 - 7,000,000.00



F	5,000,001.00 - 6,000,000.00
G	4,000,001.00 - 5,000,000.00
H	3,000,001.00 - 4,000,000.00
I	2,000,001.00 - 3,000,000.00
J	1,000,001.00 - 2,000,000.00
K	500,001.00 - 1,000,000.00
L	300,001.00 - 500,000.00
M	1,000.00 - 300,000.00

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**Table 5.16. Percentage of churches income payable to district and section**

Income range	% to District	% to District Make-up	% to Section	Total
From 100.00 – 100,000.00	35%	--	3%	38%
From 100,001.00 and above	35%	2%	3%	40%

The 2% additional percentage income payable by churches to the district is meant to assist the district in pastors' make up payment.

**Fig. 5.17. Percentage of district / areas income payable to general council**

Group	Income (₦)	Percentage
A	10,000,001.00 and above	30%
B	9,000,001.00 – 10,000,000.00	30%
C	8,000,001.00 - 9,000,000.00	28%
D	7,000,001.00 - 8,000,000.00	28%
E	6,000,001.00 - 7,000,000.00	27%
F	5,000,001.00 - 6,000,000.00	27%
G	4,000,001.00 - 5,000,000.00	27%
H	3,000,001.00 - 4,000,000.00	22%
I	2,000,001.00 - 3,000,000.00	17%
J	1,000,001.00 - 2,000,000.00	15%
K	500,001.00 - 1,000,000.00	12%
L	300,001.00 - 500,000.00	10%
M	1,000.00 - 300,000.00	10%

Our respondents agreed that the unfavourable financial disposition of the pastors has generated some subsidiary problems such as:

1. Some of the pastors colluding with their church deacons to doctor their church account in order to deceive the leadership. With this, figures are changed or modified, while others render only part of the money and keep the remaining to help themselves having received the connivance of their deacons. This makes the District and the General Council to receive lesser amount than they ought to every month.
2. Some pastors resorting to using their members to either start their own ministries, or converting the existing church to a new one with the new name

written on their signboard. As a result, some churches that could have been part of AG in the state had been lost.

3. Some pastors who felt dissatisfied with the system, and who do not have the gut of converting their church to their own personal ministry, tendered their resignation to either join another denomination or start their own ministries altogether.

### **5.3.6 Unfaithfulness of some members**

Another cause of financial predicament of AG's pastors in the state which our respondents disclosed is financial unfaithfulness of the members. Most of those whom we contacted through oral interview confirmed that this is due to too many financial demands by the District and General Council, which constitute too much burdens on them. Some of these members find it difficult to pay their tithes regularly or give quality offering. This situation results in meager income in the church, hence, the average AG's pastor in the State is usually left with very little or nothing as his pay package.

Added to this, some of the pastors who were among our respondents indicated that most of their members do not imbibe or internalize the biblical principles of generous giving. The fact that the pastors are equally financially handicapped could not enable them to show by example, what it means to give generously. Therefore, some members do not see what could practically motivate them to give bountifully. It follows, therefore, that one of the reasons for the lack of commitment among pastors as indicated by our respondents is lack of motivation and proper incentive measures, especially in terms of their remuneration. It implies that if every pastor is properly compensated through remuneration for his work, part of the problems that take the form of lack of spiritual commitment and dedication on his part would have been solved.

### **5.3.7 The method of leadership selection**

The process adopted by any church in determining who becomes their leader(s) is of great importance with what becomes the overall success or otherwise of such church. This is confirmed by John Maxwell, as he avers that:

People often attribute the success of organization and teams to many things: opportunities, the economy, personnel, team work, resources, timing, chemistry, luck. And while it is true that any of those things can come into play, the one thing all good organizations have in common is good leadership.<sup>21</sup>

Considering the above position of Maxwell, it is right to say that the goals a group sets for themselves and their achievement of such goals will depend a lot on if they have put the right leaders in place. As such, the selection of leaders is crucial in that everything rises or falls on leadership.

The dynamics of any organization or group of people necessitates that the selection of leaders be done by approved procedure relevant to the body, and that with passage of time such leaders would need to be succeeded. The common situation among Christian denominations with different types of church Government is that the issue of succession phase or exercise has always been problematic, disastrous and with serious consequences. Nevertheless, some denominations are fortunate to have peaceful and successful selection or succession process. Assemblies of God Nigeria, as we gathered, can be said to have benefitted in the past from this peaceful and successful selection process since its inception in 1934. Notwithstanding our respondents confirmed that the present trend in the denomination, with particular reference to its work in Ogun State, overtly x-rays a crack in the wall. The craving for power to rule among the pastors is therefore generating tension in the minds of the present leaders at all levels, Sections, District, and General Council.

We gathered that the Assemblies of God Nigeria's process of selecting their leaders is by election. Our investigation revealed that while a section of the membership embraces it as the best and most appropriate for the denomination, the opinion of most of our respondents during the focus group discussion and oral interview is that of suspicion, complaint, irrelevant to the contemporary time and therefore, should be discarded. The said election as practiced in AG, according to our respondents, cannot be said to be all that democratic in nature in that it does not give

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<sup>21</sup> J. C. Maxwell. 2008. *Leadership gold*. U.S.A: Thomas Nelson Publishers. 75.

room for campaigns but incorporate prayers. At best, it could be regarded as a “hybrid Election” because it allows a combination of secularism and spiritualism.

According to our investigation, the peculiar nature of the process used by AG in selection of its leaders has generated questions, such as: Does this process produce the best candidates for offices? Do we have a level playing ground for all the contestants? Are the crops of leaders who emerge through this process the best to help the denomination make a giant stride in this contemporary and competitive society? Are there ways the election guidelines can be improved upon?

In addition to the above questions, certain dangerous behaviours associated with elections are found exhibited by the members and pastors and these constitute a malaise in the body. It constitutes subject of interest as one treats issue from the moral perspective. Our observations and interview confirmed that these behaviours, based on the periods of their occurrences, can best be classified into three: before, during and after elections, and need to be addressed.

Our respondents affirmed that before the election, a high level of carnality is exhibited both among the pastors and members. These take the forms of division into camps based on tribal and parochial interests, lacking sound ideological groupings. This corresponds with the “invisible political parties” berated by Paul in 1Cor. 3:1-3, leading to positive campaigns for their candidates, while the perceived opponents are denigrated, hated, threatened, maligned, ridiculed, held in contempt and odium.

During the elections, partisanship has been observed in the conduct by the officers in charge through projection and favouring of certain candidates for emergence because they are to protect certain entrenched interest upon assumption of office. For instance, most of those who participated in the focus group discussion indicated that it is now a common trend to find the presiding officers, drawn among the Executive Committee, during each District Council business session, passing positive comments on the report of an incumbent leader before the house ahead of the day’s election so as to influence the minds of the electorates to vote for him

After the election, the reverberating effect of the aftermath of elections, according to investigation through oral interview with some of our respondents, has been more disastrous for the denomination, owing to a plethora of petitions received against the result and panels set up to resolve the problems that result. Our respondents indicated that panels do witness, in some cases leaders telling lies on oath, threatening and abusing one another, and those found guilty of malpractice

during elections are disciplined, some are suspended while others are dismissed from the ministry.

Another horrible occurrence that usually occurs as confirmed through our investigation is the vindictiveness exhibited by the leaders that emerge against their defeated opponents. They try to frustrate them all areas in the ministry. They transfer them to non-viable churches, or churches that are not in consonance with their ministerial experience, level or status. This generates another form of petitions and unrest among the pastors.

We also gathered that since AG Nigeria mode of choosing its leaders is election, at times, the incumbent leaders hold tightly to their positions, refusing to leave their office when the people's mandate is not in their favour. Those who lose during election often feel bad and demonstrate bitterness, envy and rancor over the new leaders. At times, the will of God becomes suppressed. There have been cases in which lives have been lost as a result of bitter rivalry among the pastors.

