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A Literary Study of the Bible and its Implications for Church Leadership and Social Transformation in Nigeria

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Abstract

Beyond the doctrinal and theological construct of the Bible, lies its literary, aesthetic and sociological value. It is also not in dispute that the devotion to the sacredness of the biblical text has placed great restraint on the much needed attention to a proper socio-literary critique of the narrative. In contextualising the Nigerian church, and by implication, assessing and re-assessing the state and practice of leadership in the country, from the traditional to the modern, this study attempts a foregrounding of the literariness of the Bible within the conceptual framework of post modernism, and submits that the Bible, in its truest socio-literary realization, and indeed the

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church in Nigeria, have a lot to offer in terms of leadership re-engineering and social transformation.

Keywords: Literature, Bible, Leadership and Church

Introduction

As a way of creating a prefatory base for this study, there is need for some clarifications and definition of terms. Literature in this context is appreciated principally as an aesthetic tool of social engineering. Our concern therefore, is to see how the literary features of the Bible have implications for leadership and social revival. The argument is that the Bible has artistic and sacred characteristics that are transformational in nature. In addition, the Church is used interchangeably with the following concepts; The body of Christ, which is the church universal, Christianity, which is the religion of the church, the pulpit, which is the creative platform of influence of the church, the Bible, which is the symbolic instrument of the religion of the church and the individual that makes up the church. Social change is viewed as the several transformations and reforms that are operational in a social setting. The focus is on the contemporary Nigerian setting. Issues and posers that are addressed in this study include the following: How have literature, the Bible and the Church fared in Nigeria? To what extent have they been able to shape leadership and social transformation in the country? What are the challenges of the Church in Nigeria? Of what socio-literary relevance is the observation of Edgington (1982:85) that the churches in the third world countries are merely growing rapidly? In the midst of changes and social decay, what is the progress chart of the church? Beyond the literary or performed Bible, as reflected in the pulpit, has the Church been relevant in Nigeria? How has the Christian been living in a non-Christian world? Bolarinwa (2008:3) while wondering whether the value of the knowledge of God has actually added to the transformation of our society poses: “can we really say that Christian religion is alive to its responsibilities or should we be talking about the death of religion in the contemporary society?”

Conceptualising Literature, the Bible and the Church

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While it is crucial to acknowledge that literature has several definitions and functions such as strategic education and the dynamics of correction through satire, the fact still remains that its primary essence and purpose is in the aesthetic and creative organization of words. Olusegun Oladipo (1993:5), while giving literature a sociological outlook, observes that there exists a working “relationship between literature and philosophy from the perspective of ‘worldview’ and critical discourse”. He argues that philosophy and literature are both social phenomena and forms of social consciousness. They are social, not just in the sense that they are produced by people who are “beings– in – society”, but perhaps more importantly in two respects. First, even when philosophy and literature spring from the experience of an individual or treat very abstract matters, they still constitute a reflection in the phenomena of life (Here it should be noted that personal experience, the experience of the individual, is still human experience and human experience is essentially social – a product of our interaction, not just with nature but also with ourselves). Second, philosophy and literature are products of the intellectual and practical needs of society and the individuals and classes comprising it. Whichever tool of analysis we use in describing or assessing literature, its relevance cannot be a work for its own sake. It either tries to present an experience of human relevance or attempts to repackage or remodel the personality of the individual in society. In performing any of these roles, it is not out of place to observe that literature operates within certain context of ideas which provide an anchor point for the web of descriptions, facts, constructions and evaluations that it contains.

Eagleton (1976) has also argued that literature is nothing but ideology in a certain artistic form. In other words, the works of literature are essentially expressions of the ideologies of their time. Continuing the contextualization of literature within ideological framework, Literature, Finnegan (2005:164-166) observes, has gone beyond its conventional perception of being a written text .Its significance extends to the domain of performance. And just as literature exists in performance, so does performance have a lot to say about literature and literary theory. To argue therefore, that literature exists only in text or that it “signifies textual manifestation of writing” is misrepresentative. Sam Asein (1995, 7) draws the message closer to the context of the present discourse by examining literature within a social-ideological context and submits that whether a product of an individual’s creative imagination, critical intelligence or as the shared

