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## EDITORIAL DESK

The Journal of Contemporary Issues in Nigerian Economy stands as a beacon of scholarly excellence, drawing upon a diverse spectrum of researchers hailing from the expansive West African region and beyond. This volume showcases 14 meticulously researched articles curated from contributors in Nigeria and the United States of America. The genesis of these scholarly endives can be traced back to the auspicious conference convened at the Lagos State University Makanjuola Lecture Hall, held in December, 2023.

These articles, characterized by their depth and precision, underwent rigorous scrutiny during the conference, with over 90 participants actively engaging in critique. Subsequent to this extensive quality assurance regimen and plagiarism checks, only 14 articles successfully met the standards set forth by the esteemed guild of the editorial team, in strict adherence to international best practices.

It is with great pleasure that the Board of Editors announces the second edition of the publication schedule of the journal. Our heartfelt congratulations extend to the authors whose papers demonstrated exceptional merit and successfully navigated the rigorous selection criteria. To future researchers, we extend our encouragement to strive for greater heights in their scholarly pursuits.

The Board of Editors appreciates the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Ibiyemi Ibilola Olatunji Bello, mni NPOM for providing the enabling environment for the conference and her directives to the editorial team for strong quality assurance measures. We believe in your leadership and concerted efforts at ensuring high standards for the journal publication.

Prof. M. O. B. Mohammed, FNAEAP  
Editor in Chief

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## RELIGION AS A PANACEA FOR COMBATING MODERN-DAY SLAVERY IN AFRICA

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### **Abstract**

*The paper examined religion as a panacea for combating modern day slavery. Religion played a great role in civilization and education in Africa. The advents of educational and medical institutions in Nigeria owe credence to religion. Religion is also one of the vehicles used to tackle slave trading in Africa. In the declaration international human right, there is verbal abolition of all forms of slave trade and colonialism. Currently however, there is resurgence of modern slavery mainly in the form of neo colonialism. The wave of the neo colonialism and modern slavery in Africa cuts across religion, education, economy, politics, science, technology, immigration, medical pilgrimage, insurgency, etc. The bane of religion is to bring freedom to people who are oppressed, depressed and compressed. Religion intrinsically de-weaponises, promotes unity and exhibits command. Hence, to what extent can religion end modern day slavery in Africa today?*

**Keywords:** Religion, Panacea for Combating, Modern Day Slavery, Africa

### **Introduction**

After the formal global abolishment of slave trade, Africa is yet to experience total freedom. The continent has not recovered from the effects of slave trade. The continent has also been bedeviled with all sorts of issues ranging from bad leadership, corruption, unemployment, insecurity, poverty, infrastructural deficit and many more. The result according to Mamadu (2006) has been coups and counter coups, tribal wars, political conflicts, political instability, embezzlement and cheating in high place, robbery, cultism and other litany of crimes. The atmosphere is so horrible that Africans are going back to become slaves of the Europeans and Americans so as to escape the quagmire caused by African leaders. Actually, the question here is whether Africa is the cause or Africa is cursed? The dependence of African countries on Western countries especially those countries that colonized them indicates that Africa is not yet free. Africa however thrives in religions such that as industrialization is going on in the West religion is booming in Africa. Now that religion thrives in Africa, how can it be converted as a tool for African liberation from modern day slavery? To further deepen the discussion in this position paper, this paper discussed religion, slavery, modern day slavery, religion as a panacea, conclusion and recommendation.

### **Religion**

Religion as a concept is being understood from different viewpoints and it could be considered from Cultural, Sociological, Anthropological, Phenomenological, Philosophical, Ethical and Aesthetical dimensions. In its etymological dimension, the term 'religion' is a derivative of the Latin root religare meaning 'to bind fast'. Thus religion has the force to bring people together and consequently have a strong emphasis on community living. However, religion is very complex and inclusive. It accommodates different aspects of life such as worship, rituals, myths, belief, values and many more. It is also worthy to note that there some who believe that there is nothing like religion. Fredrick Nietzsche opined that there is nothing like God and even if there is, he is dead. Aristotle was caught up in middle way between theism and atheism. He criticized traditional religion believing it to be false but at last agreed that religion and its institutions are

vital if any city in the polis will exist and flourish. Karl Marx regarded religion as opium of the Masses.