In addition, we confirmed that there have been inquiries set up to unravel the allegations of misappropriation of funds by the officers who emerged and immediately used the avenue to enrich themselves. Most of our respondents that participated in the focus group discussion agreed that this problem cannot be divorced from the fear that such leaders know that the means which they got into the office could also be used to truncate their tenure.

The above multifaceted negative moral occurrences that some of our respondents have traced directly to the electioneering and the administrative stuns of AG church government are, therefore, to be seen as serious problems that can affect the continued peaceful coexistence of the body and achievement of its stated objectives. We concluded that such needs to be corrected.

### **5.3.8 Poor educational background of the pastors**

Aja avers that:

Freud and others wrote during the Enlightenment period. Freud featured between 1856-1939. He felt like others before him that religion was practiced mostly by poor societies and societies ruled by ignorance and superstition. However, we know that men like Isaac Newton the great scientist and others were quite religious in spite of their knowledge.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>D. Aja. 2007. *Global Trends; A Historical and Systematic Study*. Lagos: Global Care Organization. 243.

Our respondents disclosed that the days when illiteracy and ignorance were displayed from the pulpits unquestionably are over, because such dispositions are no longer being condoned by the enlightened church membership.

The report gathered from the three AG District secretaries indicated that more than 50% of the pastors' Academic entry point to the theological school for pastoral training was below school certificate of education, and less than 2% with University degrees. To worsen the situation, most of the pastors do not get involved in updating themselves academically, but felt satisfied with the seminary training which got them qualified to be on the pulpits. This has reduced their chances of being able to compete favourably with the challenges of the contemporary society where most youths are eager for better education. As such, it becomes an up-hill task to retain such youths in some parishes as soon as they get advanced academically. Their exposure to scientific methods of solving issues makes them not to feel comfortable with the ministration of pastors that could not apply their ministration with the reality of the contemporary challenges. Owing to this factor, there are only few elites in most of the parishes investigated, where most members were traders, farmers and other professionals with low wages. The aftermath of this is that most of the parishes find it difficult to thrive financially, in consequence of which the pastors' salary, which is calculated relatively to the church's income, is nothing to write home about.

Our investigation revealed that in 2002, the leadership in an attempt to encourage its pastors to advance academically passed a resolution during its 32<sup>nd</sup> General Council meeting that ordained pastors that would be eligible to contest for important positions, both at the District and General Council, must possess a minimum of first Degree. This resulted in many pastors becoming interested in getting updated academically, whereby they were able to undergo academic programme of studies in recognized universities. However, in 2006, at the its 33<sup>rd</sup> council meeting, there was a revisit of the previous resolution, in which, those that would become eligible for elective positions must have their first Degree, not in secular universities, but in Assemblies of God's institutions. Our respondents confirmed that the above position, while having its desired goal of wanting the pastors to be more rooted in AG's teachings, doctrines and policies, deprived pastors opportunities of exploring other fields of learning that could enhanced their better exposure, and consequently, make them become more relevant to contemporary



issues. Furthermore, some deacons confirmed in the course of interview, that the church's position at the council of 2006 was purposed to outwit those whose first degrees were from secular Universities, whose presence some of the leaders considered to be a threat to their positions in the church.

#### **5.3.9 Inadequate support for pastors on training**

We confirmed through our respondents that the remuneration policy of the church generates problems on the pastors on training. This is because most pastors are hesitant to support their student pastors from the church income, knowing that such arrangement may reduce their salaries at the end of the month. As such, most of the student pastors struggle for finance alone during their theological training. Those who found it difficult to continue their studies stopped halfway due to frustration. This situation makes such ones who graduated to see no reason why they needed to support the incoming pastors, since such a gesture was not extended to them while in training. Hence, the common slogan among the AG's pastors, "Go and prove your ministry". By this, they mean, if God actually calls one as a pastor, He should give him the needed backing that will make him have converts, which in turn will lead to his all round prospering that will serve as evidence to people that he is called indeed.

Added to the above, our investigation indicates that the problem of lack of or insufficient support from the mother church made some pastors on training to be restricted as regard access to quality books and other materials that could enhance their effectiveness during their training. As such, since they are not introduced into the culture of having such materials while on training, it becomes difficult for them to have a paradigm shift after graduating from their theological studies. This has given rise to lesser studiousness among the AG pastoral fold, a situation which would greatly be traceable to the poor remuneration policy of pastors.

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## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter attempts to proffer solutions to the problems besetting AG's pastors in Ogun State, Nigeria. It gives an appraisal of the previous solutions, with the aim of discovering their strengths and weaknesses, and further suggests new solutions that could generate better results than what the previous steps taken have generated.

#### **6.2 Previous solutions reviewed**

The overt nature of the problems of AG's pastors, both to the leadership and their followers has led to the use of certain steps geared towards ameliorating the predicament of its pastors in Nigeria, especially as it relates to Ogun State in particular. Some of these steps as confirmed by our respondents are discussed below:

##### **6.2.1 Pastors' make-up**

The meager salaries received by some of the pastors made it difficult for them to cater favourably for their families' financial needs. In order to assist such pastors, especially in terms of reducing their financial problems, a palliative arrangement is put in place in all AG's Districts and Areas to encourage them. The nomenclature used for this arrangement is "pastors' make-up".

Pastors' make-up is given to those pastors on the 'make up' list from the District's or Area's monthly income generated. In order to generate money to be used for this purpose, every financially viable church within a District or Area is to pay a fixed percentage of its income to the District during the monthly business meeting held at the sectional headquarters. For detail on what the General Council stipulates that each Church is to pay to assist the pastors on makeup list, see table (6.1) below.

**Table 6.1. Percentage of churches income payable to district and section**

Income range	% to district	% to district make-up	% to section	Total
From 100.00 – 100,000.00	35%	--	3%	38%
From 100,001.00 and above	35%	2%	3%	40%

With this arrangement (pastors' make-up), pastors whose church income is considered relatively meager are given financial assistance based on their credentials. As such, in Abeokuta District, according to the District Treasurer's report, each affected ordained pastor receives ₦10,000, the licentiate ₦8,000, while the Exhorter receives ₦7,000 each month. In Ijebu District, the District Treasurer has it that each ordained receives ₦6,000, while pastors who are either licentiate or exhorter in the 'make up' list are to receive ₦3,000. In Sango District, each ordained on 'make up' list receives ₦25,000, the licentiate ₦20,000, while the exhorter is given ₦15,000.

Apart from Ijebu District whose additional financial assistance is not hinged on whatever amount the church has given to the pastor, as in the case of both Sango and Abeokuta Districts, the arrangement is such that whatever each pastor has received from his church and what assistance is given to him would be done to enable him have what the District fixes for him to receive as his minimum wage. For instance, a pastor who is a licentiate in Sango District whose church has paid ₦12,000 will only receive additional ₦8,000 from the District as an augment. In the case of Abeokuta, a licentiate whose church has paid ₦6,000, will be entitled to additional ₦2,000 from the District. The monthly financial report submitted by each church will enable the District to know what amount each pastor concerned is entitled to as per additional financial assistance (make up) he would be entitled to receive. The belief underlying the policy of make-up is that through it, each pastor on 'make up' would be given an aid or assistance so as to upgrade whatever he has been paid by his local church each month. However, within some months or few years, each church on 'make up' is expected to grow, so as to have

increase in its income, whereby its pastor would have graduated from the 'make up' list and no longer entitled to it anymore.

What is overtly clear from the treasurers' reports above is that the make up for pastors in AG is relative to each District's or Area's financial status. As such, where the District or Area is in a non-viable milieu, the amount it could afford to support its needy pastors monthly would be lesser than those of a viable environment. That is the reason why, though the three Districts investigated are in the same State (Ogun State), yet the 'make up' differs in each case, based on each District's financial status.

