

Essays

A Hermeneutic Analysis of Selected Yorùbá Pentecostal Songs¹

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Abstract

The Christianity that reached Africa, especially the sub-Saharan region, had undergone several stages of inculturation and re-organization. The changing social, political, and cultural situation of the people had a tremendous impact on the Christian religion. As Christianity moved through the intellectual and political worlds, especially among the Yorùbá people of southwestern Nigeria, it acquired new categories of thought. Yorùbá philosophical language began to be applied in expressing some of the mysteries of the Christian faith. This was particularly evident in the articulation of the theological language expressed through various Christian songs. Different types of songs collected during the worship among the selected African Indigenous Churches and those produced by some artists were analyzed through the lens of textual exegesis. This paper considered the impact of the emerging trend of diffusion of African philosophy, worldviews, and Christian theology in the selected Christian songs. This in turn revealed the dynamism or the emerging trends in African Christianity that authenticate the pluricultural nature of contemporary world Christianity. The work demonstrated that Christianity is an essential part of the identity of the Yorùbá people, which is best demonstrated in the folkloric expressions, especially songs.

Keywords: Christianity, Dynamism, Identity, Yorùbá, Philosophy, Songs.

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Introduction

It has also been pointed out that Pentecostalism has rapidly grown across the globe; and, because of its recent ascent into prominence, its theology, practices, and methods should be appraised critically (Martin, 2018). The changing social, political, and cultural situation of the people had a tremendous impact on the Christian religion. As Christianity moved through the intellectual and political worlds, especially among the Yorùbá people of southwestern Nigeria, it acquired new categories of thought. Yorùbá philosophical language began to be applied in expressing some of the mysteries of the Christian faith. The Yoruba people of South-Western Nigeria have been reconstructing songs from their indigenous backgrounds to play significant roles in Christian worship (Ajibade, 2007 and 2012, Eniolawun, 2016).

This was particularly evident in the articulation of the theological language expressed through various Christian songs, especially in the Yorùbá language. Language is obviously a vital tool. Not only is it a means of communicating thoughts and ideas, but it forges friendships, cultural ties, economic relationships, and socio-political ideologies (Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835), Edward Sapir (1884–1939) and Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897–1941)). Benjamin Whorf has noted that language shapes thoughts and emotions, determining one's perception of reality. John Stuart Mill said, "Language is the light of the mind." For the linguist Edward Sapir (1921), language is not only a vehicle for the expression of thoughts, perceptions, sentiments, and values characteristic of a community; it also represents a fundamental expression of social identity. Sapir (1921:158) said, "The mere fact of a common speech serves as a peculiar potent symbol of the social solidarity of those who speak the language." In short, language retention helps maintain feelings of cultural kinship. Language is a subtle and complex instrument used to communicate an incredible number of different things, but for our purposes here we can reduce the universe of communication to four basic categories: information, direction, emotion, and ceremony. The first two are often treated together because they express cognitive meaning while the latter two commonly express emotional meaning. A priest using ritual phrases may be communicating information about the religious ritual, invoking predicted emotional reactions in religious adherents, and directing them to begin the next stage of the ritual — all at once and with the same half dozen words. Ceremonial language cannot be understood literally, but neither can the literal meanings be ignored. Few would deny that music is a powerful force. It has the power to ignite emotions of romance, nostalgia, desire, joy, sorrow, and guilt, and been recognized by many people that it is a motivator to action.

It has been noted that in the 1980s and 1990s, contemporary Christian music played a significant role in Evangelical Christian worship (Reily and Dueck, 2016: 443 and Guest, 2007: 42). Likewise, a great array of musical styles has developed traditional praise (Kurian and Lampert, 2016: 629). Like any musical group or act, many Christian musical artists perform concerts in churches or as well as in Church-related venues such as programs organized by Christians. In many instances, it may be for pure entertainment; but also, on some occasions, they perform with the intention of evangelizing by bearing witness to their faith. It has been noted that songs are used to enshrine social and religious ideologies among members of any society whether indigenous or contemporary (Adedeji, 2000; Ayokunle et al. 2017; Faseun, 2008; Idamoyibo, 2007).

The Yorùbá Christian songs have an impact on the identity, consciousness, and understanding of congregations, artists, and people in their various communities. To many Christians, the text of songs that may have theological significance is for secondary consideration. Their emotional attachment to the lyrics of the songs is stronger than the interpretations given to the texts. It is clear in the praxes of many Christians among the Yorùbá people that the songs they sing shape their theology much more deeply than the sermons that they hear. Hence, the relationship between the faith of a community and its singing tradition is a complex one and equally fraught with emotion and cognition.

Vicki L. Brennan (2018) novel book on the Cherubim and Seraphim Church shows how singing the same song is a central part of the worship practice for members of the Cherubim and Seraphim Christian Church in Lagos, Nigeria. She also reveals that by singing together, church members create one spiritual mind and become unified around a shared set of values. She follows parishioners as they attend choir rehearsals, use musical media—hymn books and cassette tapes—and perform the music and rituals that connect them through religious experience. Brennan asserts that church members believe that singing together makes them part of a larger imagined social collective, one that allows them to achieve health, joy, happiness, wealth, and success in an ethical way. Brennan discovers how this Yorùbá church articulates and embodies the moral attitudes necessary to be a good Christian in Nigeria today.

Methodology

This paper considers the impact of the emerging trend of diffusion of African (Yorùbá) culture, philosophy, worldviews, and Christian theology in the selected Christian songs. Data for analysis included different types of songs collected during the worship among the selected African Indigenous Churches; the works of selected Christian artists collected, transcribed, and researched

using literary exegesis to discover their origin, as well as their modern usage and alteration. In addition, there were sessions of in-depth interviews with purposively selected church choir leaders and music artists to elicit information about the composition and sources of the songs they sing. The work seeks to demonstrate that Christianity is an essential part of the identity of the Yorùbá people, which is best demonstrated in the oral genres formed among the folks.

