



# Traversing Local-Global Religious Terrain: a Case of Brotherhood of the Cross and Star

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## Abstract

The term “transnational” is appropriate to describe the globalized Brotherhood of the Cross and Star movement, and as such the term transnational will be used interchangeably for BCS tendencies towards traversing local-global terrain in this research paper. In the past, it has been falsely claimed that African Christianity was founded by and for Africans. African Christianity experts today refute this idea because the faith has spread successfully over the globe. This opinion also applies to BCS, an organization that has gained widespread acceptance globally. It achieves this by developing itself as a global organization, employing cutting-edge information technology, transferring missions and miracles, evangelizing abroad, and visiting foreign communities with the leader of the BCS. Thus, the paper takes into account BCS tendencies toward globalization and further presents BCS as a worldwide movement. This paper critically used of qualitative method, involving historical, and theoretical, methods. Data was sourced mostly from library materials, oral interviews, participant and personal observations, as well as the internet and views of renowned scholars in religion, African Independent Church Movement, African Christianity in the Diaspora, and sociology of religion. This research concludes that a religion, as it moves to a foreign territory, becomes an umbrella for cultural identity, a means of connecting to the home country for immigrant members and it additionally serves as a medium of survival for indigenous members.

**Keywords:** Brotherhood of the Cross and Star, Christianity, Africa, faith, globalisation.

## Introduction

This research focused on the Brotherhood of the Cross and Star (BCS) religious organization as a transnational movement. The organization was started as a healing home in Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria by its primal leader Olumba Olumba Obu, an itinerant trader, in 1958. The movement has since grown beyond local and national and to international boundaries. BCS presence can be seen in numerous African countries such as Ghana,



Gambia, Ivory Coast, South Africa, Kenya and some Western countries. The organization aims at evangelizing the entire world. It considers itself to be a universal school of practical Christianity and not a church. Ghana is one of the countries in West Africa where BCS has established a firm hold. It seeks to evangelize the people of the world as exemplified by the different strategies devised to bring the world under its umbrella.

BCS appropriates the use of information technology, planting of missions abroad, miracle transfer, and regular visitation of the leader to old and new missions abroad. Its universal ambition is also noted in the proliferation of bethels all over the world and displays of international flags at the headquarters in Calabarto indicate the nations affiliated to it. In view of this, Vasquez and Maraquardt, (2003) averred several religious organizations have always had a global focus and were formed on universal principles. The universality and globalization of religion, however, frequently take precedence over its national forms in the current era of globalization. Religion no longer has a strong national or legal foundation, much like capitalism or politics (Ogungbile, 2010).

BCS further considers different Nigerian ethnic groups incorporated in the organization in the Diaspora and how members participate in transnational practices that embody a sense of identity that is both cultural and transnational. This research looks at how the practices of the BCS become a coping mechanism for creating a home away from home for its adherents while petrifying as a global religion. It also aims at discovering the new religious impressions unfolded in the process of contact with foreign environments, such impressions as adaptation of certain aspects of the host land practices and cultures as well as rejection of some of its original practice as a result of contact with a foreign environment. In this vein, Ebaugh, O'Brien and Chafetz (2000) postulated that all religious institutions exist within an environment that includes a variety of features that they cannot control but which can, nonetheless, exert significant impacts on them. Environments proved to be both opportunities and constraints for congregations and their members

## Literature Review

Hervieu-Leger (2002) asserts that religion gives believers a sense of belonging to a chain of memories that spans the past, present, and future. In this way, religious transnationalism and globalization strengthens the ability of immigrant members to uphold the principles of their religion as they were practiced in their native country. By doing this, members continue to utilize religion as a bridge to their original home country even when they are not there. Robertson (1991), Beyer (1994), and Queen (2002) all hold the opinion that religion ought to be examined more broadly than it has been in the past, rather than just at the national level. These thinkers highlighted the significance of using the global system as the main analytical unit in order to comprehend modern social existence. Beyer (1994) contends that issues like what are the cultural and religious ramifications of the "thick" contemporary globalization, with its increasing velocity, are handled in the context of religion and cultural identity. Thus, Beyer's conclusion is that, as opposed to their former one-sidedness, many faiths today are multi-centred. As a result, change becomes a crucial component of the global religious movement.