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collective product of a state, literature manifests observable traits and relates in terms of its themes, total landscape and tendencies to the social, political, cultural and physical environment characteristic of its enabling state. By nature, literature is generally a highly manoeuvrable art form. It creates and posits possibilities for social order without necessarily fragmenting entities. Literature is an exportable commodity and has a trans-territorial status that lends its universal applicability. However, as Asein also observes, even in that trans-contextual state, literature maintains a distinctiveness which it does not, and cannot, negotiate or compromise. It creates its own myths and mytho-poetic hegemonies. It recognizes its own geography and negotiates its own space. Bamidele (2000:4) advances this argument by observing that literature shares basically the same sociological concerns. According to him, studies have revealed that literature, like sociology, is a discipline preeminently concerned with man's social world, his adaptation to it, and his desire to change it. The literary forms in prose, poetry or drama, attempt to recreate the social world of man's relation with his family, with politics, with the state in its economic or religious constructs. Literature delineates the role of man in the environment, as well as the conflicts and tension within groups and social classes. Literature and Sociology are therefore, technically speaking, best of friends, no matter the operational differences in their method of talking about society. Literature in its aesthetic form creates a fictional universe where there is a possible verification of reality at the experiential level of man living in a society. It is arguable that imaginative literature is a re-construction of the world seen from a particular point of view which we may refer to as the abstract idealism of the author or the hero. While the writer may be aware of the literary tradition, it is the unconscious re-working of experience fused with his definition of a situation and his own values that produce the fictional universe which the sociology of literature may be concerned to explore.

Mbiti (1959) gives credence to the cultural value of literature when he submits that to know the literature of a people is to know them well and that it is the precipitation of their mentality, their custom, their habit, their hopes and ideas about life itself. It is therefore, amazing how much one gets to know, as Ogunba (2006: 11) also observes, about the Igbo by reading Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* or *Arrow of God*, about the Indians by going through R. K Narayam's *Waiting for the Mahatma* or about the now seemingly insoluble India Pakistani conflict by

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reading Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* or about the ordinary life of Trinadians by going through Naipaul's *The Mystic Masseur*. In each case, the details of the life and thought of the people are laid out in a clear-cut, digestible manner. No philosophical, sociological or political treatise can teach one as well as a good creative piece. In the same vein, scholars are in agreement that the Bible is enmeshed in the society in which it is located. The politicians use it, the lawyers quote from it. Barrett (1991:10) notes that it is extremely difficult to state where the Bible or the Christian religion begins and where it ends. Fatokun (1995: 80) tries to see ways African traditional culture in chieftaincy titles has influenced attempts at indigenizing the Bible or Christianity in Africa. What this amounts to is the fact that the African experience is crucial to an understanding of biblical texts. W. Heerden (2006) strongly believes that "the perceived gap between African culture and the western packaging of the Christian gospel necessitate reflection on the possibility of meaningful and enriching dialogue between facets of African culture and biblical texts. In interpreting the Bible across cultural lines therefore, it is important to ask some questions: is culture a thing created by God? Or is it entirely a human device? Is there anything in a people's culture which can be said to be biblical or sacred? What is the role of the Bible or religion in social and cultural realisation? (Etuk U 2002:13).

The concept of the Church has also progressed over the years. While some scholars see the Church as a building, others have opted for the root implications of the word. Bolarinwa (2010) explain that the word "church" was derived from a Greek word *ekklesia* indicating "assembly" in English. Not satisfied with merely seen as an assembly of people, the early Christians went to their basics, Hebrew language, to locate a suitable word to describe their company, and they found a word *qahal* meaning "the called out". It is also important to put in context the Greek root word of church, *kyriakon*, meaning "things belonging to the Lord". When *ekklesia* and *qahal* are juxtaposed, it is possible to appreciate the church as "the assembly of the called out" and when *ekklesia* is considered together with *kyriakon*, we can say the church implies "the assembly of the Lord". . It is also the responsibility of the Church to encourage Christians to make spiritual progress and to demonstrate faith in their behavior- through their ethics and their good works. These responsibilities include correction in love and drive towards adherence to godly principles. The Church has a duty to discipline Christians whose lives are

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inconsistent with the teachings of Christ. It is however, worrisome to observe that the Church today is not careful about carrying out this function and this surely is one of the areas that need urgent attention in the body of Christ. In carrying out this function however, the Church should not slide into self righteousness and intolerance.