Religion as a concept has no unified definition since it is understood and viewed differently by different people. It has both cultural, philosophical, psychological, sociological and political understanding. According to Cunningham, et al, Religion signifies those ways of viewing the world which refer to (1) a notion of sacred reality (2) made manifest in human experience (3) in such a way as to produce long-lasting ways of thinking, feeling, and acting (4) with respect to problems of ordering and understanding existence. Sir E.B. Tylor (1877) in his book *Primitive Culture* defined religion as “the belief in spiritual beings.” Sir J.G. Frazer (2020), in the *Golden Bough*, presented religion is a 'propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life. According to Smith (1958), Religion is a complex of culturally prescribed practices, based on premises about the existence and nature of superhuman powers, whether personal or impersonal, which seek to help practitioners gain access to and communicate or align themselves with these powers, in hopes of realizing human goods and avoiding things bad. Religion is to be understood an activity of man whereby his natural experiences draw him to a dependence on supernatural and transcendental being he believes to be responsible for his being. One of the most common elements in religion is belief.

### Slavery

Anderson and Lovejoy (2020), opines that slavery is a term used loosely in both European languages and Christian societies, which can only be taken into consideration after its careful cross-examination, especially as used in human relationships throughout the globe. The problem he envisaged bothers more on Africa where religious interpretation is given to slavery. Anderson and Lovejoy (2020) further states that this problem is more compounding in the African context where both Christian and Islamic concepts of slavery are defined in different if not complex legal systems though applied on the entire African continent.

An international definition of slavery was recognized in 1926, it was defined in 1956, and was replicated in substance as the definition of enslavement included in the 1998 Statute of the International Criminal Court. Slavery here is recognized as the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised. Anderson and Lovejoy (2020) posited that

“A slave is a human being who is the property of, and entirely subject to, another human being under the religious, social and legal conventions of the society in which he or she lives. Being the property of, means that an owner, restricted only by the conventions of his society, is able to buy, sell, adopt, ill-treat, or kill his slave whose children belong to their owner and can be treated in the same way. A slave has no freedom of personal rights and can become one voluntarily, by a legal decision, or by force”.

Bales and Soodalter (2010) state that: there are three essential criteria from knowing if someone is a slave. The first is the complete control of one person by another, through the use of violence - both physical and psychological. The second-hard labour for little or no pay-clearly applies as well. [...] The third criterion is economic exploitation - making a profit for the slaveholder.

Issues surrounding slavery borders around being controlled by another person. According to Bales and Soodalter (2010), slavery as a status or condition is not defined by the customs, practices, methods, or mechanisms of enslavement. A person might be taken into slavery by many paths, but the means of enslavement, the vehicle by which a person arrives in the state or condition of slavery, while important for understanding the nature of a particular case, does not determine that state; it is simply the means by which a person arrives under the control of another. In cases of slavery, the exercise of “the powers attaching to the right of ownership” should be understood as constituting control over a person in such a way as to significantly deprive that person of his or her individual liberty, with the intent of exploitation through the use, management, profit, transfer or disposal of that person. Usually this exercise will be supported by and obtained through means such as violent force, deception and/or coercion.

### **Modern Day Slavery in Africa**

Modern Slavery in Africa is simply a hybrid or an advanced form of the olden day slavery. One can easily see the similarities between the two epochs. The stated citation is a recap of the genesis of slavery in Africa and how the Europeans and Americans had used the African slaves to develop their land and provided cheap labour for their industries. Eyre Crown in his article “How did the Abolition act of 1807 and 1833 affect Slave Trade” reported that

“As soon as Europeans began to settle in America, in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, they imported enslaved Africans to work for them. As European settlement grew, so did the demand for enslaved people. Over the next 300 years more than 11 million enslaved people were transported across the Atlantic from Africa to America and the West Indies, and Britain led this trade from the mid-17th century onwards. Ports such as Bristol, Liverpool and Glasgow sent out many slaving ships each year, bringing great prosperity to their owners. Many other cities also grew rich on the profits of industries which depended on slave-produced materials such as cotton, sugar and tobacco”.

Nadir (2002) sported two dimensions of modern slavery in Africa. First is slavery based on economic purposes. He stated that “Economic/industrial slaves are those enslaved basically to serve as an economic workforce mainly for the production of surplus goods. Because of employment opportunities in America and Europe, many Africans leave to get employed. Nadir also pointed out mental slavery. In this form, “no force is used and the slaves were presumably through social engineering, considered 'free' even though 'mentally bounded'. It is often achieved manipulation of knowledge and civilization. This programme was the one used by European colonialists on the various African states in the name of 'civilising mission'. They also succeeded through this means to lure many Africans to love and appreciate their mental slavery by thinking that the only way to civilize, is to westernize. People who succumb to this form of slavery can by extension be referred as slaves extension be referred to as 'slaves. It is obvious that history is repeating itself at the moment as issues of brain drain, searching for greener pasture and japa syndrome is the order of the day in Africa. We can actually have a tabular presentation of the similarities between Old method of slavery and modern slavery in Africa.