A unique component of transnationalism in religion is substantial mutual integration. Global studies of religion are also concerned with the viability of religious ideas and practices in multicultural societies (Kudrya-Marais & Olalere, 2022). Globalization, according to Beyer (1994), is the ever-evolving state of mutability. Hence, maintaining religious rituals and beliefs free from mutability or assimilation presents a severe challenge. According to Robertson (1991), we no longer enjoy the security of a predetermined or established concept of ourselves.

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According to the sentence above, BCS, like any other religion, has a global reach due to its successful expansion throughout Nigeria and beyond.

This work was motivated by the BCS's ability to penetrate the globe. Therefore, this study's goal is to learn more about the cultural influences that are usually noted when religion interacts with other cultural backgrounds. BCS's capacity to go beyond Nigeria's borders has led to its designation as a global organization. As a result, it is the subject of this study, and our interest is in how effectively she accomplishes it. Transnational processes are those that are rooted in and span one or more governments or nations. According to Glick-Schiller (1996), the term "global" is best used to describe processes that take place all over the world rather than in a single state. Hence, the term "transnational" is more appropriate to describe the globalized BSC movement.

In light of the foregoing, the research concentrates on the BCS processes that transcend the boundaries of a single state but are nevertheless influenced by its institutional practices. Religion in a multi-cultural society fosters adaptation and incursion into the original beliefs and practices of the religion. Huntington (1991) remarked that in light of this, America deviates from the Anglo-protestant culture, customs, and values as a result of embracing of foreign races, ethnicities, and religion, and thus, warns against the risk of Hispanization. The question of whether greater religious heterogeneity diminishes religion's role in fostering social cohesion is a topic of parallel discussion among sociologists of religion. Durkheim in Okon (2010) claimed that religion's traditional function was as a unifying factor that ritually strengthens unity. It is necessary for this brief study to determine whether alternative communities have a legitimate claim to challenge BCS's authority and undermine its doctrines, practices, and beliefs as a result of globalization. It is a regular occurrence for followers of immigrant religions to be a part of international religious groups that get along well with their national and ethnic identities. Some view the religious landscape as being more important than the secular one (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000). In this vein, the article employing BCS as a rationalization tool is meant to reveal the force drawing people to the organization abroad.

Religion "transcends the limits of time because it allows believers to feel part of a chain of memory, connected to a past, present, and future," as Levitt (2007) stated clearly. The purpose of this research is to assess the degree to which BCS members who have established themselves in foreign countries have developed a sense of connectedness to their cultural identities. Also the research seeks to infer how BCS forge ties to the past, present, and future hopes. Religious leaders, teachers, and professionals place a strong emphasis on interreligious conversation and engagement in regard to faith and values (Ebaugh & Pipes, 2002). Hence, it is sufficient for BCS to redefine the parameters of religious affiliation on a global scale. For instance, BCS members who frequently walk barefoot in Nigeria would receive a reprimand in a foreign country to promote cultural and transnational assimilation. The meaning of faith, its results, and its evolution are produced by the ideas that immigrants bring to their host communities.

This transformation frequently results in transnational organizations, and the host cultures also influence changes to religion. Given these, Levitt (2007) hypothesized that many religious groups exist and they are primarily only global in that they rely on inputs from elsewhere. These are loose associations that occasionally assemble for religious instruction and prayer. She argues that while members of these religious organizations seek some level of ties to their culture and religion, they are not overly committed to any one particular interpretation. They wish to improvise, mixing a variety of religions that still have some roots in their native country. BCS, a multinational organization, can therefore shed light on membership commitment in foreign countries and help determine if people declare loyalty to BCS out of a sense of spirituality or national identity.

If BCS leaders are well-versed in cross-cultural knowledge and interpretation this will enable them to have close connection and interrelationship with both Nigerian members and non-Nigerian members. BCS as a transnational movement exposes the psychology of the BCS



leaders in foreign nations. Transnationalization is a reflection of the shifting borders of the communities in which its leaders and participants are embedded. According to Hannerz (2004), as religious organizations evolve, so do the activities that take place within them. A large number of members of a large religious group conduct some aspects of their religious life remotely. So, religious organizations must devise new methods of management to keep them happy and under control.