Mueller (1984: 20) states that the Church is expected to take a deep interest in the physical and spiritual welfare of not only the Christians but all mankind. In the face of social changes, the Church can certainly not remain indifferent. She must exhort, inspire and if need be, look for practical remedies. While it must be stated that the immediate and principal essence of the Church remains the sanctification of men through the teaching of the truth and the perfection of the saints, the redemptive function of the Church however extends to the society – that is the institutional social reform and the advancement of the material standard of living of the generality of the people. In other words, the mission of the Church is by no means restricted to the salvation of individual souls, it is, technically speaking, the vital principle of society. Bolarinwa (2010: 34-35) gives an expository approach to the functionality of the institution. According to him, the divine purpose of the Church, as a community, include the teaching of biblical doctrine. In other words, building a people for the purpose of living for God, the provision of a place of fellowship for believers, which in itself implies that the Church as an organization has the responsibility of working for the peace and pleasant co-existence of her members, the paying of tithes, offerings and generous donations to be able to achieve the above and the observation of the ordinances of the community, since every community has its constitution-written or unwritten and the Church is not exception.

Theoretical Framework

Gabel et al (2005: 385) have noted that the term “postmodernism” arose in debates over theories of architecture soon after the Second World War., and influenced by thinkers like Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes, spread rapidly through the social sciences, humanities, art and beyond. While the approaches of postmodernist criticism vary widely, nearly all have emphasized the difficulty inherent in language and symbols, and have attempted to move the critical focus from a determinable and unchanging text to the actual reader (or to some place between text and reader) and to the social, cultural, historical and linguistic situation in which the reader finds himself. In essence, the Language in India www.languageinindia.com

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process of reading becomes the means by which meaning is made – if indeed it can be made at all. Due to the indeterminacy of any text, beyond the emphasis that post modern criticism places on close and careful reading, these theories have had less influence on readers of the Bible than on readers of general literature.

In his advocacy for the sustainability and continued relevance of the Church in the face of social changes and global evolution, Hevea (2007), in using the concept of postmodernism and the Bible, argues that Christianity can remain significant in our modern world. While drawing attention to the seeming diabolical implications of post modernity to spiritual development posits that post modernity actually draws one close to God. Situating the Bible in post modernist discourse is instructive for many reasons. First, it is a metaphorical tool to represent Christianity. Second, the Bible has actually weathered the currents of social change and can therefore stand the test of time. The Bible, in being positioned on the currents of postmodernism is encouraged to cross its literary and cultural boundaries. Post modernity gives readers the opportunity to weave biblical narratives with other narratives and thereby locate Christian values in every social setting. The Bible is not just a mat but that which is capable of being woven with multiple stories and applications. In fact, the Scripture is for all ages.

Literary Forms and Genres in the Bible

The Bible is a mixture of genres, many of which are literary in nature. The major literary genres in the Bible are narrative or story, poetry and proverbs. The Bible is also profound in figurative language and rhetorical or artistic patterning. Other literary genres of note in the Bible include epic, tragedy, satire, pastoral, wedding poems of love and elegy (funeral poems). The focus of this work is the application of different literary tools in the interpretation of the Bible. A study of genres is crucial to any literary approach to the Bible because every genre has its own conventions, expectations and corresponding rules of interpretation. Conner and Malmin (1983, 10) argue that if the Bible must be understood and placed in its proper perspective, its literary genres must first be determined. It is this literary task of determining genre(s) that sets the mood from which the entire work can be seen. In his location of the literary genres and figures of speech within the core spectrum of Biblical interpretation, Lawson (1992:20) observes that whole texts or passages can be written in a figurative sense, stressing that a good understanding

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of the linguistic possibilities of the Bible is critical to the appreciation of its aesthetics. Lawson explains further that a biblical story for instance, is a sequence of events, not a series of ideas. It is structured around a plot conflict, not a logical argument. It communicates by means of setting, character and events and not by propositions. Literary genres of the Bible require us to approach them in terms of the convention or procedure they possess. Literature uses distinctive resources of language. This is most evident in poetry. Poets for instance think in images and figures of speech. God is a shepherd, people are sheep, the tongue is a fire. It is fascinating how much of the Bible is poetic, especially books obviously dominated by literary qualities and materials such as Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Songs of Solomon and some of the prophets. The entire spectrum of figurative language is central to the consideration of the Bible as literature. Figurative language in the Bible includes metaphor, simile, symbolism, hyperbole, apostrophe, personification, paradox, pun and irony, to mention just a few. These resources of language, though not limited to poetry, pervade the entire Bible.