Research Questions

How do Christian songs shape the identity and theology of Christian communities among the Yorùbá of southwestern Nigeria? How does the identity and theology of a Christian community shape their songs? How vital is song in the construction of communal belonging and cultural memory in contemporary Yorùbá society? This article explores these questions from the point of view of the author's community-- the contemporary Yorùbá Christian community.

The research engages the study of Christian song texts among the Yorùbá of Southwestern Nigeria; and how they function in the field of practical theology and liturgy. It discusses how the themes and biblical interpretations of the Christian songs shape their faith and Christian actions.

It shows enculturation, as the process by which an individual learns the norms and values of a culture through unconscious repetition. It also shows acculturation as the cultural modification of an individual, group, or people because of prolonged contact with the people of other cultures.

Growth of Pentecostalism in Nigeria

Some scholars have documented the growth of Pentecostalism in Nigeria. It has been noted that an Anglican Church deacon formed a prayer group in 1910 while another prayer group known as the Precious Stone (Diamond) Society was formed in 1918 to heal influenza victims. The Eternal Sacred Order of the Cherubim and Seraphim Society founded in 1925. The Church of the Lord (*Aládúrà*—"praying people") founded in 1930. The Precious Stone (Diamond) Society group left the Anglican Church in the early 1920s and affiliated with Faith Tabernacle, a church based in Philadelphia (Anderson 2001: 80-82; Gaiya 2002: 5, 2004). Anderson stresses further that in 1930, Joseph Ayo Babalola of Faith Tabernacle led a revival that converted thousands. In 1932, his movement initiated ties with the Pentecostal Apostolic Church of Great Britain after coming into conflict with colonial authorities, but the association dissolved over the use of modern medicine. In 1941, Joseph Ayo Babalola founded the independent Christ Apostolic Church, which is estimated to have over a million members by 1990 (Anderson 2001: 86-87). Foreign

Pentecostal denomination known as Welsh Apostolic Church was founded in 1931 while The Assemblies of God was founded in 1939. The Celestial Church of Christ was founded in Africa by Samuel Oshoffa on 29 September 1947 in Porto-Novo, Benin, and was planted in the 1950s in western Nigeria rapidly expanded into northern Nigeria and became one of Africa's largest *Aladura* churches.

In 1952, a prominent member of the Eternal Sacred Order of Cherubim and Seraphim Society, Reverend Josiah Olufemi Akindayomi, founded the Redeemed Christian Church of God.

Enoch Adejare Adeboye succeeded him in 1981. The church, which was not well known prior to Adeboye's ascendance has grown phenomenally, to become Nigeria's biggest, with branches globally in about 190 countries, including more than 14,000 in Nigeria (Anderson 2001: 85; Murphy, March 25, 2006; Mahtani, April 26, 2005; Ojo 2004: 4). The Foursquare Gospel Church was founded in 1954.

A wave of Pentecostal expansion spawned new churches in the 1960s and 1970s. A leader of this expansion was the late Benson Idahosa, one of Africa's most influential Pentecostal preachers of his time. Idahosa established the Church of God Mission International in 1972. In 1974, Grace of God Ministry was founded in Eastern Nigeria. The Deeper Life Bible Church was founded in 1975, and soon became one of Nigeria's largest neo-Pentecostal churches, with an estimated 350,000 members by 1993 (Ojo 2004: 3; Olupona 2003: 16; Gaiya 2002: 15). In 1986, David Oyedepo founded Living Faith Outreach Worldwide, popularly known as "Winners' Chapel." It opened a "Faith Tabernacle" in the suburbs of Lagos in 1999 that seats 50,000 people (Phillips, Nov. 30, 1999; Ojo 2004: 4). Today, we have more than 500 Christian denominations in Nigeria.

Analysis

The Yorùbá Christians and the Construction of God in their Songs

The features of Yorùbá deities or divinities are merged with that of Yahweh or God as seen in the bible. For example, in "Àṣe Májèmú" by the C&S, in praising God, they sang thus:

Olórùn tí ñ tojú aláṣejù bomi gbígbóná-The God who puts the eyes of aláṣejù inside hot water.

Èbè ni mo bè o, e má pa kádàrà mi dà-I am pleading, do not change my destiny.

The powerful Praise movement also sang thus in one of their songs:

<i>Olówó-gbogboro-</i>	The-one-with-an extremely-long-hand
<i>Olójú-káriayé-</i>	The-one-whose-eyes-sees-the-whole-world
<i>Elétí-gbòrògòdò-</i>	The-one-with-an-extremely-big-ear
<i>A-rú-bí-iná-</i>	The-one-who-appears-like-fire.
<i>Iná lójú-</i>	Fire in the eyes
<i>Iná yeyé lójú-</i>	Glowing fire in the eyes
<i>Aláhòn-iná-</i>	The-one-with-fire-in-the-tongue
<i>Iná yeyé lènu-</i>	Fire in the mouth
<i>Tùnimú-</i>	Emitting smoke from the nostrils
<i>Tù lènu-</i>	Emitting smoke from the mouth
<i>Eléémín èéfín-</i>	The one who breaths smoke

Of particular importance is the ability of Sàngó to regularly spit out smoke and fire from his mouth. This probably stems from his herbal and metaphysical knowledge, which enables him to strike his enemies with thunderbolts. Sàngó's magical power and association with fire are very well encapsulated in the following lines of his *oriki*:

<i>Iná lójú, iná lènu-</i>	He who spits out fire in his mouth and eyes;
<i>A-gbéná-jó</i>	He who dangles a touch of fire while dancing,
<i>A-gbéná-yan</i>	He who also dangles a touch of fire while walking leisurely;
<i>Iná lórùlée páànù</i>	One who have fire on his roofing sheet.
<i>Kèù, bí iná jò láàrò</i>	One who ignites fire as if fire is burning at the cooking stand
<i>Èéfín là n dá láyé</i>	It is mere smoke that we ignite here on earth
<i>Iná n bẹ lódò ọkọ mi lọrun</i>	The real fire abides with my lord in the in visible world
<i>Fẹrẹ-bí-iná-jò-láàlà</i>	Swiftly spread like a glowing fire in the farm boundary
<i>Akọ iná-tíí-bódòò-rìn-pò</i>	The tough fire that burns in the river
<i>Jésù-</i>	Jesus
<i>Olùgbàlà-</i>	The Savior
<i>Olùlànà-</i>	The Pathmaker
<i>Olùyèná-</i>	The Path clearer
<i>Olúmọ̀nà-</i>	The Path knower
<i>Sónsò-orí-abéré-tí-ò-ṣe-gbámú-</i>	The-pointing-edge-

*Ọba Adìgbónún-
Ọba Ajàníbí-ó-wù-í-*

of-a-needle-that-cannot-be-held.
The King who folds arms.
The King who fights wherever
likes.