In this regard, BCS, as a transnational organization, is tasked with developing competent leaders who can assume the mantle of leadership in other countries and with implementing the methods that the BCS head has devised to prevent migrant members from departing from its core principles. In order to maintain the sustainability and purpose of the content, cultural impact has a continuing role in changing BCS doctrines, practices, and beliefs. Several types of leaders are needed for transnational religion. It necessitates new manufacturing techniques, as well as new tools for communicating with followers in new ways. It entails changing the membership conditions so that people can continue to fulfil their potential in their brand-new worship place all over the globe. Finding a way to teach the future generation is also implied. All of these together lead to significant changes in a global religious organization movement. Religious societies can no longer rely on face-to-face interactions between leaders and followers as a result of member migration.

This means that organizations must create long-distance leadership strategies that limit authority and who can hold it. They provide members the opportunity to assume leadership roles who were previously unable to do so. Because many organizations are too small to sustain full-time clerics, the most experienced members usually assume the lead. With international religious groups like BCS, the dynamics of the relationship between shepherds and their flocks also alter. In support of the aforementioned statement, Hannerz (1996) pointed out that:- the global networks and institutions correspondents relate to many impacts and they work just as powerfully as the foreign locale that is their beat. As a result, foreign journalists are an essential catalyst for the democratization of values such as individualism, materialism, and self-actualization as well as the globalization of consciousness. The way that religious leaders view their lands is altered by globalization.

These leaders range in understanding of the regions they are assigned to, from those who are familiar with them to those who are not. Hence, individuals who are familiar with the area may become a source of light for the immigrant members, while those who are unfamiliar with the area sometimes rely on other people for explanations of the location they are leading. Language is important from this angle; if a leader cannot communicate with his followers in their language, he will often turn to his knowledgeable members for assistance. Given the aforementioned, Levitt (2007) claimed that when studying religion in a multicultural society: although only briefly, these religious leaders interact with those outside the communities they directly serve. They are able to assist their members in coping with what occurs on the other side of their church's wall since they are knowledgeable enough about it. The Sadhu at the ISSO temple, in comparison, has a very different relationship with his disciples. His English is not very good. To ladies, he is mute. He won't leave the temple unless someone is with him as corroborated by Levitt.

The post BCS leader, who annually travels to immigrant communities (foreign countries), where its branches are located around the world, is an example of how BCS as a transnational organization presents another type of leadership group. He uses this to inspire members to be steadfast in their religion. This behaviour is a departure from that of the founding leader, who never left the organization's headquarters. Nonetheless, in this approach, the post-BCS leader appears to be a 'parachute' leader since he makes brief, symbolic visits to followers before returning to home base. Members often have little to no direct contact with their leader, but they nevertheless feel a sense of intimacy with him. The brief presence of the post-BCS leader frequently strengthens religious ties and affinities.



## Historical Origin and Growth of BCS in Nigeria

Members of the movement have different accounts of the BCS's beginnings and development. According to one theory, the Leader Olumba Olumba Obu's birth in 1918 in the village of Biakpan in the Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria is largely responsible for the BCS's inception. Some members believe that this served as the official beginning of the movement's physical manifestation (Offiong, 2003). An informant said as much in an oral interview: "When the leader was born, a blind woman came to welcome the new baby and when she touched the baby she was able to see again which was a great miracle and thus marks the beginning of the BCS. "On the other hand, some members don't care about the BCS's historical context. According to a participant by the name of Margaret Antia, the BCS has no beginning and no end. Unless we're talking about physical manifestation, she said, "finding out time is like trying to find out the origin of God, because Brotherhood is God and all His creatures, including spirit." However, in answer to a query from a reporter from the Nigerian Chronicle Newspaper, "Supposing you hear your member proclaim, Olumba Olumba Obu is God, will you stop them or refute their claims," Olumba Olumba Obu denied that he (Olumba Olumba Obu) is God, as alluded to by his members (Odey, 2009). Anyone on the surface of this planet who claims to have knowledge of the formation of Brotherhood is lying, according to another account of the movement's beginnings provided by the founder himself who believes the movement was not created as previously described (Offiong, 2001). Similarly, Obu writes as quoted in Mbon's (1992) book BCS: Since Brotherhood has neither beginning or conclusion, Obu advises against trying to understand it. Instead, he says, "Whoever wants to know the genesis of Brotherhood seeks to disgrace himself and to treat Brotherhood disdainfully and spitefully".