The importance of genre to biblical interpretation is that genres have their own methods of procedure and rules of interpretation. An awareness of genre should program our encounter with a text, alerting us to what we can expect to find. For example, the most prevalent of all literary forms is narrative or story. To make adequate sense of a story, we need to know that it consists of plot or action, setting, and characters. These, in turn, constitute the basic grid through which we assimilate the story and talk about it. In view of how many literary genres are present in the Bible, it is obvious that the overall literary form of the Bible is the anthology. As an anthology, the Bible possesses the same kinds of unity that other anthologies exhibit: multiple authorship (approximately three dozen authors); diverse genres; a rationale for the assembling of this particular collection of materials (a unifying religious viewpoint and story of salvation history, as well as the fact that all the books except Luke and Acts were written by Jews); comprehensiveness; and an identifiable strategy of organization (a combination of historical chronology and groupings by genre). With belief in the inspiration of the Bible as a foundational premise, we can say that the Holy Spirit is the ultimate editor of the anthology that we know as the Bible. Literature is identifiable by its subject matter. It is differentiated from expository (informational) writing by the way in which it presents concrete human experience. Instead of

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stating abstract propositions, logical arguments, or bare facts, literature embodies what literary authors often call “the stuff of real life.” We can profitably think of biblical writing as existing on a continuum, with abstract propositional discourse on one end and concrete presentation of human experience on the other. The more thoroughly a piece of writing falls on the experiential end of the spectrum, the more literary it is. To illustrate, the command “you shall not murder” is an example of expository discourse. The story of Cain and Abel embodies the same truth in the form of characters in concrete settings performing physical and mental actions. Expository writing gives us the precept; literature gives us the example. “God’s provision extends to all of our life” is a thematic summary of Psalm 23; the psalm, however, eschews such abstraction and incarnates the truth about providence in a pastoral poem that images the daily routine of a shepherd and his sheep.

The subject of literature is human experience rendered as concretely as possible. The result is that it possesses a universal quality. Whereas history and the daily news tell us what *happened*, literature tells us what *happens*—what is true for all people in all places and times. A text can be both, but the literary dimension of a text resides in its embodiment of recognizable human experience. While we rightly think of the Bible as revelatory (God’s supernatural revelation of truth), the literary parts of the Bible are at the same time the human race’s testimony to its own experience. The goal of literature is to prompt a reader to share or relive an experience. The truth that literature imparts is not simply ideas that are true but *truthfulness to human experience*. The implication for interpretation is that Bible readers, teachers, and expositors need to be active in re-creating experiences in their imagination, identifying the recognizable human experiences in a text (thereby building bridges to life in the modern world), and resisting the impulse immediately to reduce a biblical passage to a set of theological ideas.

Also central to the literary form and genres are archetypes and motifs. An archetype is a plot motif (such as initiation or quest), character type (such as the villain or trickster), or image (such as light or water) that recurs throughout literature and life. The presence of archetypes in a text signals a literary quality. When we read literature, we are continuously aware of such archetypes as the temptation motif, the dangerous valley, or the hero, whereas with other types of writing we are rarely aware of archetypes. Archetypes are the building blocks of literature.

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Writers could not avoid them even if they tried. The Bible is the most complete repository of archetypes in the Western world, and this makes the Bible a universal and primeval book (reaching down to bedrock human experience). Awareness of archetypes helps us see the unity of the Bible (since we keep relating one instance of an archetype to other instances), the connections between the Bible and other literature, and the connections between the Bible and life.

Literature uses distinctive resources of language that set it apart from ordinary expository discourse. The most obvious example is poetry. Poets speak a language of their own, consisting of images and figures of speech. The most important of the special resources of language that push a text into the category of literature include the following: imagery, metaphor, simile, symbol, allusion, irony, wordplay, hyperbole, apostrophe (direct address to someone or something absent as though present), personification, paradox, and pun. The most concentrated repository of such language in the Bible is the books that are poetic in their basic format — the prophetic books, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes (a book of prose poems), Song of Solomon, Revelation. But literary resources of language are not limited to the obviously poetic books of the Bible. They appear on virtually every page of the Bible beyond the poetic books—most obviously in the discourses of Jesus and in the Epistles, but also, though less pervasively, in the narratives of the Bible. A related literary phenomenon is rhetoric — arrangement of content in patterned ways and employment of conventional literary techniques or formulas. Parallelism of sentence elements, for example, is an instance of stylized rhetoric. Patterns of repetition — of words, phrases, or content units — are a distinguishing feature of the Bible. So are the aphoristic conciseness that continuously raise the Bible to a literary realm of eloquence far above everyday discourse. A specimen page from a New Testament epistle might include the presence of rhetorical questions, question-and-answer constructions, direct addresses to real or imaginary respondents, and repeated words or phrases within a passage, and we can depend on it that famous aphorisms will appear in abundance. Literature is an art form in which beauty of expression; craftsmanship and verbal virtuosity are valued as rewarding and as an enhancement of effective communication.. The standard elements of artistic form include unity, theme-and-variation, pattern, design, progression, contrast, balance, recurrence, coherence, and symmetry.