No wonder Dada (2009:45) succinctly noted, “people’s culture rooted in their past and present experiences cannot be ignored in the search for self-reliance and development”. One of the songs rendered by Adebayo, a prominent music artist in C&S goes thus:

*Ọlórún mímọ́, Ọlórún mímọ́
Ọlórún mímọ́, Ọlórún funfun
Ọlórún bàbá, Ọlórún Èlà
Ó nínú funfun
Ó níwà funfun
Èdùmàrè rere la ó máapè é*

A holy Lord, a holy Lord
A holy Lord, a white Lord
Lord of Father, Lord of Èlà
He has white (clean) mind
He has a white (clean) character
We shall be calling him good
Edumare

Ó fìyùn sọwọ́ ọmọrẹ̀ òsì

He puts choral beads on the right
wrist of his child

Gòólù sọwọ́ ọmọ̀ rẹ̀ ọ̀tún

He puts gold on the left wrist of
his child.

The song above reveals the Yorùbá Christians’ understanding of Jesus Christ by equating him with Èlà, a prominent deity among them who has been in existence prior the advent of Christianity. To the Yorùbá people, Èlà is GOD himself if one understands the sublime wisdom in IFA corpus, where historical information about creation was made manifest. According to the corpus, Èlà is GOD. This is because Èlà was spoken word in the chaotic void, which brought forth the LIFE. Èlà is the Ọ̀rọ̀ that connects humanity to GOD. Èlà is that invisible energy that moves between the oracle and Ọ̀rúnmilà, and between Orí and Olódùmarè – the umbilical cord. Èlà is Ọ̀rọ̀ after it hits the primordial abyss. Ọ̀rọ̀, as primordial matter, has an innate urge to communicate. Èlà is the manifestation of the primal urge to communicate. It is the link between human and God; human and human; and human and the universe. Èlà (the Spirit of Purity) functions in the Ifá divination complex as the embodiment of *ọgbón* (wisdom), *imọ* (knowledge), and *ọ̀yẹ* (understanding). Èlà is the recognized authoritative source of communication and explanation of the nature of Olódùmarè and all creation (Abiodun, 2014). Èlà is that one who connects the human inner self in the visible plane with his or her higher self (*ìpònrí*) on the invisible plane.

In the songs, singers combined Yorùbá deities' attributes to eulogize Christian God, including Èsù, Oya, Sàngó, Ògún, and Èlà. The translational equivalents of the attributes of Yorùbá deities and their names may not fit into the biblical saints very well because of differences in culture and cosmogony, but they essentially convey critical theological and philosophical worldviews from which religious insights can be gained. One can say that there is a new self-awakening among the contemporary Yorùbá Christians that there is the need to understand and unlock the mysteries in the once demonized Yorùbá traditions by the Westerners. This is in consonance with the position of (Igbonin, 2014:196) that:

There is the possibility that if one understands another's religious traditions one can unpack and unlock the mysteries of one's traditions without compromising the latter. We also recognize as a caveat too to that possibility, that if not soundly handled it can yield unwarranted results, namely either undermining one's traditions or supererogating them over another's.

Although Olódùmarè is omnipotent, he has a retinue of responsible ministers, called the divinities who are saddled with almost absolute powers with which to carry out their various duties and assignments (Igbonin, 2014). The imaginations of these ministers of Olódùmarè by the Yorùbá Christians are thus transferred to God of the Christian faith.

Similarly, Bola Are, a notable singer of one of the most prominent AICs sang thus while praising Olódùmarè in her album titled "*Olórun Èrùjèjè*":

*Olórun mi o-
Àwàwàńwówó Olódùmarè
Àrá tó sán ní òrun
Àrá wàá, Àrá wòóó*

*Ò-bénìkan-jà-towó-bo-
gbogbo-ilé-lójú
Mànámáná ojú òrun
Ògbàmù-gbámú-oju-òrun-
kò-séé-gbámú
Adé iná ladé è re
Tóótó òba-*

My Lord!
A gigantic Almighty God
The thunder that strikes in the sky
The thunder that strikes here and there
The one who fights a single person and attacks all household members
The lightning in the sky
The one who holds, (hands) cannot hold the sky
Your crown is a crown of fire.
Homage to the king

Creative power and imagination are increasingly becoming a form of knowledge production that is germane to opposing ideological bewilderment. The authors of knowledge creation, either in poetic, prosaic, or dramatic forms

reveal that contemporary social, cultural, and political conditions necessitate a modification of the imaginative functions of an art. The attributes ascribed to God in the above song are a combination of attributes that the Yorùbá people ascribed to certain deities in their society. *Ẓàngó*, the god of lightning and thunder is known to be associated with lightning and thunder while *Èṣù*, the Yorùbá trick deity is usually praised as the one who fights a single person and attacks all household members. The above attributes of the Yorùbá deities have been imported into the Christian songs.

Dancing away Sorrow: Bodily Exercise in Performing Spiritual Songs

While rendering some songs, the Yorùbá Christians in contemporary society have some dancing styles. In the recent past, most of these dancing styles were condemned and regarded as unscriptural but they are accepted today. Regarded as worldly in the past because some of these dancing styles have their origin in many of the classical songs in the society while some are traceable to some Yorùbá deities.