Since Olumba Olumba Obu thinks the movement has existed since the dawn of time, before the earth emerged, he claims that Brotherhood is eternal and like God himself. However, it is apparent that the movement's head, Olumba Olumba Obu, contradicts himself when he claims he is not God but claims that the movement's origins give the idea that it was created in heaven, making him God. According to Mbon's (1992) account of the BCS's founding, Obu's struggle to balance his trader's job with finding time to travel from house to home and minister to those who would listen to him was the catalyst for the BCS. Furthermore, Goring (1998) writes in her book "something more than Gold" that Obu's early years in existence could be seen as a precursor to his future self. Little Obu started educating the other kids in the community in spiritual matters when he was only five years old and insisted that his father refer to him as "Teacher". As was previously noted, when the young Obu arrived in Calabar at the age of eight, he began a clothing business and merged it with his part-time missionary work. He eventually received a call from God to enter the ministry as a full-time minister for the salvation of humanity.

Leader Olumba Olumba Obu provided the narrative to Amadi in response to this call, as Mbon (1992) recounted. The aforementioned voice had commanded him to give up all of his extra goods and go back to a very basic and natural way of life. Shoes (including slippers), pants, jackets, long sleeve shirts, ties, caps, and even watches were to be fully abandoned by the man. He was not allowed to utilize any of these items or any type of transportation ever again. His meals were to be small and straightforward, primarily made up of fruits. He was once more made aware of the fact that he was on earth to fulfil a unique task that required him to be extremely humble and simple. He and the accomplishment of his mission were crucial to the future and salvation of the human race. As a result, according to Mbon (1992), he started following the voice's instructions in the early 1940s; consequently, (Obu) started his full-time ministry at the age of twenty six years. Offiong (1996) reports in his M.A. thesis that the movement was actually and formally incorporated as a religious movement in 1956 under the Federal Republic of Nigeria's Perpetual Succession Act, Cap. 98, and that it was given a Certificate of Incorporation in 1964. However, the organization pioneer leader disappeared from daily routinization of activities in the early years of 2000 and has since been replaced by his successor (his son) named Roland Olumba Olumba Obu, who is referred to as the post-



BCS leader in this paper. Mokhoathi (2020) noted African Christianity almost often emerges in an utmost modest foundation. This clearly exemplified in the BCS foundation years. It started off in extremely modest circumstances and has since expanded greatly. As stated by Goring (1998), BCS is a black African movement that primarily consists of Nigerians, with lesser populations from other African nations, the West Indies, the USA, London, and an increasing number of Ghanaians. Today, the movement has spanned well over all parts of the world, which is why it is now considered to be a global religion.

### **Statement of the problem**

Given the current trend of globalization, it is not surprising to say that all religions are diverse and:- by showcasing its global inclinations, BCS is following suit. The motivation for this study is to ascertain BCS flow along the path of globalization and its capacity to actualise such. This research investigates and examines the BCS's capacity to actualise religious transnationalism. Additionally, it demonstrates how it alters its cultural norms to fit the new environment it has migrated to, as well as how it adapts to diverse civilizations and faiths imposing their doctrines, dogmas, and practices.

### **Methodology**

A literary and descriptive research methodology was used in this study. It employs a qualitative methodology that makes use of both preliminarily collected data and postliminarily collected data. Oral interviews and focus groups were used as preliminary data gathering methods, while the usage of library resources, scholarly publications, the internet, and pertinent text books was used as a post-preliminary method. Information from the organization's bulletins, program books, and churches' websites are added to them as supplements. Ample use was made of the theories of renowned academics in the fields of religious sociology, African Christianity in the Diaspora, immigrant religion, and religious demography.