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Authors cultivate artistry like this because it is important to their effect and intention. The Bible is an aesthetic as well as a utilitarian book, and we need to experience it as such, both for or understanding and for our enjoyment

Social Transformation and Church Leadership in Nigeria

Social change or transformation is essentially a sociological term for alterations in basic structures of a social group or society. Transformation is an ever present phenomenon in social life. It has always constituted a striking force in the personal and collective experience of mankind. It should be noted that it is not all the time that change is a welcome phenomenon. Sometimes it is embraced, at other times, it is resisted. All over the world, changes have been evolving in different forms and shapes – ranging from the economic and political to the moral and spiritual. While some of these transformations have had their injurious implications, others have not been totally negative. Some of these changes have brought many socio-political advantages. The technological explosion and increase in knowledge, the progressively liberal mindset on hitherto sensitive issues such as politics, ethnicity, and the dignity of womanhood are indices of this positive occurrence. Within the overriding atmosphere of the social transformation and chaos exists the Church. The Church discovers sooner than later that in spite of its tendencies to stay aloof and afloat, it cannot totally evade the societal incursions and influences. White (1984:214) in his description of the post-Reformation and Renaissance world of Western Europe which is also applicable to us today observes that:

The world has changed almost beyond recognition with the coming of industrialization, scientific inventiveness, materialist, humanist, and secularist fashions of thought, and social revolution. New problems constantly challenged old principles, and found scripture inadequate...

Moreover, another subject that is becoming a matter of anxiety is how the Church ought to cope with the increasingly complex societal disequilibrium. How can the Church change in

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outlook and practice and still continue to be relevant, while remaining the same essentially? In other words, how can the Church uphold the fundamental doctrines and practices of the faith and sustain its significance in a changing world? In the face of globalization, high tensioned corruption, national decay and rot, how has the Church been coping in Nigeria? Has the Church lost its relevance? Has the Church remained the light of the world or has it gone into a shadow of its ancient self? Has the preoccupation of the Church with personal gain and wealth created a materialistic group with itching ears, heaping on itself leaders who would blend their greed with imbalance teaching, concentrating on what the congregation would want to hear rather than what they need to hear? Where are the ancient landmarks of honesty and integrity, of selfless service, of righteousness and holiness, of godly values and true leadership? Adefarasin (2010:5) has traced the root cause of the nation's moral laziness and decay to the catastrophic loss of values. He observes that life itself has become worthless in our present day society. No wonder "we strive to gain mastery over each other in the work place, we have neglected the training of our children, and family life is not what it used to be. Corruption is endemic and the list is endless".

This dilemma brings to light the need to situate a dynamic and pragmatic relationship between what are true or enduring ideals and changing situations. It may also not be out of place to locate the dual nature of the Christian who, though is in the world but is not of the world. Situating the dual possibility in a sense, the dual nature of the Church within the conservative and liberal thought, Morberg (1965:94) notes that:

The Christian ideally is both a conservative who tries to conserve all that is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and gracious in society and a liberal who tries to liberate mankind by changing the conditions of society that violate those criteria of excellence.

This perspective takes into cognizance the doctrinal and ethical development which occurred within the Apostolic Church and since the Apostolic period, even while it holds on tenaciously to the inherited faith "once for all delivered to the saints." The dilemma raises a lot

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of issues. For instance, how did the early Church respond to the social change? How has the response been through the centuries? What roles has biblical hermeneutics played in the evolving social order? What is, and should be, the relationship between Christians and non-Christians in the society? How can a proper understanding of the dynamics of the Church help in social restructuring and leadership orientation?

Ighile (2007) has argued that the Church-based pulpit, or the performed Bible, while it shares some structural features with the conventional theatre, is a potent instrument of leadership development and social transformation. Just as the traditional theatre functions as a form of communication, mirrors life and society, educates, entertains, and gives employment to people,

so does the pulpit; in a special way. The pulpit is an elevated platform for dramatizing the beauty of good and the ugliness of evil. It is not exactly a designer's construct for entertainment; rather, it is a developed structure for training, enlightenment and instructions. While using biblical standards in analyzing contemporary issues, it proffers solutions to the challenges in the society. The pulpit is particularly not symbolic of a money-generating venture; it is not a business enterprise. However, when the lead -actor plays well his part, the empowered audience rises up to its responsibility of ensuring that the performer does not die on stage, that the light does not fade out and that the play goes on. It is sad to admit however that the pulpit is fast becoming more materialistic than the conventional secular theatre. This is both unfortunate and a monumental crisis.