Our findings revealed that while the General Council's position is indicated in Fig 6.1 above, some Districts however, did not follow this arrangement accurately, owing to the difficulty in its implementation within their own locality. For instance, in order to reduce the number of pastors who are entitled to the District make up, Abeokuta District does not allow churches having an average income of less than N10,000 to render their account to the District, but to their sections. Hence, the problem of how to address the financial plight of pastors in those churches is not brought before the District as to attract any District make-up. Equally, in this District, churches with an average income of between N10,000.00 to N19,000 are to pay N200 into the District make-up, while churches having an average income of between N20,000 – N50,000, N51,000 – N99,000 pay the sum of N500 and N1,000 respectively into the District make-up fund as against the General Council's policy that stipulates that churches having an income ranging below N100,000.00 should not be obligated to pay any amount into the make-up fund. The problem that necessitated this position of Abeokuta District, according to the information supplied by the District Treasurer, is that only few churches are having an average income of N100,000, while there are too many churches whose income are below N100,000. Hence, the District leadership devised the means in order to curtail the expenses that would go on make-up every month.

We gathered that Ijebu District abided by the General Council's arrangement. However, the report supplied by the District Treasurer confirmed that since only 5 churches could generate an average of N100,000 per month, the amount realized for the make-up is usually very small, making the District to bear the brunt of paying most of the pastors who are on make-up. Accordingly, we gathered that the District is spending

more from its general purse to address the make-up need, and this affects its progress and development.

Sango District Treasurer's report indicated that there are 18 churches that make about an average of N100,000 and above. Each of these pays 2% into the District make up fund according to the policy of the General Council. As such, its pastors on make-up are better off when compared with their counterparts on make-up, either in Ijebu or Abeokuta District, since the District has more fund generated in the process to assist such pastors.

The policy of pastors make up, according to our respondents, has some benefits. One, it shows that the leaders are aware of the financial plight of the pastors and not outrightly unconcerned or passive in their disposition, but aim at taking steps toward ameliorating the pastors' financial predicament. Aside from this, our respondents confirmed that the policy serves as an encouragement to the pastors in non-viable churches, showing them that their District leaders are practical in demonstrating their love and concern to them. Some of the pastors who featured in the oral interview and FGD indicated that the policy has benefitted them a lot, making their financial plight to be less terrible each month they receive the assistance. In addition to the above, the policy does not allow those on the 'make up' list to be seriously affected during Christian festivals, because in most cases, the loss they suffer is borne by the District. For instance, in Sango District the church which could only afford to give its licentiate pastor N6,000 during Christmas as against the N10,000 that he was given before Christmas travel would have its pastor being assisted with N7,000 by the District as against the N5,000 of the pre-Christmas months.

While it is not debatable that the above policy has been of great help to AG's pastors in Ogun State, most of the pastors we interviewed, however, agreed that it is not the best arrangement to offer permanent solution to the financial plight of the pastors in AG, Nigeria. Our respondents identified a lot of factors for the shortcomings of this policy. One, the fact that it is hinged on the financial status of each District or Area makes those pastors in more viable Districts and Areas to be at better advantage over those in the non-viable Districts and Areas. It therefore, does not operate on the principle of perfect equity among the AG's pastors. Furthermore, where few viable Churches are in the viable stratum, it makes the amount to be used from the district/area income to be too cumbersome, coupled with such assistance to be very meager and sometimes not regular.

In addition to the above, the increase in the number of pastors on ‘make up’ list, according to our respondents, has been a great financial burden on some of the Districts and Areas. This, to certain extent hinders their progress and development, whereby some Districts and Areas could not have meaningful projects executed due to the monthly financial drain incurred through “make up”. Furthermore, our respondents, especially the District Treasurers, who served as our first hand informant, affirmed that at best, most pastors who are on ‘make up’ receive far below what they needed to cater for their families’ needs.

#### **6.2.2 Special arrangement for the collection of tithes during Easter retreat**

Our respondents confirmed that contrary to the previous arrangement in which all offerings and tithes collected during Easter Sunday at the Easter Retreat programme were sent to the National headquarters, provision is now being made in some venues of the Easter retreat in which each local church is permitted to receive the tithes of its members in attendance during the Easter Sunday service.

The above arrangement takes place as part of the items of the programme drawn for the Easter Sunday. After the offerings and other donations which are to be forwarded to the National Headquarters are given, the programme Coordinator invites a Deacon from each local church to stand in front of the congregation to collect the tithes of those members from his local church. He records this and submits it to his local church. Unlike the previous method in which all tithes, offerings and other donations collected were sent to the National Headquarters, this new method helps the local churches better. This is because it does not affect the tithes given at the Easter Retreat Camp, thereby not making all the members’ financial obligations during the programme to be only for the National headquarters.

While the above arrangement is confirmed to be better than the earlier method, respondents, however, indicated that it does not offer the best solution to the financial plight of AG’s pastors during the Easter period. Respondents confirmed that the fact that some of the members could not attend the Easter Retreat, owing to certain problems, especially financial incapability and monetization of the programme has often resulted in lesser amount being recorded through the tithes received. Similarly, the respondents disclosed that the idea of calling out the Deacons to collect their church tithes does not



promote unity in worship. Apart from the problem of distraction which generates in the process, it underscores the gap in AG in terms of financial challenges encountered in each local church, the absence of which such arrangement would have been uncalled for.

### 6.2.3 2011 Remuneration review investigation survey

We gathered that the ubiquitous nature of poverty prevalent among AG's pastors as a result of the unfavourable remuneration policy made the National leadership to set up a committee to investigate what best policy to be implemented. As such in 2011, the National leadership of AG, Nigeria constituted this committee to investigate from all the District presbyters, Area counseling committee and all AG's Bible Schools/ Seminaries' Administrative staff on the best solution toward arresting the problems generated through the pastors' remuneration policy. Copies of a questionnaire were sent to the above surveyed pastors, who constituted the leadership stratum of the church in their various units. It was felt that with this bold step, the pulse of these leaders, who are closer to the grass root of the work, would be felt, and possibly lead to a review of the remuneration policy to permit contemporary relevance.

While most of those who participated in FGD commended the above step, they, however, observed certain factors that militated against its effectiveness. First, the questionnaire was not circulated to those pastors who were outside the leadership cadre, especially those who were seriously affected by the remuneration policy. This, they regarded as deprivation in that most of the pastors were not allowed to have a say in what affected them.

Second, the committee that was put in place was not permitted to disclose their findings to the pastors as regards the responses of majority of those who filled the copies of the questionnaire. Were they in support of the continuation of the old scheme? Did they advocate for a review to permit the use of graduated scale of salaries? It was felt that the leaders should not have remained silence on the outcome of that exercise. The exercise was meant to give the true picture of what those stakeholders thought could assist in navigating solution into the problems of the pastors' salaries. Rather than giving this report, the respondents disclosed that the leaders decided to embark on increasing the

percentages each pastor is entitled to receive from the monthly income realized by his local church. This, they felt was not the best solution to the issue at stake.

#### **6.2.4 Adjustment in percentages of church income to be paid to the pastors**

In order to find a solution to the remuneration policy of the pastors, there has been certain adjustment of percentages which the pastors are entitled to receive from the income realized from their local churches. For instance, (appendix C) on page shows that between 2004 and 2011 churches with an average income of between N20,000 and N30,000, were to pay their pastors an average of N7,500. Going by the adjustment done in 2012, as indicated in (appendix D) on page, Churches with similar income are now to pay their pastors an average of N10,000. Similarly, while (appendix C) indicates that Churches with an average of N40,000 were to pay their pastors an average of N13,500, (appendix D) indicates that the new adjustment makes such Churches to pay their pastors an average of N20,000.

Our respondents indicated that although the above step is borne out of good motive. It is a way of navigating the path of solving the problems associated with AG's pastors' salaries. It however, does not result in the best solution. It, at best, only attempted to increase the percentage within the reality of the nation's inflation, since the value of the Nigeria currency does not increase, but decreases almost annually. Hence, the adjustment does not bring the expected solution to the financial plight of the pastors. Rather, it merely makes the present earning power of each pastor to come so close to what it was when the old policy was newly introduced in 2004. Furthermore, most of the pastors in churches with average or low income who were interviewed responded that while they appreciated the concern of the leaders of AG, the present economic reality in the country does not allow them to feel much of the effect of the adjustment on their financial status, especially as one treat issue within the context of the economic reality in 2004.