### **Old Method of Slavery Modern Slavery**

1. Africa was accessed through the cooperation of the local chiefs Politicians who are African leader create conducive atmosphere for Modern slavery through bad leadership
2. Lack of education and ignorance contributed to slavery in Africa. The educated are not

- properly employed and remunerated. Brain drain is gain in America and Europe.
3. The African slaves were assured of good life Greener pasture is presented to brilliant Africans
  4. Africans were used to provide cheap labour for the slave masters. The African slaves faced severe labour for their masters Africans in search of greener pasture over work themselves just to meet up financially. Provision of cheap labour continues
  5. African slaves were said to be happy Brilliant Africans celebrate their exit from Africa
  6. Colonialism facilitated slavery in Africa Neo colonialism is forcing Africa almost to depend on the Western Countries
  7. Corruption and greed made the local chiefs to collaborate in slave trade Corruption aided by western countries makes political leaders to impoverish Africa resulting in system and infrastructural decay, thereby exposing it to modern slavery

### **Religion as a Panacea for Combating Modern Day Slavery**

It is said that a good teacher teaches from known to unknown. African problem could be solved with what is thriving in Africa. We can assert that as religion is booming in Africa, it can go a long way to combat modern day slavery in Africa. We can recall that in the advent of civilization in Africa, religion played great roles. The earlier schools and hospitals we have in Africa were mostly products of religious groups and missionaries. People like Mary Slessor was instrumental to the abolition of the killing of twins. She fought for this course simply for the love of humanity. Okoligwe (2010) stated that love is the fundamental attribute which confers value to our Christian life and our membership in the church. Love for humanity will always make one to be selfless. But the truth is that the Missionaries the colonial era were mostly expatriates. Now that we have indigenous heads of the various religion, what can they do in the present situation whereby a large number of their adherents are praying for opportunity to run away from their fatherland? We have churches in almost every street. It is observable that great number of those attending prayer, crusade and revival in these churches are praying that they be granted visa to travel abroad. Since it is obvious that religious leaders are so much respected in Africa, how can these respected leaders use their influence to convince Africans that the African land is not cursed but rather the mentality and attitude of Africans are the cause of African backwardness?

Can the emphasis shift from building of churches to industrialization? This is possible and should be advocated now than ever. We needed schools and hospitals when the early Missionaries came but now we need industries. As we see churches sited here and there in the streets, it becomes imperative that after going to church, the followers need work. So the churches can actually build industries or encourage entrepreneurship. Can the church stop celebrating African leaders who make their money through corruption? It is the duty of religious leaders to institute morality for all. Politicians who embezzle public fund should not be seen romancing religious leaders. According to Mamadu (2006), one of the ways to fight corruption must be the reception of moral formation and cultivation of sound consciousness through moral/sound education. This task is heavily the burden religion must bear to assist Africans overcome moral enslavement.

The church was instrumental to civilization, it is the time for recivilization for the freedom of Africa. At this time it must be African civilization by Africans and for Africa. Africans must believe in Africa. Africans must stop seeing themselves as inferior human beings. Africans must appreciate her human and natural resources. These are the ideologies to be promoted by African religious leaders in the face of the modern day slavery in Africa.

### **Conclusion**

It is a statement of fact that the diaspora gains and the questions of modern day slavery in Africa is a truism. Every aspect of the life of the African man is affected. Now we know that there is problem, it is time for all hands to be on deck so as to bring solution to the big beast standing

before us. It is obvious that among the greatest groups of people in African that command respect and control crowd are religious leaders. The African man is deeply religious inclined. Politicians, Professors, Doctors and people in other professions have one or more religious leaders they pay allegiance to. I was listening to a religious native traditional man in social media and he was narrating how different groups of people including Politicians, Professors, Lawyers, Medical Doctors and other groups of professionals do visit his shrine for consultation. I wished that he could use the opportunity to speak truth to them. Unfortunately most African religious leaders are benefitting from proceed of corruption. The religious leaders are expected to use their position to begin the reorientation that is needed.

### Recommendations

I am recommending that African religious leaders should go beyond just preaching prosperity and do more to speak about the problems of Africa. The religious leaders should always speak the truth to authorities and avoid sycophancy. Faith based organizations should transcend humanitarian activities that stop at receiving foreign aid and giving food to hungry Africans. They should focus on empowerment, entrepreneurship and good governance.

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