### **Traversing Local-Global Religious Terrain: a case of BCS**

Local groups starting missions and allowing their religious message to spread to a larger audience demonstrate the BCS's major propensity towards globalization. BCS has established hundreds of branches (bethels) around Europe in addition to the thousands of branches in Africa. Both Africans and non-Africans are their target market in the new environment. Adogame (2002) stated, that joining or participating in intra-religious networks is hard and varies from one person or group to another, provided there is main support for the them. In essence, most African Christian organizations would view this development as an essential tool for evangelism and global outreach, or what they refer to as the (re--missionisation of heathen Europe). Umejei (2023) however continued by saying that the reason for this intra-religious involvement and disengagement is the need for spiritual fulfilment and religious identity (as a place where people can feel at home), as opposed to living as aliens, outsiders, and strangers, particularly in foreign nations.

Globalization-related BCS drives or trends can also be seen in the way that some foreign visitors to a religious institution receive prompt attention and are even encouraged to become members. The intention is to automatically convert the foreign member and, in the long run, develop his or her support by requiring that, upon returning home, he or she assists the organization in opening a new branch in their home country. Because of this, such members are unintentionally forced to pledge allegiance to the religious organization before they can be helped spiritually or have their problems resolved. They are asked questions like "Are you ready to serve God?" and "Will you repent and work solely for God?" and after answering affirmatively, they are forced to make this commitment to God through the organization's baptism and religious re-atonement.



More specifically, BCS also see globalization as occurring through a phenomenon that might be referred to as "wonder transfer." In this instance, foreign members are given spiritual items such as holy water, holy oil, church emblems, stickers, and pictures of the religious leader when they visit the headquarters in Calabar specifically in the hopes that these will help promote miraculous displays in the foreign territory and, by doing so, when miracles occur, it will undoubtedly draw in more foreign members to the religious organization.

Other measures used by BCS to realize globalization stride include international crusades. In order to evangelize the world by miracles, religious leaders who are miracle-centred preachers in BCS travel from one country to another. In this vein, Adogame (2002) observed that the adoption of terms like "international," "world-wide," and "global world" to their nomenclatures, indicating their access to transnational networks and the wide range of their international ties that are inspired by religion, is one striking characteristic of the majority of these movements. They strongly suggest their intention to cross national and international boundaries. Adogame (2002) noted that this seeming global dispersal of these churches may have been the inspiration behind Ter-Haar's (1998) decision to rename them (African International Churches), utilizing the old initials African Independent Churches but assuming a new modern connotation. The majority of churches, according to Ter-Haar, refer to themselves as international churches in order to indicate their desire to participate in the international community and their conviction that they have a universal mission to fulfil.

The BCS encourages the use of contemporary information and technology, such as radio, television, internet, World Wide Web, Facebook, Tiktok, Twitter, Instagram, fax, phone, etc. in broadcasting messages about their organization in an effort to better demonstrate their goal of globalization. The growth of BCS in other nations can be linked to a number of causes, including advancements in information technology and communication. Modern transportation technologies like airplanes and a good road network, as well as improved communication and information technology, have all served to enhance and facilitate movement between the African and European continents. In addition to creating new sectors, such as the computer and information sector, modern technologies also allow for the instantaneous global transmission of transnational media and information. Because of the advancements in communication and transportation technologies, the inherent inclination toward globalization is sufficient.

BCS is one of the most well-known indigenous religious movements in West Africa. It was born out of the life, vision, and charisma of Leader Olumba Olumba Obu in 1959. (1918-till his disappearance days). The creator was a Nigerian who was born in the hamlet of Biakpan in the Cross River State's Biase Local Government District. The charismatic leadership of Olumba Olumba Obu is responsible for the movement's global reputation. The organization has had tremendous expansion, first expanding across almost the whole of the southern and western sections of Nigeria and then to other parts of Nigeria. As a result, BCS in its early years in Calabar could be described as an "ethnically based religion" made up primarily of Ibibios, Efiks, and a small number of Igbo speakers. However, as the organization gradually expanded outside of the Ibibio and Efiks geo-ethnic context to other regions of Nigeria, bethels are being built or planted simultaneously by both Ibibios and Efiks and non-Ibibios and Efiks speaking members in the nations throughout the West African sub-region, including Ghana, Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, Cameroun, Senegal, the United States, Canada, and several European countries.