#### **6.2.5 A review of the Bible schools and seminaries' curriculum**

Our investigation revealed that the National church took a step in the direction of reviewing the curriculum of its Bible schools and seminaries in 2006. Unlike the old curriculum which did not give consideration to graduates of secular universities to spend lesser years in running their Bible school programme when coming to be trained as pastors, the AG Board of Education reviewed the curriculum in 2006, to give certain considerations along that line.

The new curriculum allows those who are graduates of universities and other recognized tertiary institutions of learning, with NCE/OND and BA/BSC to run their Diploma Bible School programme for only two years, as against the three years for those with lesser certificates. This reduction of one year exempts such graduates from taking some courses which are normally offered during the first year Bible school programme of studies. It was done with the aim of encouraging such graduates to take up pastoral work, so that gradually, the academic outlook of those in the denomination's pastoral work might take a better form, especially with regard to the contemporary academic challenges in the Nigerian society.

Equally, it was hoped that through the above consideration, it would be possible to check the exodus of graduates from the church into other denominations. The issue of the need to check such exodus could be perceived in two ways: that those of them who are called and are members of the church might get interested to answer the call in AG and not outside AG. In other words, it was assumed that such graduates would receive motivation, so that those of them who feel they cannot spend up to three years for their pastoral training might consider two years a better alternative. Consequently, they would retain their membership in AG rather than going away to other denominations. In the same vein, according to what our respondents disclosed, with this arrangement, the church hope to use such graduates that are trained as pastors to reach others of relevant

educational exposure. Hence, it will bring solution to the paucity of elites in the church's membership. Apart from being able to reach more graduates who are yet to become AG members, it was meant to serve as a catalyst, to assist in retaining the few graduates who are already members of the church, because such ones could become better pastors that would be able to minister to them at their own level.

The above step of reduction of the number of years for intending graduates to undergo the pastoral training was regarded by our respondents as quite encouraging with proactive outlook to help the church. Notwithstanding, our findings indicate that certain observations were made since 2006 when it was introduced.

First, statistics show that this step has not remarkably increased the number of graduates that responded for pastoral training in the church seminaries. For instance, the record at the Registrar's office of Southwest Advanced School of Theology, Iperu-Remo, in Ogun State, shows that in 2007, only 4% of those who took the entrance examination were graduates. In 2008, it was 5%, while in 2009, only 5%. 6%, 5%, 5% were recorded in 2010, 2011 and 2012 respectively. According to those who participated in the FGD, this insignificant response to pastoral training is not because the few graduates in the church do not see the pastoral profession as important, but they regarded the remuneration package as not the best it should be to motivate them to become pastors in AG. Some of the few pastors who came in with the relevant secular educational background not lesser than OND equally indicated that the problem of the remuneration policy constituted a great factor as to why some of their colleagues would not want to utilize the opportunity of the two years pastoral training provided in the new curriculum. Accordingly, our informants disclosed that the real problem to address in order to motivate the church members who are graduates lies on the remuneration policy than the reduction of the number of years to be spent for their pastoral training.

### **6.3 New suggested solutions**

Considering the limitations and inefficiency of each of the previously applied solutions, it becomes obvious to suggest new steps yet unutilized to assist in solving the problems of AG's pastors. This made us to carry out investigation by consulting our respondents through oral interview and FGD, to discover better ways to assist the church. Some of the areas suggested by our respondents as alternative ways to assist in bringing better solutions to the above problems are discussed below:

### 6.3.1 Graduated scale of salaries

From what we gathered from our respondents, the policy adopted by the church for the remuneration of its pastors indirectly promotes injustice and lack of fair play among the pastors. For instance, those who are unfortunate to be in places or churches that are not financially viable receive lesser salaries and allowances than those who are their colleagues or juniors in the ministry, but are fortunate to be posted to better and financially viable churches or locations. When crisis occurs, the pastor is made to suffer the brunt of it, though he may not be responsible for it. This policy makes the affected pastor suffer financially, whereby his situation is made worse. In other words, apart from the emotional or psychological trauma he experiences during such crisis; the policy makes his situation worse financially in that he is to receive lesser income if the crisis affects the church income negatively. This has often led to discouragement, disappointment, frustration and spiritual lukewarm among the pastors. To this end, the respondents advocated graduated scale of salary for AG's pastors.

Graduated scale of salary, according to our respondents is the best arrangement that would bring the needed respite to the economic and religious problems facing AG's pastors, due to the unfavourable remuneration policy. Graduated scale of salaries at best operates within the context of universal principle, which takes into consideration how the civil servants and workers in private establishments are being remunerated. In its operation, it becomes possible for pastors to be regarded as a part of the society, with the understanding that they are affected by what goes on in it.

As an attempt to know what obtains in some other churches, the report gathered indicated that this recommendation would be in the best interest of AG pastors, their church and the cause they are called to serve. For instance, a respondent from Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) indicated that the pastors of the denomination are remunerated differently, both full-time and part-time due to the some factors that are peculiar to the locations, environment (urban and rural) and financial capability of the church and members. All of these account for the remuneration that will accrue to a particular pastor. Second, the full time pastors are placed on graduated scale of salaries, depending on their qualifications, for instance, graduate pastors and non-graduate pastors have different rating scale of salaries. The factors earlier mentioned also contribute additional income to the pastor or otherwise. For instance, a pastor in urban cities, like Lagos, Ibadan, Port-Harcourt, Abeokuta e.t.c., having tithes running to the tune of 2 to 5

million naira a month, with possibly monthly Thanksgiving income of about 2 million naira. This pastor would be entitled to 20% of the thanksgiving and half of both the tithes of the ministers and members. Investigation revealed further, that 12.5% of the ministers' tithes, and 30% of the members tithes accrue to the pastors and the church for running expenses and growth.

According to those who featured in the FGD, graduated scale of salaries would allow pastors to be classified into categories, taking into consideration such indices like years of service, academic qualifications and other relevant variables, and with these remunerate them accordingly. The opinion of most of our respondents is that such an arrangement would result in assuring pastors that factors like, mass traveling of members during occasions of festivals or any related crisis would not affect their salaries at any time. Furthermore, they disclosed that those pastors who are in non-viable areas would not be tempted to leave their duty post, but will be committed to their work better, since they are sure of receiving same salaries like their counterparts in viable places. This, to certain extent, our respondents agreed would curb the problem of secession and breakaway. This will also prevent the possibility of those pastors and churches at the territorial boundary of a District wanting to leave the District to the next one which they feel is more economically viable. Reports from the District officers confirmed that, most often, it has been that churches at the boundaries left their District and decided to belong to the next District. They did so because they discovered that the new District they decided to join had better "make-up" package and prospects for their pastors, or demonstrated better concern in terms of economic wellbeing of such pastors and churches than the place they initially belonged.

Most of our respondents did not agree that the pastors would become lazy if the graduated scale of salaries is put in place. Although they did not disprove this tendency with some pastors, their opinion is that such a policy would rather generate greater commitment among the pastors than what obtains at present. For instance, the responses from those who filled copies of the questionnaire indicated that those whose focus seems to be diverted to other areas to make ends meet would now become more committed to their pastoral assignment. It would invariably lead to the expansion of the work of the church. With regards to the possibility of some who are not genuinely called that may want to come to the pastoral work if graduated scale of salaries is put in place, our respondents agreed that stringent measures could be put in place to ensure thorough screening of prospective candidates who may want to come to the pastoral profession.

With this, only those who have genuine call would be permitted to get enrolled.

Among measures suggested by those who featured in the oral interviews as ways to admit only those who are genuinely called into the pastoral profession are: there should be evidence that such ones are gainfully employed at their pre-entry into the pastoral profession, and not coming as a result of unemployment. Furthermore, they should be those whose commitment to Christian service in the church has been proven for years, which should be obvious to all and sundry. They suggested also that the leaders at the local, sectional and District/ Area levels should actively be involved in the screening exercise, so as to ensure that such ones satisfy their expectations in terms of spiritual maturity, financial capability and other related issues before they are allowed to come for their pastoral training. In addition to this, those who are already pasturing churches should be subjected to a regular internship training to get them updated with relevant contemporary issues that bother on effective and efficient pastoral work. Equally, our respondents indicated that the progress witnessed in the church should be one of the factors to use to determine when a pastor is to be promoted from one level to another. This will prevent the assumption that one would receive same salaries, as his contemporaries, from the National church, regardless of what becomes the condition of his own church.