Prior to the advent of Christianity in Nigeria communities, there were several traditional religious cults, and each cult had its own rituals, music, oral literature, and dances through which such a Deity was worshipped. Each traditional Deity has specific musical ensembles that accompany the orature that is used during the worship. For example, the *Bátá* drum is used for *Ẓàngó* and *Dùndùn* is used for *Egúngún* among the Yorùbá (Adeoye, 1979: 123-127. As technology and Christianity were the two main arms of colonialism in Africa, which was seen as a dark continent that needed to be illuminated with European culture, early ethnologists and linguists stifled African oral literature by presenting texts that matched Christian ethics. The scholars and researchers at that period “took the liberty to edit the texts to get rid of materials they considered ‘unclean’ by European standards” (Okpewho, Isidore, 1992: 8-9). The missionaries frowned at music that was voluptuous and effeminate. In practice, this indicates that aspects of traditional literature (culture in a broader sense) that the missionaries had deemed as being backward, archaic, noxious, and unclean had to be abolished. That was the situation during the colonial period. At that time, the mission churches were forbidding the use of Yorùbá traditional orature in their worship and services. The foreign missionaries declared most of these oral pieces of literature of the people demonic and unholy in the worship of their God. Not all the musical ensembles that the people were using for the worship of their Deities were allowed in the church.

The ordination of Bishop Ajayi Crowther (the first African Bishop) marked a turning point in the history of Christianity in the African continent, which in part connotes that blackness is not a trait of inferiority and uncleanness. Later,

there was evidence of cravings for the *indigenization* of Christianity in Africa that resulted in the breaking away of many people from the mission churches, and the formation of AICs. Many of these AICs could be regarded as the propagandists of this tradition. However, there is a great deal of overlap of theology and practice between AICs and the mission churches, especially among the Yorùbá people as reflected in their music. Besides the use of a hymnbook, they also sing choruses and different types of songs composed in Yorùbá language. These choruses sung in many different denominations and formed part of a common Christian culture that crosses denominational boundaries and the boundaries between the AICs and the mission churches.

The Catholics, Protestants, and new religious movements are using various Yorùbá traditional musical ensembles in their services, worships, and entertainment showing that there is no total departure from the traditional practices. The Yorùbá traditions form the root of most of their practices. There is adaptation of the Christian religion to the cultural values of Yorùbá making it more appealing and giving the natives a sense of belonging in the religious practices. Many of their worship songs take after traditional songs and religious literature. For example, *ìjálá*, which is the genre of *Ògún* worshippers, *ìyèrè*, that is the tonal poetry of Ifá, *ẹ̀sà* that is the literature of Masqueraders, and *ràrà*, which is the tonal poetry of *Sàngó* are now adapted either to praise God or as songs of praises in their worships.

While writing about the Yorùbá people in contemporary society Eades, (1980: 105) proves that the new religious movements share organizational similarities with the old cults, and cultural rites of passage have been adapted to fit the new beliefs largely. Many contemporary Christian singers in Nigerian communities now make use of indigenous languages and traditional songs in their compositions. There are three basic reasons for this practice, one, and the resilience of their traditional practices die hard, and the other reason is that they must make their songs acceptable to the local people by using their orature that they are familiar. The third reason is that most of these singers who are members of the Indigenous New Christian Religious Movements (IN-CRMs) are in one way or the other contributing to shifting the focus of the centre of Christianity from the Western to the non-Western world by contextualisation. Most of them even claim that they are independent of foreign origin or control in organization, administration, liturgy, and doctrine most especially the NCRMs that are mainly of African origin. Hence, they are given various appellations that show their '*Africaness*'.²

2 There are two categories of the new Christian religious movements. The first group are those that prevaricated from the existing mission-oriented churches. The second group are those that were founded by charismatic individuals independent of any mother church. In any case they are given names such as African Indigenous Church, African Initiated

Though the indigenization of Christianity is common among the NCRMs, the mission churches are also contributing to it in one form or the other, especially through songs.

Following the drastically liberal outlook that the new Pentecostal movement has assumed, there has been a marked shift of the doctrinal emphasis from “holy living” to earthly mastery of the prosperity formula. Most programs by many churches, messages, and Songs are now constructed and fashioned to teach the prosperity principle without teaching the stewardship concept, which directs prosperity solely to divinely established objectives. The main reason for this shift traced to finding a solution to economic hardships and challenges that many people are facing, to sustain their members.

Wò mí ná, bí mo ẹ̀ n fẹ̀gbé yin baba-Just look at me the way I am using my side to praise father.

Wò mí ná, bí mo ẹ̀ n fẹ̀gbé yin Jésù- Look at me the way I am using my side to praise Jesus.

Orúkọ Jésù láyé mi ó dùn joyin lọ-The name of Jesus is sweeter than honey in my mouth.

To justify different kinds of dances they sing:

Ijó tí mo jó, ijó àdúrà-

The dance I am dancing is a prayer dance.

Jésù má jé n sòdí wùkẹ̀ níwájú Ifá-

Jesus don't let me shake my buttock in front of Ifá

OR

When the spirit of the Lord is upon my soul

I will dance as David dance/2x

I will dance/2x

I will dance as David dance.

Although no specifications were made regarding the Christian dancing style(s), moderacy and decency are being advocated as the dancing ethical codes among Christians. Truly, the contemporary Christians were not there

Church, and many other derogatory and obnoxious names either by the public or the mission churches that see the NCRMs as schismatic, separatist, or spiritism. For more on nomenclature and classification of the AICs, see (Hayes, 1992 and 2000), Turner, (1979).

when David was dancing and this has given room for many to engage in Different types of the so-called worldly dance like *Şòkí* (formed by a popular musician in Nigeria), and *Şàkùşàkù* (formed by Olamide Gbenga Adedeji, another pop musician), and *Àlùjò* (coined by Yinka Ayéfélé), among others. It is clearly evident that even though the above-mentioned dancing styles are regarded as worldly, they are permitted in the church as one of the pulling factors for the youths into the church in contemporary society.