BCS members we are expected to number 1.5 million worldwide as of 1991 (Gory, 1998). The All African Church Conference (AACC) estimated the BCS membership to be at 765,000, adherents which is a conservative figure. The BCS manual also showed a significant rise in the number of bethels. The number of bethels overall in the world was estimated to be 1962 in 1985, and 2161 in 2007, 2008, and 2009, respectively (BCS handbook 2012). Official data that is currently available also shows a rise in BCS bethels from 213 to 2262 between 1991 and 2010. Only 1945 Bethels can be discovered in Nigeria, despite there being bethels all around the West Coast of Africa, Europe, America, Canada, London, and other countries.



These statistics are incomplete since they only include official BCS data (BCS Handbook 2012), which is based on the fact that more prayer houses are opening up every day under the BCS banner thanks to the members' sometimes-transcending visionary abilities. Available data presented by BCS headquarter as 2022, doubles the data above and puts BCS membership statistic globally at two billion as the demographic figure (the glorious dawn, 2023).

These conservative official numbers above and its mixed socio-ethnic composition demonstrate that the BCS has moved beyond geo-ethnic boundaries in its development, transforming it from a "ethnic local based religion," as some studies about African Christianity have maintained. Hence, BCS can be categorized as a "global religion," or much more crucially, as a church that considers itself to be "international." In their early years, the bethels abroad in (Europe), were frequently predominately made up of Nigerians; but, as they become more established, both Africans and non-Africans began to flock to them. Although Africans make up the majority of the membership, there are a few Whites among them. The BCS has tried to promote its ideas in a number of ways, including by utilizing cutting-edge communication technology. The group aspires to develop a more positive feeling of itself as performers on a global spiritual stage,, as opposed to remaining limited to the geographic and religious periphery of Africa.

The organization has long adopted the use of communication technology. As a result, using media to confront globalization is not a new tactic. At various points in her evolution, BCS has actively used and still actively uses print, electronic, and personal media. Yet, their purposeful endeavour to establish their presence on the Internet is a more recent phenomena (WWW). The BCS is thus increasingly using the internet for religious communication, especially in the last ten years. In light of the foregoing, the paper makes the observation that new global socio-cultural realities are the use of fresh, alternative evangelistic methods which are closely connected. For instance, the individualism that is prevalent in Western countries has substantially rendered many of the recognized traditional techniques useless and significantly less productive (Adagome, 2002). Marketing outings, door-to-door, street-to-street, and general evangelism are examples of personal ways of communication that are gradually making way for more "impersonal" and "neutral" modes (such as fax, email, and computer websites). It makes sense that practically all of these bethels' websites are established, created, and maintained outside of Africa, whether in Europe, London, the United States, or somewhere else, given the significance and urgency that these alternate means of communication demand in a western context.

In this vein, Adagome (2002) noted that this is closely tied to the fact that a substantial portion of Celestial Church Internet connectivity is not available to members in Africa, and they are completely uninformed that the church has a website, and do not even know what and how a Personal Computer system is shaped. This view by Adagoma is here refuted because BCS make adequate use of the information communication technology. It's also crucial to remember that bethels in European nations use modern communication technology more effectively than BCS branches in Nigeria. During the BCS founder Olumba Olumba Obu celebration of formation, the organization presented its organization as an international organization. The BCS leader, who was ostensibly aware of the advantages inherent in an increasing level of global interconnection and exchanges, spoke with the senior hierarchy about the urgent need for evangelism through the electronic media (television and radio), using the Efik language with an interpreter who translated his sermons into English.

In order to air its programs, particularly Sunday services, the organization paid for airtime on some local media, including (NTA) Nigerian Television Authority channel 9 Calabar, (CRBC) Cross River Broadcasting Corporation Calabar, and (AKBC) Akwa Ibom Broadcasting Corporation, one of the states close to Cross River State. On Sunday mornings, episodes of religious programs that lasted an hour or thirty minutes are pre-recorded and broadcast. BCS provide audiences to the general public on Mondays from 4 to 5 p.m. through the program BCS Hour, which is hosted on Nigerian Television Authority channel 9 in Calabar (NTA). This





initiative has not only continued when the original BCS leader (O.O.O.) vanished, but it has also gained further momentum thanks to the post BCS leader. Nsan Takon, the BCS's information officer, claimed in an oral interview that the organization's post-leader has broadcast more than fifteen thousand recorded sermons on radio and television through the BCS hour program, all this is aimed at globalization inclinations.