### **6.3.2 Intensive evangelistic strategies to the indigenes**

Considering the fact that the financial challenges faced by most of the parishes investigated in Ogun State during Christmas festival is attributed to the mass traveling of members who are non-indigenes, our respondents suggested that the church needs to employ effective evangelistic strategies to win more indigenes into its fold. While they do not mean that the church does not need to win the non-indigenes, what is meant is that greater effort to reach the indigenes should be intensified than what has been. To this end, both those who participated in the FGD and oral interview indicated that the following areas could be better explored to realize the above goal:

1. There should be symbiotic inclusion of the non-AG among the beneficiaries of the proceeds during Christian festivals. The reports gathered indicated that most of the parishes investigated are far from taking advantage of this medium to bring in the non-AG into their fold. The common trend among the churches is to limit their festival's beneficiaries to only those in their parishes. While it is commendable that concern is shown to their members, the respondents agreed that where such kind gestures are extended to the non-AG needy neighbours, it would serve as an effective strategy of greater impact, whereby the gospel could be presented to such ones. Our respondents agreed that this would make



the beneficiaries to be better receptive to the gospel message presented by the church, in consequence of which the church may experience growth. Where this is the case, much of the financial problems generated due to mass traveling of non-indigenous members, especially during Christmas festival would be reduced to the barest minimum.

2. AG church needs to be better friendly to the people where its parishes are found in the State. Our respondents confirmed that the level of its friendliness with the people outside its fold is less satisfactory, for it operates much more within the context of a closed system within the places where its parishes are found in the State. This has been responsible for its drastic growth and lesser interest of those of Ogun State origin becoming members. According to Aina, 75-90% of conversion to Christianity is initiated through friendship and life style evangelism. It involves developing significant, credible relationship with non-believers<sup>268</sup>. A part of what is meant here is that the Church should carry out good projects that will give it a good image in the eyes of the public. For instance, Day Star Center, Lagos, under the leadership of its pastor, Rev Sam Adeyemi, exemplified this when his church embarked on an eleven million naira rehabilitation of Oregon High School, Lagos, a school in their neighbourhood. The church should realize that there is a direct correlation between friendliness and potential growth. All things being equal, the friendlier a church is, the greater its potential for growth. The less friendly a church is, the lower its potential for growth.

3. The church should be actively involved in ministering to the less privileged in its community. This, according to our respondents, could take the form of relevant outreaches utilized by sister denominations to reach out to such category of members of the society. This would provide such less privileged the resources that will restore their hope and empower them.

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<sup>268</sup>A. Aina. 2012. 100 ways to increase church attendance. Lagos: Life and Ministry Publications. 139.

Our respondents indicated that in the contemporary world characterized by variation in value system, the primary need of man is his major priority. In that sense, any attempt to reach people (by evangelism or any other means) has to address areas of humankind's primary needs. The type of evangelism that obviously suits the urban areas will be such that will prefer casting solution to the obvious problems in the society. If the evangelization of the contemporary urban areas will succeed, it must practically take on human face. Raimo, for instance, argues that Catholicism, in all aspects of its traditions, does not call Christians to abandon the world but to help in shaping and transforming it through involvement in worldly tasks and responsibilities.<sup>269</sup> According to Aina<sup>270</sup>, the analysis of "a recent response to questionnaire administered to 1000 pastors in a denomination in Nigeria shows that prayer/ revival services bring 50% to the church, crusade brings 20%, personal evangelism brings 8%, other forms like Guest Sunday brings 7%, welfare/Benevolence attracts 15% to the church". The above discovery underscores the importance of benevolence as effective evangelism strategy in the contemporary church, being able to attract better result than evangelistic outreach with mere words lacking good deeds.

Among the outreaches suggested by our respondents who participated in the (FGD) as means whereby AG in Ogun State could allow its evangelism to fulfill the above purpose, we have:

a. **Food and assistance for the homeless shelters**

This is an ongoing outreach to the people who are homeless. Each week, a catered meal is suggested to be provided to people located in a targeted area. Also assistance should be given to the homeless families, especially single mothers with spring cleaning and get them provided with other needs, such as personal care effects for the women and arts supplies for the children for their art projects.

b. **Back to school outreach**

This could take the form of an annual event where food and other school supplies, such as bags, books, school fees, uniforms are given as assistance to the under privileged

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<sup>269</sup>K. Raimo. Catholic Tradition in D. Esseim. *Work ethics and attitude of Christian civil workernsmnts in selected local government areas in Akwa-Ibom state, Nigeria*. PhD.Thesis: Dept. Of Religious Studies.University of Ibadan.

<sup>270</sup>A. Aina. 2012. 100 ways to increase church attendance. 46.

children. Respondents agreed that this could boost the churches' chances of retaining the children who are already in their congregation and also reaching to those outside. Furthermore, it could result in the overall conversion of some of their parents, who may be impacted through the practical dissemination of the gospel message through good works.

c. **Thanksgiving lunch and consent**

This, according to our respondents, should be an annual event organized for homeless people. A prepared and pre-packed thanksgiving meal could be provided to all who attend, accompanied with concert entertainment. This, however, should be different from the regular annual thanksgiving programme which is primarily for those that are already members of the congregation. Its primary aim, according to our respondents would be to extend the church's care ministry to those outside its fold, especially to get them impacted in the process.

d. **Winter coat outreach**

Our respondents indicated that this programme can be organized annually to provide winter clothing for the homeless people just before the cold winter season. This will enable them to have such resources that could shield them from any adverse effect of the cold weather.

e. **Christmas shoe outreach**

The consensus of our respondents is that this outreach should be put in place before the Christmas season, whereby shoes and personal care products are packed into individual shoe boxes and distributed. This, accordingly, would at least reduce the expenses of such beneficiaries, which may eventually lead to opening of their heart to the gospel message.

f. **Medical missions outreach**

According to our respondents, medication and counseling services could be donated to the sick and less privileged members of the society through the above outreach. This would assist by solving their health and related problems. Equally, the respondents disclosed that the church can embark on the building of hospitals that could truly serve the people at almost no cost. They maintained that the practice of engaging medical personnel to offer free medical consultation alongside counselors who offer psychological advice to those in need could effectively aid in reaching the unreached, especially those who are poor. This is because there is a strong link between common diseases and poverty. Where concerted effort is geared toward the removal of poverty to a great measure, Nigerian hospitals would record fewer patients. It is obvious that some

of those whose cases demand going to hospitals do not have money to get the desired treatment. Hence, building hospitals where the church can attend to some of these ailments would help it impact the society better. This is expedient because according to the Bible<sup>271</sup>, “The poor would always be in the land.” Hence, it is therefore, proper that people who have should share with those who do not have. Where the church can meet the people at the point of needs, it could ultimately have their heart open to the gospel, for evangelism that starts at non-believers point of felt needs and ties the gospel into that area of need has the greatest capacity for capturing the mind and heart of the non-Christian<sup>272</sup>.

g. **Skill acquisition programme**

This is an outreach where many youths and married people, especially job seekers could be trained and equipped in different career skills to further improve their livelihood. Apart from being a means whereby converts could be won, the respondents agreed that it could also serve the purpose of empowering the jobless or under employed members of the church. The aftermath of this would be an increase in the church income, which invariably would result in boosting the pastors’ salaries and his spiritual wellbeing.

All of the aforementioned ways would make the church to be community impact oriented. With such practical steps, the church would reap the following benefits of community impact. First, its gospel being presented becomes more meaningful. Second, it would attract favourable comments from the community. Added to the above, the outsiders would be persuaded to recommend the church to others. Further, the community leaders would be at peace with the church. And finally, the situation would generate positive rub-on effect on the members in the society.