Gospel of Prosperity and Materialism in a Globalized Community

Christian prayer songs are used to circulate the prosperity gospel among Yorùbá Pentecostals in Nigeria. Yorùbá Pentecostals, in addition to diverse biblical engagements on prosperity themes, have always creatively employed Christian prayer songs in their hermeneutics of prosperity gospel within their cultural praxis (Ajose, 2020). The business of “churching” has become so fertile that almost every street or close hosts as many as three churches in southwestern Nigeria. The many denominations and congregations spawned by these movements remove the importance of God’s Grace in personal salvation and promote personal works and spiritual perfection as the key to Heaven, or to abundant blessings. The Bible is reduced from a collection of works that once helped man understand God and His principles to a mysterious manual that must be interpreted continually by a minister with “revelation” knowledge as if one were reading “tarot” cards.

This often creates anxiety and low self-esteem in the individual as the inference is made almost continuously that they aren’t good enough, or that they’ll never prosper if they don’t obey the continual flow of new mandates and “revelations” by their spiritual leader. Many completely divorce themselves from independent thought and become emotionally dependent on these “leaders” -- sometimes being unable to function socially without ministerial advice. Often, these dictatorial ministers take advantage of their followers, “swindling” them frequently of their hard-earned wages for their own selfish purposes. The most important fault within the entire movement is the religious power and authority most of these denominations and congregations instill within the local pastor-- something that is pandemic within both Pentecostalism and its spiritual descendent, the charismatic movement.

This unchecked authority can and does corrupt many people who feel called into Pentecostal/Charismatic ministries. Church money is used for personal gain, people are abused and controlled by tactics intended to create obedience and loyalty to the pastor, bible passages are contorted to bend to the pastor’s personal opinions -- and to preserve his wealth and authority, and those that question or stand up to such abuses can sometimes face public humiliation from the pulpit, or even be “excommunicated” -- which can be quite

stressful to someone who still accepts the core doctrines.”God made man; man made money; money made man.” That is an age-long saying that articulates the negative influence of crass materialism on the sublime values of humanity. Significantly, this saying holds true in the secular world as it does in the religious community comprised of churches and mosques, among others, values ordinarily be expected to be dominantly influenced spiritually. Without a doubt, money is indispensable and vitally important for organic existence entailing the growth process.

Many Christians wrongly quote the scripture, saying that money is the vehicle of evangelism. This is not what the scripture says. The scripture says money answers all things. Contemporary trends in the church have raised a big question on whether money (by itself) can be separated from the love of money which the Christian scripture says is “the root of all evil.”

Scholars have argued that the contemporary wave of Pentecostalism in Nigeria is so nauseatingly materialistic in form and content that only a very thin line of distinction is left between churches and business enterprises. By contemporary trends, the gospel ministry is for many Pentecostal pastors’ now big money and big hype.

One more hallmark of the new Pentecostalism is the advent of truly anointed clergymen, who opted for flamboyant lifestyles to prove the point of the compatibility of godliness and prosperity. Not that such a lifestyle detracted from the divine unction and authenticity of God’s calling upon their lives. To show that money can be a useful tool for Christendom and prosperity a compatibility with a godly complement would seem to be the driving motive of the new wave of Pentecostalism that has anchored the entire gospel message on the prosperity doctrine. There are now gospel ministers who ride in convoys and move more impressive and flashy than a state governor.

Many Christians in contemporary society do not compose songs that really reflect the Christian creeds and ethics. More often, Christian musicians sing for commercial purposes and to excite the senses. They compose many songs to appeal to the masses, especially in this era of material prosperity that looms over the society as resilience of colonial imperialism. Many songs fall into this category as shall be seen below.

<i>Gbóri mi sòkè-</i>	Lift my head up,
<i>Gbé mi òdè-</i>	Promote me,
<i>Fà mí lówó sokè-</i>	Lift my hands up,
<i>Kí n ga ju ayé lọ-</i>	Lift me up more than the world,
<i>Ògo ayé mi, jé kó yo jáde-</i>	Let my life’s glory burst out,
<i>Tètè se é o Jèsù-</i>	Jesus, do it quickly
<i>Má mà jé kó pé-</i>	Don’t let it be delayed.

This is one of the songs of prayers that reveal the outbursts of Christian's hearts towards material possession. They opine that it is God who can prosper them; that is why they urge God in their song to prosper them quickly. Orí (head) mentioned in the first line of the song has to do with the Yorùbá idea of the personal head as crucial in the vitality of a person in the world. Johnson Samuel (1976: 27) affirms the importance of the head in Yorùbá philosophy:

The orí (head) is the universal household deity worshipped by both sexes as the god of fate. It is believed that good or ill fortune attends one, according to the will or decree of this god; and hence it is propitiated in order that good luck might be the share of its votary.

Praying through song that God should lift their heads is not out of place since they are Yorùbá because it is a clear manifestation of the Yorùbá belief in the significance of one's personal head. In a similar vein, they sing another song as seen below to show that people become prosperous when helped and supported by other people, such people can in turn fly their own kite. Hence, they believe that it is Jesus alone that blesses without gasconading. Craving for money and material possessions forms one of their gospel messages that emanates in their preaching and music. The songs below were sung at the naming ceremony of a member of Gospel Faith Mission, a brand of the NCRMs in Ile-Ife in 2000. The Minister who preached on that day raised songs which was echoed by the people who were in attendance.

<i>Ọlórún ò mo fowó òlá-</i>	Oh God I want big money/2x,
<i>Ọlórún ò mo fowó dólá rẹpẹṭẹ-</i>	Oh God, I want plenty Dollars.
<i>Pound sterling, owó dólà</i>	We will spend pound sterling and
<i>a jọ máa ná an ni-</i>	dollar together.
<i>Bìlìọ̀nù, Mìlìọ̀nù a jọ máa ná an ni-</i>	We will spend billions and millions
	together.
<i>Òsì ò yẹmí Ọlórún ayò o-</i>	poverty does not fit me oh God of
	joy,
<i>Òsì ò yẹmí Ọlórún ayò o -</i>	poverty does not fit me oh God of
	joy,
<i>Şe rántí pé àwò tó o fún mí kíí şe tìyà-</i>	remember that you did not give me
	poverty colour,
<i>Òsì ò yẹmí Ọlórún ayò-</i>	poverty does not fit me oh God of
	joy.