The pulpit can best be appreciated in its strategic and symbolic nature. It is positioned in a vantage area, and in most cases, on a raised stage-like platform. The reason for this theatrical structure of the pulpit is not far to seek. The pulpit is expected to be at an angle, not only of easy view to the audience, but also capable of commanding attention. There is also the symbolic dimension to the phenomenon of pulpit. It is not just a tool of communication, it is also indicative of empowerment. Whoever is on stage is assumed to have been called by God and approved to speak. His speech, persuasion and conviction are therefore, not seen as mere intelligence, but appreciated in the context of a supernatural engineering. This assumption constitutes modes of influence on the people. Whatever comes from the pulpit is taken seriously.

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The pulpit has a magnetic force of attraction. When it is used appropriately to explore the dynamics of leadership and social transformation, it generates a pulling effect. There is a way in which the platform of the pulpit can be used to cause Christian to do what is scripturally acceptable. Leadership in practice simply means the art of getting someone else to do something that you want done because he wants to do it. And the pulpit provides the forum for this subtle exploitation. The pulpit symbolizes popularity. Leaders who may not have been known or respected by the people in the first instance are impressed on them by the force of the pulpit. The pulpit gives authority, identification and fame to its users. People tend to listen to the pulpiter, follow what he says and even want to be like him.

Leadership is all about influence and the pulpit is a sensitive instrument of realizing this function. Maxwell and Dornan(1984) identify four ways in which this leadership influence can be effected. These include modeling, motivating, mentoring and multiplying. From the pulpit it is possible to build an image for people to model. The pulpit is a platform for motivating people to be the best that they can. It is a stage of mentoring and multiplication of value. The pulpit-man moves to the platform with a number of questions in his mind: How do I bring out the best in the people who have value for me and my words? What are their challenges and how do I make them turn these into stepping stones to their greatness? How do I stir up the giants in them? How do I make them accountable for the decisions and choices they make? Am I a good example to follow? Is my relevance noticeable beyond the pulpit?

Implications for Contemporary Nigerian Society

There is the need for the Church to stand focused and distinct. The practitioners of the church must stand out in character, appearance, speech and action. The reason for the display of quality lifestyle is not far to seek: those who must lead and transform the society must be a light in literal and symbolic forms. As the light of the world, they are to give direction with their lifestyle and as the salt of the earth; they are to add flavour to the world. However, if the Church is to make meaningful progress in effective mentoring, there must be a strategic blend of Christians and non Christians whose daily experience of specific problems can help in understanding them better. In other words, there must be a functional use of the Bible for the

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world of men. The creative and productive exposition of the Bible must have a contemporary packaging for effectiveness. In addition, there is the need to carefully study the process of interpreting and applying scriptural texts to actual social situations and issues. The Bible can indeed be relevant to the society.

Adefarasin (2010:7) has also suggested the need for exemplary leadership, accountability and a return to fatherhood. The Church, according to him, must lead by example. The leaders must show the world how best to do things. The restoration of fatherhood is a precondition for revival. God would want the men to demonstrate the true heart of the father. This would break the chains of bondage and oppression and facilitate the emergence of God-fearing and God-serving generation.

There is also the need for the Church to avoid the error of allowing the world's own agenda to skew biblical truth. Scott (1984:14) draws attention to the need to address this dilemma observes that:

Some Church advocates, anxious above all to be faithful to the revelation of God, without compromise, ignore the challenges of the modern world and live in the past. Others anxious to respond to the world around trim and twist God revelation in their search for relevance. I have struggled to avoid both traps. For the Church is at liberty to surrender neither to antiquity nor to modernity. Instead I have sought with integrity. Yet, this is our calling to submit to the revelation of yesterday within the realities of today. It is not easy to combine loyalty to the past with sensitivity to the present. Yet, this is your calling; to live under the world in the world.

Conclusion

This paper, in applying the socio-literary analysis within the theoretical framework of post-modernism, has attempted to juxtapose the Church with the phenomenon of social change and thereby promote an appreciation of the dynamic functions and responsibilities of the Church and its contextualization within social stratification and transformation. While drawing attention to the possible challenges that social phenomena can pose to the Church, it argues for a workable strategy that would make the Church relevant for all ages.

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