### 6.3.3 **Special theological training programme for graduates of secular institutions**

AG church Nigeria, according to our respondents, needs to put in place a quality theological training programme for graduates of secular Institutions. Since the previous

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<sup>271</sup>Deuteronomy 15:11.

<sup>272</sup>A. Aina. 2012. 100 ways to increase church attendance.138.

attempt in which a reduction in the years they were to spend from three to two years has not yielded commensurate response, our respondents suggested that part-time programmes for such graduates would rather attract better response from those called into the ministry but are not willing to come into full time pastoral work as a result of the unfavourable remuneration policy. Since such arrangement would enable them to continue with their secular work while having the privilege of pastoring churches on part time basis, our investigation revealed that it would result in lesser financial burden on the church. It will also enable such graduates from secular institutions to get fulfilled in their areas of calling.

Our respondents agreed to the effectiveness of the above method, indicating that quite a number of outstanding preachers in the contemporary Nigeria-society, such as Pastors E. Adeboye, W.F. Kumuyi and Dr T. Olukoya started their pastoral work on part time before translating to full time. Furthermore, the respondents agreed that such provision would boost the church's chances of reaching other graduates, which invariably would change or uplift the outlook of the church membership for better.

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## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

## CONCLUSION

### 7.1 Summary

This work has proven that AG's pastors and members are morally justified to conduct Christian festivals, for both the Bible and the Church's constitution gave moral approval along that line. Furthermore, our findings indicated that AG's pastor fall bellow expectation in articulating relevant moral principles during such festivals, as there were evidences of profiteering, greed, exploitation and commercialization in display among them during such occasions. In addition, we discovered that Christmas and Easter festivals had negative financial impacts on the pastors, though they enjoyed some monetary benefits during Thanksgiving celebrations and spiritual renewal during Easter. The remuneration policy of the Church, according to our findings is the main factor responsible for the adverse economic and religious effects of these festivals on the pastors. This brings us to the last chapter, purposed to proffer relevant solutions to the problems of AG's pastors, especially during Christian festivals. With this, we are able to achieve our aims for this research work.

This study has been able to show that it is mere generalization, void of empirical presentation, to say that pastors are always benefitting economically during Christian festivals. The empirical case study of AG's pastors in Ogun State has proven to us, that the assumption that the pastors in question could be at advantage economically during such occasions may not be true. This is the case, especially where the remuneration policy is such that hinges the pastor's salary to the church's income, or where majority of the members are non-indigenes that may travel during the period, as in this research. This could also affect his spiritual wellbeing adversely as the discovery made in this research has shown. Equally, the issue of unfavourable remuneration policy could give certain complex problems like, difficulty in transfer of pastors, craving for materialism, monetization of the gospel and campaigning during selection of leadership, if the process is by election.

Most of the pastors and deacons we interviewed and those who featured in the focus group discussions believe that certain things are not in the proper order within the Assemblies of God's administrative policy and leadership style. The whole issue can be understood to be what is called "poor ministers' welfare". This could be best described in

the words of Francis Bola Akin, that attempt to grow the pastor would result in growing the church, for no church will ever rise than the life of its pastor<sup>273</sup>. Aina equally confirms this truthfulness of this position. According to him, Leaders cast long shadows. Who your leaders are, both paid staff and lay leaders have enormous impact on the type of people that become attracted to the church. The obvious reason for this is that the leaders are the opinion leaders, the most visible personalities in the church, who are easily seen by the visitors. If nothing is done to impact the church leadership, the church would not attract or retain anyone above the leadership team<sup>274</sup>.

Our investigations also confirmed that the leadership style adopted over the years by Assemblies of God has created non-working policy or well defined course of action that would be able to properly take care of pastors and their families, both during the active service years and retirement. One would imagine where a pastor would spend greater part of his time each day on the farm, only to come to Bible study class unprepared. This has given rise to the quest among the pastors for offices and for bigger churches where the income is fat. In such cases where the above becomes unachieved, some opt for falsifying figures, and casual stealing from the church treasury in order to cope with their financial challenges.

Our investigation revealed that Assemblies of God as a denomination, looks poor when sighted from a distance, yet she is very rich. The problem responsible for false financial image of the church being presented before the world is mainly that the leaders over the years have not come up with workable blue print of what the financial activities within its fold looks like. As a result, we have non uniformity in pastors' pay roll and the greater percentage under paid. There is also poor development and equipment of the seminaries and slow execution of meaningful projects in most of its local churches. It is obvious, that the financial burden placed upon the church seems to be responsible for the crippling nature of developmental processes at the grass root. There is no practical translation of love for one's neighbours among the church leaders and the pastors,

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<sup>273</sup> F. B. Akin-John. 2005. *Grow the pastor and grow the Church*. Lagos: Life and Ministry Publication.

<sup>273</sup> A. Aina. 2012. 100 ways to increase church attendance.107.



because of the remuneration policy that makes the gap between the haves and have-nots to be wide. The vulnerable financial condition of the pastors has generated serious spiritual effects both on them and their members. It has not allowed some of these pastors to be so committed to their sacred service, and some clandestinely engage in exploitation and greed which do not provide good atmosphere for spiritual growth of the members. Rather, as a result of the wrong examples of these pastors they are negatively influenced.

Whereas certain steps had been taken before now by the leadership to address the church's problems, especially as they apply to the pastors, we however, discovered that they have not been effective as to navigate the needed solutions. Hence, as it is with AG, there is a need to proffer recommendations that could be more effective than the previous attempts. This underlines the necessity of the under listed recommendations:

## 7.2 Recommendations

1. The headquarters church should not undermine the importance of economic wellbeing of the pastors because there is a way in which this would enhance their spiritual life, dedication and commitment to their sacred service. In that sense, it is paramount that all categories of leaders of AG in the section, District and especially the General Council should demonstrate central concern over what affects each pastor and his church. It is obvious that the contemporary competition among different denominations is not that where a church can be expected to grow successfully coupled with its pastor being at his best spiritually, economically and psychologically if the pastor and his church are left to fend for themselves without due financial assistance from the headquarters.
2. The national church should have in its policy, an arrangement in which each local parish is subject to practicing budgeting. Adequate provision should be made through this means that the pastor's salary is given ultimate priority. In order that this might work successfully, the national headquarters must not stuff the local parish with too much financial demand that could drain its purse. This would make the pastors to be properly taken care of financially, and also enhance his spiritual wellbeing and those of his members. This is so, because he would now have to spend his quality time with God and other related spiritual matters, rather than trying to look for means to fend for himself and his family.

3. The church constitution and bye-laws need to be reviewed to suit a modern approach for the smooth running of the organization. It should spelt out clearly certain provisions in it. For instance, it should stipulate that all pastors, including officers in various capacities should pastor a church. The absence of this provision has resulted in making the majority of its pastors to believe that making it to the top is a time to rest and enjoy, rather than providing people oriented programme and effecting necessary changes in the system.

Furthermore, the above situation has increased the financial burden on the Headquarters, where billions of Naira is being used to service the leaders of more than one hundred Administrative units in Nigeria every month. The Article X section 7(2) of the church's constitution which says "AG pastors are on full time pastoral assignment" should be reviewed. Provision should be made, whereby both full time and part time pastoral work could be encouraged. In other words, that section of the constitution should be reworded to read something like "AG's pastors are either on full time or part time pastoral work, depending on each person's personal conviction of God's will for him". Under this arrangement, those who opt for part-time pastoral work should be given needed recognition as it is done in other sister churches like Redeemed Christian Church and Foursquare Gospel Church. They should not be treated as second class citizens in pastoral ministry, but should be entitled to certain rights and privileges, such as attaining position of leadership and ordination eligibility.

Although church activities make very high demand on ministers, the case of sister denominations like Redeemed Christian Church of God, Deeper Life Bible Church and Foursquare Bible Church could be cited to prove the workability of this method. According to the investigation we carried out, the Deeper Life Bible Church permits this, whereby the part-time pastors render their services voluntarily without salary. This gives room for the involvement of more hands and only the full time pastors and administrative staff are entitled to fixed monthly salaries. This condition does not put much financial burden on the church, and members in non viable places do not see their pastor as a burden since his salary is being paid by the headquarters.