The organization's international headquarters, specific bethels, as well as unidentified benefactors both inside and outside the organization, all contribute to the funding of the religious programs. These religious programs' institutionalization has had a significant impact on the organization. For instance, we receive comments from listeners (both members and non-members) via phone calls, faxes, and emails asking for prayers for blessings, wins, healing, counselling, etc. Several individual bethels have also started religious programs on local television and radio stations after gaining the required approval from the organization management. BCS has recently partnered with Lagos TV, a global network television, to show BCS programs every day from 8 to 9 am. This network regularly broadcasts the Eton movement (formation ceremony) for the benefit of viewers worldwide. According to Nsan Takon, this is due to the post-BCS leader's efforts to clearly represent BCS as an international organization working to usher in the new kingdom of God on earth (Nsan Takon Oral interview 2023).

During his yearly missionary journeys, the BCS leader has expanded the organization's evangelism and revival efforts outside Nigeria, where it is most well-known. Depending on the planned schedule of events, The trips frequently last anywhere between a week and several months (spiritual and administrative). The BCS leader visits different countries overseas frequently.. This tour involves the leader in a number of tasks, including debates on registration and the growth of bethels, negotiations for new bethels buildings, the resolution of disagreements within bethels, and the necessity to step up evangelism. Members are urged to pay the sum of one hundred and seventy thousand naira (N170,000) in order to secure a visa as well as a return ticket in order to carry out regular religious pilgrimages to the United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, France, United States of America, and South Africa among the countries recruited in BCS transnational exploit (BCS Trumpet 2022).

Most crucially, the necessity of administering the anointing or unction as a ritual thought to place members of the spiritual hierarchy who are faithful has prompted the yearly missionary travels to the bethels abroad. The rite of passage makes it easier for members to advance through the hierarchy's levels (Dike Joe oral interview). As a result, members who wish to develop in the organization, it becomes a must. Members who live outside of Nigeria are therefore urged to travel to the worldwide headquarters in Calabar every year during significant yearly events like the April and December convention.

The annual anointment rite is held at the international headquarters in Calabar, Nigeria, however many members are unable to attend due to immigration regulations and other difficult situations in many foreign nations. Only members who could afford the costly airfares and who are in possession of valid residency visas in their host countries are allowed to attend the event. The annual anointment rite is now also performed in the abroad bethels by the post BCS leader with the support of higher Bishops, Apostles, and Evangelist committed to the overseas bethels in order to ease this suffering and close the current communication gap (Dike Joe oral interview 2023). Also, members who live abroad and are unable to come to Calabar are always asked to tune in to Lagos TV, where the event is featured for everyone to witness, in order to get the blessings associated with this anointment.

In light of the foregoing, it can be argued that the annual pastoral visits also serve as a powerful argument in favour of maintaining the unity of all bethels worldwide to continue upholding the organization's unique doctrinal interpretations despite the various localities, and to create new avenues for recruiting new members, and this is as relatable to Olupona (2007) view.. Revivals, public talks, press conferences, and other evangelistic tactics are increasingly being used to place the organization on the map of world religions. On these



tours, polite calls are also paid to other religious institutions and authorities in the respective nations. The post BCS leader has used electronic media to take part in religious and public forums and dialogues (The Glorious Dawn, 2023).

In addition to using internet websites and email for information processing and dissemination, BCS has chosen a globalization-focused approach. Nsan Takon, (oral interview, 2023) emphasized that the organization recently gave computers and lab tops to its members who are in positions of leadership so they can work efficiently in the digital age. Given the foregoing, Dawson and Hennebry,, cited in Adagome (1999) noted that the primary purpose of the internet is undoubtedly to promote (religious) organizations and provide low-cost access to information about them. Also that the majority of these organizations who usurp the web sites do so in order to additionally attract potential customers or members, despite the fact that they serve as a novel and comparatively effective method of outreach to the greater community. According to Dawson and Hennebry's perspectives, BCS websites and online marketing tactics are essentially another way to evangelize the world and win over more "fish" (men and women) for Christ.

