

Chapter 9

The Christian Perspective on Worldly Practices in 21st Century Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Worldly practices, in Christian thought, would mean acts considered inappropriate, in that they suck Christians in by things that are harmful to their spiritual lives or cause another to stumble. This challenge is exacerbated by globalization and explains the paradox and dilemma of Christians in the rapidly advancing world. It is this that this chapter investigates in 21st century Nigeria. The work aims at situating Christians as responsible members of the global community freely expressing their fundamental human rights without infringing on the right of others. To achieve this, the chapter utilizes the phenomenological and sociological methods. The chapter discovers that most Nigerians hinging on the freedom platforms provided by the exercise of fundamental human rights show great preference for worldly practices, which is at variance with normal regulations of religion. The chapter recommends a synergetic approach of major faiths in Nigeria for an articulation of moral/spiritual codes, adopted from existing ethical windows for a fresh national moral rebirth and cohesion.

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INTRODUCTION

Secular syndrome and unregenerate lifestyle constitutes two aspects to contemporary tendencies which challenge Christianity and Christian values today (daSilva, 2017). Interestingly, the everyday changing world constantly creates needs and expectations but also expresses frustration towards religious organizations and Christians. However, the most fundamental question that Christianity faces today is posed by what the world needs and expects from religions. This expectation is based on the assumption that religion is meant to participate in the healing of the world (Sinn & Trice, 2015). The socio-historical reality of the current situation globally, includes the misuse of the principles of the Christian faith which constitute a serious challenge to the outlook of the true values, ethos and meaning of Christianity (Sinn & Trice, 2015). It is therefore, incumbent upon Christianity to find answers to the world's problems because of Biblical exhortations such as "love thy neighbour" (*Mark 12:31*), which underpins ethical behaviour. Historically, the journey from the early centuries of Christian era to the present day 21st century is indeed long. Hence, those parameters that dictated societal norms and practices in those times are in extinct today. The powerful cooperation of the state and religion as custodians and drivers of societal values and heritages are now largely lacking. Some behaviours considered as unethical such as homosexuality, adultery, murder and theft are now being interpreted on the dictates of moral laws in the contemporary times. The factor of globalization which provides a variety of platforms to engage issues makes absolutes in any matter herculean. Consequently, what we have today are many moral gaps begging to be satisfactory filled for continuous existence of humanity. Do we sacrifice the sanctity of human life, for instance, on the altar of liberty and freedom? The Christian's voice is both loud and clear on the above poser. What seems, however to constrain the Christian is the prevailing, non-stringent, religious world space. What Christianity professes to be solutions are mostly faulted on the ground of the right of others (fundamental human rights). To be able to perform as salt and light of the world, the Christian would have to be persuasive, and this would further place on him/her the burden to be both pragmatic and pro-active. This window provides a wider reach that would attract like-minds across boards. The above, aids dissemination of vital information for necessary behavioural transformation. This done, the Christian would have overcome his dilemma because he is now well situated to give moral direction according to the Christian teachings, without infringing on others' rights and at the same time exercising his freedom to freely express.

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