One might be surprised to hear song like the first one from the Christian Ministers who are to lead their flocks to live a life of contentment. They have different interpretation of the biblical injunction that says:

Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.³

As a matter of fact, if a survey were to be taken maybe, high as three quarters of the programs, messages, and songs in most of the new wave churches are inspirational and material prosperity oriented. The prevailing culture of affluence seems to be putting some church members under pressure to meet up; and this in turns put some people into trouble of negating some ethical principles in the scriptures.

Spiritual Warfare/Religious Contestation and Power Confrontation

Although the term spiritual warfare doesn't occur in the Bible but the most used to justify spiritual warfare are the following:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:12)

Through You we will push back our adversaries, through Your name we will trample down those who revolt against us. (Psalm 44:5)

For You have girded me with strength for battle; You have subdued under me those who revolted against me (Psalm 18:39)

These scriptures are commonly used to convey the idea that Christians should be actively attacking the enemy. Unfortunately, many Christians get on the wrong track in attempting to fight in the spiritual world. While we can gather scriptures to make a concept for spiritual warfare, it is very important to see the limitations of that concept. While it is true that we do have an

3 I Timothy 6: 6-10, *Holy Bible*, New International Version, Bangkok: International Bible Society, Pp 841.

unseen enemy who actively works against us, we need to understand several important truths about the conflict between the Godly realm and the evil one.

Many Christians seem defeated and feel the enemy's power more than they do God's. They perceive their lives as a life and death battle between good and evil, and live in fear that the enemy will harm them or their families. In many situations some of their songs show that they are looking around for an enemy to fight. One of such songs goes thus:

<i>Jé n gbélé gbó, Olúwa jé n gbélé gbó-</i>	Let the news come to me in the house, Lord.
<i>Àwọn kan n bẹ, tí wọn n ni mí lára-</i>	There are some who are victimizing me.
<i>Wọn fẹ pa kádàrá dà-</i>	They want to change my destiny.
<i>Wọn fẹ yẹ iṣé rẹ wò-</i>	They want to question your handiwork.
<i>Jé n gbélé gbó</i>	Let the news come to me in the house.
<i>Bí wọn ẹe fowó ara wọn ẹera wọn-</i>	As they are harming themselves by themselves.

There are many other songs that the Yorùbá Christians sing to portray spiritual warfare, religious contestation, and power confrontation. Let us examine these examples below.

<i>Oṣò tó lóun ó pa mi iró nlá-</i>	Wizard who wants to kill me, it is a big lie.
<i>Àjé tó lóun ó pa mi iró nlá-</i>	Witch who wants to kill me, it is a big lie.
<i>Oniṣẹ̀gùn tó lóun ó pa mi iró nlá-</i>	Native doctor who wants to kill me, it is a big lie.
<i>Adáhunṣe tó lóun ó pa mi iró nlá-</i>	Conjurer who wants to kill me, it is a big lie.
<i>Olókò ilẹ̀, fún un lókò ilẹ̀ wò o Jẹ̀sù/2x</i>	Jesus, the owner of underground car let the person board underground car.
<i>Olubi èniyàn, aṣebi èniyàn- Tó fẹ̀ pa mi tógotògo-</i>	Evil person, an evildoer Who wants to destroy me with my glory.
<i>Olókò ilẹ̀, fún un lókò ilẹ̀ wò</i>	The owner of underground car let the person board underground car

<i>Ijà nílá la ó fòní jà/2x- Oṣó ilé, ẹ múra ogun-</i>	Today is for a great fight/2x. House wizards, go and prepare for war.
<i>Àjé ilé, ẹ múra ogun-</i>	House witches, go and prepare for war.
<i>Emèrè ilé, ẹ múra ogun-</i>	Emere in the house, go and prepare for war.
<i>Jésù lolóri ogun-</i>	Jesus is the captain of the battle/ war.
<i>Ó n bẹ léyìn mi- Ení bá fowọ padà ogún, a bógun ọ-</i>	He is sordidly behind me Anyone who tampers with war sword will perish in the battlefront.
<i>Àwọn aföyàyà bayé ẹni jé-</i>	Those who use enthusiasm to destroy one's life.
<i>Àwọn afikúnlẹ-gbogo-ẹni-sonù-</i>	Those who use kneeling to rob one's glory.
<i>Jésù Olùgbàlà, gbà mí ọwọ wọn-</i>	Jesus the Savior, deliver me from them.
<i>Olúwa, bá mi lùyá àgbà pa/2x</i>	Lord, help me beat the old woman unto death/2x.
<i>Ìyá àgbà tó rẹran nilẹ tó fẹ pọmọ/2x</i>	The old woman who sees a goat and it is my child wants to kill
<i>Olúwa bá mi lùyá àgbà pa.</i>	Lord, help me beat the old woman to death.
<i>Àkànmólẹ ní tẹ̀ẹkan</i>	Raft is totally driven into the ground.
<i>Àgbáwolẹ ní tèsó Ọtá tó bá n dènà ayọ mi -</i>	Nail is totally driven into the wood. Enemies who are blocking my joy.
<i>Jésù bá mi mú un so</i>	Jesus, bind them for me.

Reference made to witches and wizards in many of the above songs is a manifestation of the social reality of many Yorùbá Christians. Among the Yorùbá, old women are generally regarded as witches. They are always depicted with euphemisms such as *iyá àgbà* (elderly woman), *iyàmi Òsòròngà* (My powerful mother), *ayé* (the world) and *eníyán* (Literally, pounded yam seller)

The Yorùbá believe that the witches are females who derive their powers from the Supreme God-Olódùmarè. Not only this, the Yorùbá believe that witches are the major causes of misfortunes, illness, poverty, bareness, impotence in men and untimely death among others. It is also believed that some witches use their witchcraft to protect their children and husbands, although this type is believed to be very small in number.