As a global organization, BCS is exposed to technological advancements that allow people to remain fully committed as long-distance adherents of the organization's faith and culture. Due to the fact that the current BCS leader now uses English to communicate with second generation BCS members, as opposed to the previous leader who used "Efik" language while preaching the gospel, BCS has made its telecast program available internationally to allow long distance members to participate in the live broadcast of the post-BCS leader. Transnationalization produces change in religious practice, it can be inferred. Mokhoathi, (2020) corroborated thus technology enables BCS to spread globally and reach millions of people. As a result, BCS practices change not only as they are implemented globally but also as they are passed down to future generations (second generation). The organization must therefore devise ways to replicate its methods and remain relevant to a second generation raised under a different set of regulations. In this regard, Olupona and Gemignani (2007) note that Africans in America lead transnational lives, which is increasingly true for immigrant communities in general. They are linked to African immigrants who reside in European nations like France, Great Britain, and Germany thanks to their transatlantic social and economic links, political activism, and cultural customs.

BCS cultivates every opportunity to demonstrate its international nature. To assist in the opening of new branches in their nation, they enlist the aid of foreign members. In order to present the idea that they are open to the world and prepared to evangelize it, they also claimed to be multinational communities by adding international appellations to their titles. In this regard, Adogame (2002) argued that the majority of African-oriented Christianity has not only created its own evangelistic and missionary dynamics and techniques, but has also given itself the mandate to expand its vision beyond its immediate surroundings and context.

BCS has undergone a significant transformation over time in order to keep up with the trend of globalization, which is why they are dynamic, evolving over time and creating new strategies every day. Turker, G.H. and Nortje-Meyer, L. (2022) upholding innovative strategies of religion maintained innovative religion have to keep up with current trend of globalization, as such BCS engages in sponsoring members to attend school in a new and foreign area. By doing this, the member gets acquainted with the new environment and settles there. When he said that certain African churches feel that they have a mission to us (Europeans), Turner (1979) provided evidence in support of this viewpoint. They are aware of our inflexibility and lack of effectiveness, as well as how little we share some of their fundamental views on worship, fasting, healing, the power of the spirit, and other topics. They are at the height of a flourishing faith. Additionally, Mingand Daliman, (2022) emphasized that they concur with the recently discovered African convictions that Africa has much to offer the world's nations, notably in the regions of human relations and the spiritual, where we are progressively drying out and lacking. Their eagerness to share their discoveries and reopen to us the dynamics of our shared ancestry is one indication of the veracity of their adherence to Christianity. International



flags are flown at the BCS headquarters in keeping with the organization's current view of itself as an international one with the world serving as its field of evangelization. The flags of those organizations illustrate or symbolize their worldwide character and global reach, and they also stand for the nations in which they are present.

According to Adagome (2002), who also notices this tendency, one new aspect of some of these churches is the symbolic manifestation of their worldwide operating frameworks through the hanging of flags (banners) at or near the pulpits as well as inside the church grounds. Each flag represents a country where the church has established ecumenical relationships, where there is a religious connection, or where a branch office has been established.

### **Recommendations**

The following possible recruitment tactics are highlighted in order to support the organization's efforts to go global:

The internet might work better as a supplement than as a substitute for other media.

When in contact with a different culture, certain organizational habits, such as going barefoot, should allow for absorption, mitigation, and adaptation.

The message of love for one another, which is the central idea of the BCS religious themes, should be spread, especially in the Diaspora, in order to promote the acceptance of all people, regardless of their race, colour, or ethnicity.

The post-BCS leader's efforts are quietly applauded, notably his personal evangelism to European nations, which adds a motivation and as a result, it ought to be further promoted.

### **Conclusion**

The mission statement of Brotherhood of the Cross and Star explains their intentions, coherence, and determination to use the internet for membership recruitment; however, the approach does not seem to provide any significant empirical evidence to suggest that BCS has been successful in utilizing it as a viable member recruitment medium. Future events will show how and to what extent the BCS is successful in replacing traditional recruiting channels with the internet conversion approach. The investigation suggests that BCS conversion happens primarily through pre-existing social networks and personal connections, as well as through other conventional evangelistic techniques like revival meetings, musical performances, jamborees, prayers, healings, and miracles—including the most recent invention by the post-BCS leader, the Eton Carnival Session. All these continue to add impetus to its globalization tendencies, thereby projecting BCS as a beyond boundary African Christianity.

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