The above recommendation is expedient, considering some of the advantages it could generate. First, it would reduce the financial burden of the church. Some of those who

feel they are called to serve as pastors and are of the conviction that they can function in the capacity of part-time would find it easy to do so without necessarily looking up to the local church to pay their salaries as the case is at the moment. Second, this would allow such part-time pastors to be easily disposed to taking up the pastoral function for new work or places that are not viable financially, since they know that the income of the church does not determine their salaries.

An attempt at testing the effectiveness or otherwise, of the above recommendation made us to interview some non-AG pastors. One of the respondents from RCCG maintained that through the enabling grace of God upon those who are called, combining secular work with pastoral ministry is not much a problem to him. In his words, “it is just a matter of knowing what to do at the right time (prioritized activity). The grace and mercy of God sustains those who trust in Him, and that has been the strength behind most of them on pastoral work”.

Another area that needs to be addressed in AG’s constitution is contained in Article XII section 7(3) of the constitution which states that those aspiring for relevant leadership positions, such as District Superintendent, Assistant District Superintendent, District Secretary or District Treasurer must possess a Degree from AG schools. This should be reviewed to make provision for those with first Degree from recognized higher institution of learning, like Universities and Polytechnics. The academic requirement should not be strictly restricted to AG degree, so that the pastors might explore avenues in various fields and disciplines to acquire relevant knowledge, to face the contemporary challenges of the pastoral work. Where this is done, the chances are that the educational levels of the pastors would be positively enhanced, making the church to be more relevant to the contemporary societal demand.

4. The remuneration policy of the church should be reviewed. What each pastor receives as salary should not be hinged on his church income because this has proven to be a factor responsible for the thriving of poverty among average AG’s pastors. The present policy does not demonstrate equity, fair play or treatment of the pastors by the leadership, hence it should be reviewed. To this end, we advocate graduated scale of salaries, which our research has indicated would boost the pastors’ commitment, and resultant expansion of the work of the church.

Simply put, what is being recommended in what is said above is that there should be a pulling or centralized system, whereby a reasonable percent of all money that is generated in each local church monthly would be sent to the national headquarters, from where the salaries of all pastors would be paid, based on graduated scale of salaries. Apart from the possibility of serving as an encouragement to pastors, irrespective of time of the year, and where they serve across the General Council, or in the foreign field, it would also assist in curbing the monster of politicking, unhealthy competition, financial frustration, transfer, and promotion problem among the pastors. The workability of this however, depends on all the pastors becoming mission minded, so that those who are in financially viable areas or churches might not think that their own parishes own the money, whereby they are not disposed to using same to propagate the Mission of the Lord, especially as it affects those non-viable places being pastured by others. As much as this method is working in a Church like Redeemed Christian Church of God, our conviction is that it can work as well in AG if its pastors imbibe the true sense of the Lord's Mission. This will be the case when they are ready to be sold to serving Him (God), and not their own bellies.

5. Assemblies of God should explore the avenues of relevant Christian festivals for growth and impact. To this end, there should be symbiotic inclusion of non-AG among the festivals' proceeds' beneficiaries. This will enhance the church's image, thereby making some of those who may be impacted through the process get converted and embrace its gospel message than what obtains at the moment.

6. The Church should use evangelism or missions strategies that will enhance the conversion of more indigenes to its fold in the State. Its serious evangelistic and missions' strategies should be reviewed in a way that would result in reaching the indigenes the more than what has been in the past, so as to have good percentage of them in the church. For instance, the indigenes who are already converted as members of the church should be encouraged to occupy vital positions in the church leadership. Equally, policies should be put in place reflecting the above, for it could serve as great impetus toward encouraging the indigenes. Added to the above, all the parishes within the state should be encouraged to interpret the sermon preached into the local language and where possible, the dialect of the particular environment where the parish is cited. This will go a

long way in converting the illiterate indigenes. The indigenes we are referring to in this context are the natives of the State, including other Yoruba people, bearing in mind that our work addresses issues as it applies to Ogun State.

The above recommendation is very necessary in view of our discovery on the composition of the membership in terms of which part of the country they came from. For instance, the report of Abeokuta District Secretary indicates that while the total membership enrolment is about 4641, only 5 percent of this are natives from the State and other tribes among the Yoruba people. In Ijebu District, of the 7788 total membership, the indigenes are less than 4%, while Sango District records the lowest, of about 2%.

7. AG local churches should be classified into categories, whereby those whose income are small should be pastored by the part-time pastors. This will increase the participation of the part-time pastors, and equally reduce the financial burden of the National headquarters. In the same vein, the leadership of the church should take drastic step towards curtailing the number of those to be allowed to go into full time pastoral work. It is high time this is done, so that the church might not keep breeding pastors full of frustration and bitterness that affect the members' spiritual life adversely, which result from the unfavourable remuneration policy.

8. The time for conducting the annual Easter Retreat programme should be reviewed. It is suggested that it should start a day earlier than when it usually commences and end before Easter Sunday, so that the economic hardship that faces the average AG's pastor during the Easter month might be overcome.

9. The church financial policy should be reviewed in a way to reduce the financial demands which is now terribly affecting the spiritual disposition of both the pastors and their members. Rather than making the scenario of church worship to be synonymous with fund raising almost at each service, the leaders should device other means of generating fund outside the church premises. Each section should, for instance, be encouraged to embark on lucrative ventures in their locality, and where a section is not so viable to do so, the national headquarters or district should give the needed financial assistance, even if it means that they would pay back on installment.

10. The church's mode of selecting its leaders through electioneering process has been proven to be a part of the reasons responsible for the problems facing both the pastors and their churches. This system of leadership selection should be changed. However, where it should be allowed to continue, those to participate should be streamlined, to reduce the number of participants, both those eligible to be voted for and the electorate. For instance, rather than subjecting the process of the choice of the National leaders to the participation of all the ordained pastors and two deacons from each set in order section, all of whom are of several thousands, it should be restricted to the participation of the District Superintendents, Area Supervisors and Chairmen, who are already well over hundred persons. This will reduce the unnecessary stress, politicking, campaigning and character assassination that characterize the system at present over the choice of leadership. Furthermore, it will result in the emergence of the chosen leaders on time, unlike the present method whose process lasts for days due to the participation of over five thousand ordained pastors and Deacons who constitute the eligible electorate.

The above recommendation does not disprove the importance or benefit of democratic process of choosing leaders. What is meant is that there should be an electoral college, whereby one who will be eligible to be voted for must have won the support of his District or zone. In that case, it means that his people have given him their mandate, which he will then use at the General Council in session, to represent them, either to contest or to vote for somebody that would be for the interest of the ministry. In that case, the electoral college, whose work starts from the grass root, would assist in bringing the number of participants at the General Council to the bearest minimum.

11. The church planting method employed by AG, whereby the church building is usually erected with planks and other inferior materials at the point of starting, is no longer relevant in the contemporary society. According to some of our respondents, this is partly responsible for why there is paucity of well to do citizens of each community wherever the church is sited in Ogun State. As much as one does not dispute the indispensable role of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of souls and church growth, it is equally true that a church is likely to do better when it backs up the presence of the Holy Spirit with befitting structure than when it does not take the issue of befitting structure as being important. The old, crude method of wanting to start a church with planks, which

does not permit the leadership to get financially involved in serious investment strategy during church planting would in most cases, as confirmed by our respondents, lead to converting only the poor, which has direct bearing with the church income, and resultantly on both the pastor's financial and spiritual life. On the other hand, the contemporary trend, in which the leaders would invest in church planting, would not only bring the gospel to the poor, but would also attract the interest of the rich. With this, the church would be able to reach both the rich and poor, which will make her to be able to impact all levels of the people in the State. This is very worthwhile because the gospel is not exclusively for either the poor or the rich, but for both the poor and the rich.