The fear of witchcraft is not only a disturbing phenomenon but also a threat to family and social harmony which most contemporary African societies have been keeping up with (Ogungbemi, 1992:1). Despite Western education, industrialization, modernization, and domesticated religions, the belief in this dynamic force refuses to die. The Cherubim and Seraphim, for example, sought “a re-rapprochement with African worldviews” about existential recognition of witchcraft and malevolent forces as causes of sickness and misfortune. It provides relief to daily occurrences of evil by spiritual media of revelation, fasting, and prayer, and faith healing (Olaniyi 2016: 26). This in consonance with the view of Ogungbemi (1992:5) that:

Today, priests and priestesses, both Christians and Muslims have been involved in dealing with witchcraft. Instead of eradicating witchcraft, churches and mosques have exploited the belief and have been making money in leaps and bounds. Today in Yorùbáland most of the charismatic churches are increasing because their converts want an abode of refuge from the fear and power of witchcraft.

The Yorùbá Christians, recognizing the powers of the witches and wizards in their imaginations, regardless of their new religious experience resort to appealing to the God of their new religion to see it through the Yorùbá cultural lens to successfully handle their cases for them.

To the Yorùbá, the wizards (osó) are mainly men, and they use charms, medicine, magic, and the power of covenant (ìmùlè) to inflict, afflict or kill their victims.

Àwọn tó ñ ni mí lára bàbá Father, those who are victimizing me.
Ní wọn lára o Victimize them.

Àwọn tó ñ ni mí lára bàbá Father, those who are victimizing me.
Ni wọn lára o Victimize them.

Kétékété taa ni mo gbé? Whose oxen have I stolen?
Abo àgùntàn taa ni mogbà? Whose sheep have I snatched?
Taa leni nàà tó ñ yọ mi lènu? Who is that person that is troubling me?
Ogun òrun a yo wón lènu Hosts of heaven will trouble them.

Many Christians have a great imbalance in their lives when it comes to the issue of spiritual warfare. They give Satan more thought than God honor, and tend to be paranoid, watching their backs, thinking they are always under attack, so much so, that there is more emphasis put on spiritual warfare than emphasis placed on worshiping and honoring and celebrating God with a joyous and peaceful lifestyle.

The difference between deliverance and spiritual warfare is that deliverance is dealing with demonic bondages, and getting a person set free, whereas spiritual warfare is resisting, overcoming, and defeating the enemy's lies (in the form of deception, temptations, and accusations) that he sends peoples' ways. Deliverance involves the breaking up of legal grounds, the tearing down of strongholds (offensive spiritual warfare), and the casting out of demons. Spiritual warfare, on the other hand, is dealing with three key things the enemy sends at us: temptations, deception, and accusations.

The consequence of this is that many professing born-again Christians are in reality not disciples of the Christian lifestyle but are merely sign-seekers with an ephemeral commitment to the faith they profess.

Performing Yorùbá Culture in Christian Songs

In almost all societies, a people's belief and philosophy constitute their system of thought, perceptions, and imaginations. These have always served as the basis for their attitudes and actions towards life. These attitudes, wishes, and imagination often conveyed in a people's system of verbal communication, be it oral or written. The traditional Yorùbá are associated with various beliefs about the concepts of Orí and Human destiny across different strata of human existence. There is a well-developed body of literature in Yorùbá philosophical studies, which have dealt with the concepts of orí and human destiny. Such works as Wande Abimbola, "The Yorùbá Concept of Human Personality" (1971), Olusegun Gbadegesin, "Destiny, Personality and the Ultimate Reality of Human Existence: A Yorùbá perspective" (1983), M.A. Makinde, "A Philosophical Analysis of the Yorùbá Concept of Ori and Human Destiny" (1985), O. Oladipo, "Predestination in Yorùbá Thought: A Philosopher's Interpretation" (1992), S.A. Ali, "The Yorùbá Conception of Destiny: A critical analysis (1995), E. O. Oduwole, "The Yorùbá concepts of Orí and Human Destiny: A Fatalistic Interpretation" (1996). The spiritual head is thought to be responsible for human destiny. Orí is regarded as the element responsible for a person's personality and it represents human destiny. Orí, an immaterial entity (inner head) is mulishly associated with human destiny. It is responsible for the actuality and worth of man in the material world.

<i>Orù mi o má mà gbà ibòdè láàrin egbé</i>	My head, never support your enemy among your peers
<i>Orù mi o má mà gbà ibòdè láàrin òpò èniyàn</i>	My head, never support your enemy among multitude
<i>Èlédàá mi o má mà gbà ibòdè</i>	My head, never support your enemy.
<i>Orí mi o lọ bésè mi sòrò-</i>	My inner head go and speak to my leg.
<i>Èsè mi o lọ borí mi sèpádé-</i>	My legs, go and hold meeting with my head.
<i>Ibikíbi tíre mi wà, e gbé wa fún mi-</i>	Bring my success to me wherever it is located.
<i>Ọba tó ń darí afẹ́fẹ́/2x-</i>	The king who controls the wind.
<i>Wá darí ayò mi síbí tí mo wà-</i>	Direct my joy to where I am.
<i>Ọba tó ń darí afẹ́fẹ́/2x-</i>	The king who controls the wind.

Below are a few examples of the poetry that they have created in the form of incantations (*Àyájò*):

(a) <i>Yíyọ yíyọ làá bójó – Yíyọ yíyọ làá bósù-</i>	The day cannot but show forth the moon cannot but spring forth.
(b) <i>Àfàìlà ọjọ-</i> <i>Bójó bálà màá là-</i>	unless the day does not shine (Twice) if the day shines, I will shine (Twice)
(c) <i>Ó dá mi lójú – Béyin bá forí sọ àpáta- Ọjó ikú rẹ ló pé-</i>	I am convinced If an egg hits the rock. Its day of death has come.
(d) <i>Eni tó bá rokú ròmí – Á fọmọrọ pò – Èniyàn ò lèrò kú ròmí- Kó mú un jẹgbé o-</i>	Anyone thinking that I will die His/her child will die instead of me No one can plan death for me. And get away with it.
(e) <i>Báyé gbógun dé- N ó to bábá lọ- Ma rìn ma yan bí ọba-</i>	if the world brings their problem I will go to the father I will walk majestically like a king.

Béníyán dítẹ ma sùré pe Jésù-

When people conspire, I will call
on Jesus.

Ma rìn ma yan bí ọba-

Àtigi àtòpẹ¹⁵tóni kéréin¹⁶ má wọdò-

I will walk majestically like a king,
both the trees and the palm trees
saying that the elephant will not get
to the river,

Erin ní ó ẹẹ wón ló ẹẹ láyé-

the elephant will destroy them in
this world,

Mé ra dẹyìn léyìn Jésù-

I will never go back from
following Jesus.

The above Christian songs show the kind of orientations that the Yorùbá converts have and the effect of the residual philosophy of their former religious and cultural practices. In essence, there is no total departure from their indigenous religious thought and beliefs. They make use of nature (in their cosmogony) in their prayers, which is a prominent attribute of the Yorùbá incantations. One basic feature that reveals an affinity and continuity between Aladura (white garment church) and Yorùbá cosmologies is the belief in spiritual forces (Adogame, 2004: 503). The Yorùbá imagination of enemies (*òtá*) and sadistic spirits (*ajogun*) is also present in their songs as said above. Two reasons could be accountable for this. One, it could be a way to make the new religion attractive to the masses since everyone would like to overcome his or her enemies to succeed in life. Two, it could be that the residual knowledge of nature they had already possessed is manifesting in their new religion since it is a complement to their desire to serve God. At least, the Yorùbá will say, “*Ọnà kan kòwọ ọjà-* it is not a single road that you can take to the market”. The most important thing for you is to get to the market that is your destination.¹⁷ The ultimate in religious practices is to become vital in life and the life to come as it is with most of the world religions. Therefore, the converts to these new religions cannot be deterred totally from their indigenous knowledge and practices. Abimbola even notes that ‘many Christians and Muslims consult Ifá during all important events of their lives’ (Abimbola, 1994: 101).

The Christians in most of their prayers have adapted the traditional functions of most of the Yorùbá incantations. In fact, many preachers use the Yorùbá incantations directly in their prayers by linking it to the bible in the end. For example, there was a preacher who prayed thus for the congregation during one of their services as recorded in Ilé-Ifè, 2002:

Gbọgbọgbọ lẹwó n yọ jorí-

Hands stand out from the head
(when it is raised)

Gbọgbọgbọ ni màrìwò n yọ jòpè-

The young foliage palm leaves

È ó yò ju òtá yín ló-

stand out from the tree.
You will stand out from your
enemies.

He went further, that:

Afẹ́fẹ́ kì í fẹ́ kó má kan igi oko lára-

the wind blowing never elude trees
on the farm,

Òjò kì í rọ́ kó má kanilẹ́-

rainfall never elude the soil,

Ìbùkún Olórún kò ní fò yín ru-

the blessings of God will not elude
you.

Wind and *rainfall* in this context stand for God's blessings while *farm trees* and *soil* are used metaphorically to symbolize the recipients of the blessings. The prayer above from a priest in a local assembly of Cherubim and Seraphim in Ilé-Ifè is a typical Yorùbá prayer (*Ìwúre*) but was used in a different social and religious context. This prayer shows that they believe in the curative effects of prayer for all afflictions-spiritual and physical, but resilience in belief in the potency of natural imbued power (*àsẹ*) as contained in Yorùbá cosmology is evident in their practices.

Christianity, especially the Charismatic and Pentecostals are creatively adapting the societal norms and cultural practices. One of such is the idea of using Yorùbá orature such as *Èsà* (Masqueraders' poetry), *ìjálá* (Hunters' poetry) and *ràrà* (Sàngó's chant) to advertise their various evangelical programs. This portends that many of the traditional cultural practices and heritages that was once demonized are finding their ways back to the religious practices of the people to vitalize their existence and making their faith appealing to others. This corroborates the view of Anderson that "Pentecostal churches have absorbed so much of the religious and cultural context into their Christian faith that they have much in common with other faiths" (Anderson, Allan 2004: 283).

Conclusion

It has been observed that the kinds of songs sung by the Pentecostal churches are also sung by the members of the mainline churches, although to lesser degrees. The bid to survive the landslide progress being made by the Pentecostal churches at the expense of the membership of the mainline churches in Nigeria has left most mainline churches with seemingly no alternative but to imitate those factors that enhance the phenomenal growth of the Pentecostal churches, this includes songs.

The core of people's interest in songs is the fact that they satisfy the human need for social togetherness, identity, and emotional impulse. The song seems to be a key to identity because it offers, intensely, a sense of both self and the collective. Social groups only get to know themselves as groups (as a particular organization of individual and social interests, of sameness and differences) through cultural activity, and in this case, it would be a song. Song constructs our sense of identity through the direct experiences it offers of the body, time, and sociability, experiences that enable us to place ourselves in imaginable cultural narratives. The song informs and validates cultural identity because certain songs are intertwined in the fabric of culture and society. Certain songs seem to transcend the world of entertainment and become symbols of people's cultural identity.

The paper shows evidence that the Yorùbá folk culture is mainly a legitimate source of Christian liturgical expression in order to build or construct a sense of self-esteem, cultural pride and perception of their interaction with the domesticated religion. In addition, the research explicates that folklore, songs to be specific are composed to fit their concerns, philosophy, and worldviews and participate in the construction of a Christian theology that reflects their identities, values, and needs. It also reveals how religious experience culminates into creating religious culture.

Faced with globalization and modernism, contemporary Yorùbá Christians are using songs to build a theology and doctrines that reflect the people's renaissance of worldview and religious experiences, reflect their identities, values, and needs in facing contemporary challenges, and create indigenous experiences with their own spiritual dynamics, making the church the threat.

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