### **7.3 Contribution to knowledge**

The study has identified the problem of low wage for AG's pastors in Ogun State and its effects on the financial and spiritual lives of the pastors and on the Church development in general. Pastors are custodians of the Christian religious teachings, and as such, are obligated to model these teachings in the Society. This becomes imperative in their congregations so that their members might emulate them for the overall benefit of the society. However, they need an enabling and conducive working environment, especially in terms of finance, to be able to effectively exemplify the Christian truths. Where they are deprived of this, financial hardship may make those of them that lack personal strong will in decision making to be prone to unethical actions. Such unethical actions may include exploitation of the members, profiteering and commercialization of their sacred services, which could be inimical to the societal spiritual wellbeing. Therefore, pastors should be encouraged with conducive working conditions, both by their congregations and Church leaders, to enable them exemplify Christian moral teachings and become motivated for a more committed service to their Church.

### **7.4 Conclusion**

Assemblies of God in Ogun State and of course in Nigeria as a whole has the opportunity of increasing the impact generated by Christian festivals on its pastors where the above proffered suggestions are implemented. This will boost the church's expansion. It will also cause it and its pastoral stratum to be better impact oriented than what obtain at the moment.



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**APPENDIX A**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE**  
**DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**FACULTY OF ARTS**  
**UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN, IBADAN.**

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire aims at eliciting information for an Assessment of the impact of Christian festivals on pastors' financial and spiritual lives in Assemblies of God, Ogun State, Nigeria, 2009-2011.

Your sincere and objective response is highly required for this purely academic exercise. Your anonymity is fully guaranteed.

Thank you.

Oyeniran Charles

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## APPENDIX B

### Structured Interview Guide

1. What can you say about the level of interest of your church pastor(s) and members in the conduct of Christian festivals observed in AG?
2. On what moral premise do you consider as ground to justify the conduct of such festivals in AG?
3. Would you advocate that these festivals be discontinued in AG for any obvious reason(s)?
4. Assess the moral dispositions of AG pastors in general during the conduct of these festivals.
5. What is your own opinion on whether or not the pastors maximize the conduct of these festivals for generation of impact?
6. Are there ways in which the festivals benefit your parish's pastor?
7. Do you subscribe to the view that the conduct of these festivals affects the pastors' financial and spiritual lives, both positively and negatively?
8. What factor(s) do you consider responsible for any likely negative effects of these festivals on the pastors' financial and spiritual lives?
9. Are there ways in which these negative effects affect the spiritual wellbeing of the members?
10. What solution(s) would you suggest to curb such likely negative effects, increasing the impact of the festivals on both the pastors and members and sustain their relevance?

## APPENDIX C

### Remuneration scale for AG's pastors between 2004- 2011

The Basic to start from N1 – N10,000 to 40%

	Church income	Pastors' basic allowance
1.	10,000	4,000 then add 35% of what is over 10,000 to get the basic before taking 25% allowance.
2.	20,000	7,500 then add 30% of what is over 20,000 to get the basic allowance before taking 25% allowance.
3.	40,000	13,500 then add 25% of what is over 40,000 to get the basic allowance before taking 25% allowance.
4.	70,000	21,000 then add 15% of what is over 70,000 to get the basic allowance before taking 25% allowance.
5.	150,000	33,000 then add 8% of what is over 150,000 to get the basic allowance before taking 25% allowance.
6.	300,000	45,000 then add 5% of what is over 300,000 to get the basic allowance before taking 25% allowance.
7.	750,000	67,500 then add 3% of what is over 750,000 to get the basic allowance before taking 25% allowance.
8.	1,500,000	90,000 then add 2% of what is over 1,500,000 to get the basic allowance before taking 25% allowance.
9.	2,500,000	110,000 then add 1% of what is over 2,500,000 to get the basic allowance before taking 25% allowance.
10.	Above 2,500,00	Add 1% to get the basic taking 25% allowance.

**Note:** The 25% allowance is based on pastor's basic allowance, not on church income and this (overall other allowances).

## APPENDIX D

### Remuneration Scale For AG's Pastors From 2012

The basic to start from ₦1.00 – ₦ 10,000.00 - 40%

S/N	Church income	Pastors' basic allowance
1.	0 – 10,000.00	₦4,000.00 then add 35% of what is over ₦10,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
2.	20,000.00	₦10,000.00 then add 30% of what is over ₦20,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
3.	40,000.00	₦20,000.00 then add 25% of what is over ₦40,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
4.	70,000.00	₦35,000.00 then add 10% of what is over ₦70,000.00 to get the basic

		salary before taking 25% allowance.
5.	100,000.00	₦40,000.00 then add 10% of what is over ₦100,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
6.	150,000.00	₦55,000.00 then add 8% of what is over ₦150,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
7.	200,000.00	₦60,000.00 then add 6% of what is over ₦200,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
8.	300,000.00	₦70,000.00 then add 5% of what is over ₦300,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
9.	400,000.00	₦85,000.00 then add 4% of what is over ₦400,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
10.	500,000.00	₦90,000.00 then add 3% of what is over ₦500,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
11.	600,000.00	₦100,000.00 then add 2% of what is over ₦600,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
12.	700,000.00	₦120,000.00 then add 2% of what is over ₦700,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
13.	800,000.00	₦130,000.00 then add 2% of what is over ₦800,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
14.	900,000.00	₦150,000.00 then add 2% of what is over ₦900,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
15.	1,000,000.00	₦160,000.00 then add 2% of what is over ₦1,000,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
16.	1,500,000.00	₦180,000.00 then add 2% of what is over ₦1,500,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
17.	2,000,000.00	₦200,000.00 then add 2% of what is over ₦2,000,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
18.	2,500,000.00	₦230,000.00 then add 1% of what is over ₦2,500,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.

19.	3,000,000.00	₦250,000.00 then add 1% of what is over ₦3,000,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
20.	3,500,000.00	₦280,000.00 then add 1% of what is over ₦3,500,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
21.	4,000,000.00	₦320,000.00 then add 1% of what is over ₦4,000,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
22.	4,500,000.00	₦350,000.00 then add 1% of what is over ₦4,500,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
23.	5,000,000.00	₦380,000.00 then add 1% of what is over ₦5,000,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
24.	5,500,000.00	₦400,000.00 then add 1% of what is over ₦5,500,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
25.	6,000,000.00	₦450,000.00 then add 1% of what is over ₦6,000,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
26.	6,500,000.00	₦500,000.00 then add 1% of what is over ₦6,500,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
27.	7,000,000.00	₦550,000.00 then add 1% of what is over ₦7,000,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
28.	7,500,000.00	₦600,000.00 then add 1% of what is over ₦7,500,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
29.	8,000,000.00	₦650,000.00 then add 1% of what is over ₦8,000,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
30.	8,500,000.00	₦700,000.00 then add 1% of what is over ₦8,500,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
31.	9,000,000.00	₦750,000.00 then add 1% of what is over ₦9,000,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
32.	9,500,000.00	₦800,000.00 then add 1% of what is over ₦9,500,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
33.	10,000,000.00	₦850,000.00 then add 1% of what is over ₦10,000,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
34.	11,000,000.00	₦900,000.00 then add 1% of what is over ₦11,000,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
35.	12,000,000.00	₦950,000.00 then add 1% of what is over ₦12,000,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.

36.	13,000,000.00	₦1,000,000.00 then add 1% of what is over ₦13,000,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
37.	14,000,000.00	₦1,100,000.00 then add 1% of what is over ₦14,000,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
38.	15,000,000.00	₦1,180,000.00 then add 1% of what is over ₦15,000,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
39.	16,000,000.00	₦1,250,000.00 then add 1% of what is over ₦16,000,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
40.	17,000,000.00	₦1,300,000.00 then add 1% of what is over ₦17,000,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
41.	18,000,000.00	₦1,400,000.00 then add 1% of what is over ₦18,000,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
42.	19,000,000.00	₦1,450,000.00 then add 1% of what is over ₦19,000,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.
43.	20,000,000.00	₦1,500,000.00 then add 1% of what is over ₦20,000,000.00 to get the basic salary before taking 25% allowance.

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