



Christian response to the challenge and effects of religious Pluralism on Christian Missions in Nigeria

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Abstract

Pluralism is a contemporary challenge that describes the inescapable realities of the 21st Century. Gradually but increasingly, Christian belief that Christ is the way, the truth, the life, and the only authentic way to God, is challenged by many religious scholars, philosophers, and individuals. Consequently, Christianity is seen by some as one of many legitimate paths to God. The trend has caused some negative effects on Contemporary Christian missions and this must be tackled. The study was motivated by the researchers' observation as a Missiologist that most Christians in the local Churches and theological institutions seem to have lost interest in viewing Christ as the absolute reality. The paper argues that despite the commitments of Nigerian Christians towards Missions, the effects of religious Pluralism, if left unaddressed, can destroy the goal of Christian Missions. .

Four research questions are pertinent to this paper. First, what is religious Pluralism? Second, what are the forms or manifestations of Religious Pluralism in Nigeria? Third, how does religious Pluralism affect Christian Missions in Nigeria, and lastly, in which ways can the Church confront the challenges and effects of religious Pluralism on Christian Missions in the Nigerian context? For the paper's objective to be achieved, descriptive and historical research methods were used while findings were reported qualitatively. The historical process gathered data from books, Journal articles, and internet sources that give information on the subject under review while three respondents were interviewed using purposive random sampling. Findings revealed that religious Pluralism is not a hypothetical phenomenon but an empirical reality threatening the Christian faith and its missional activities in Nigerian. Intentional discipleship and use of strategic mission strategies are recommended as tools to combat the trend.

Keywords: Pluralism, Christian missions, Nigeria, exclusivism, inclusivism.

Introduction

Over the years, Christianity has been perpetually confronted by diverse threats, which include aggressive government policies, religious violence, opposing beliefs and practices of Islamic and indigenous religious adherents, persecutions, anti-Christian philosophies, and ideologies such as postmodernism and Pluralism. Pluralism is a contemporary catchword that describes the inescapable realities of the twenty-first Century. Gradually but increasingly, Christian belief that Christ is the way, the truth, the life, and the only authentic way to God, is challenged by many religious scholars, philosophers, and individuals. Consequently, Christianity is seen by some as one of many legitimate paths to God. This position poses a severe threat to effective Christian



Missions in Nigeria. It must be intentionally addressed if the essence of Christ's death on the cross and the Great Commission to the Church is not to be eroded.

In the theology and philosophy of religion, the theory of Pluralism is attributed to John Hick. His clear idea on this view is found in his major treatise, *An Analysis of Religion*. Hick observes that a pluralist is a person who thinks humans may be saved through several different religious traditions and saviours (Race, 1984: 515). Race further observes that the Pluralist hypothesis is a move away from the insistence on Christ and Christianity's superiority and finality toward recognizing the independent validity of other ways. It is a radical shift, which Gilkey addresses as "A paradigm shift...A monstrous shift," and a "Theological Rubicon crossing". (Race, 1984:516). This writer notes that the presence of pluralists in Nigeria is two-dimensional; first is the category of Christians, who subscribe that Christ is the way, but faith in Him alone is insufficient. Hence, the need to tolerate other faiths. For such Christians, a visit and consultation with the gods of other opposing faiths in times of life's existential crisis are not considered unbiblical. I prefer to name such Christians '*Exclusivists-Inclusivists*' because they believe in Christ as the only Way to God and at the same time, they maintain a belief that in addition to Christ, there are other possible means and paths to salvation and God's blessings to humanity. It is paradoxical for the same individual to maintain two conflicting belief systems, as observed in the case of '*Exclusivists-Inclusivists*' professing Christians in that category may likely keep a weak and nominal faith. As a result, their active involvement in the Christian faith's apologetic role and effective participation in the Great Commission will be largely hindered.

The second category is non-Christians who are inclusivists and contend that no religion, including Christianity, is exclusively sufficient; instead, truth and salvation are inherent in other religions. Both Christian and non-Christian pluralists are commonplace in Nigeria. Consequently, their presence and practices serve as significant challenges to Christian Missions. One of the approaches to guarantee the growth and continuity of Christian Missions in Nigeria is to identify methods of tackling problems threatening its mission and development, such as Pluralism. That, therefore, is the purpose of this paper. The study profited from a descriptive research design. Descriptive research is employed to obtain information in regard to the current status of a phenomena and to describe "What is" rather than "Why or How", with respect to variables or conditions in a given situation (Research Designs, n.d.).

The work used a qualitative approach in examining the current phenomena under discussion. (Kothari, 2004:5) posits that a qualitative research approach is concerned with non-quantitative data collection and analysis. To validate data from secondary sources, primary source was also employed as three pastors were interviewed, using purpose random sampling. Findings revealed that religious Pluralism is not a hypothetical phenomenon but an empirical reality threatening the Christian faith and its missional activities in the Nigerian context. The paper therefore examines the Christian response to tackling religious pluralism in Nigeria, suggesting viable ways through which the Church in Nigeria could possibly confront the challenge posed. The paper argues that despite the commitments of Nigerian Christians towards Missions, the effects of religious Pluralism, if left unchallenged, can destroy the goal of Christian Missions. It can promote nominalism among Christians in the Church rather than raise disciples. Four research questions are pertinent to this paper. First, what is religious Pluralism? Second, what are the forms or manifestations of Religious Pluralism in Nigeria? Third, How does religious Pluralism affect Christian Missions in Nigeria, and lastly, in which ways can the Church confront the challenges and effects of religious Pluralism on Christian Missions in the Nigerian context? These questions constitute fundamental segments of the paper.



Overview of Religious Pluralism

In a general sense, religious Pluralism deals with an ideology and a philosophical belief that all religions are beneficial, pure, and legitimate paths to God. It focuses on the various religious beliefs, practices, traditions, and worldviews in the contemporary world and the history of world religion. 'Pluralism' and 'Pluralist' as common terminologies are presently exciting topics and subjects of deliberations and discussions in Religion, Humanities, Philosophy, and Liberal Studies. It is used in conversations about races, nations, and religions that exist concurrently in a given society. Griffin provides more insight in his submission that Religious Pluralism is an ideology that endorses all religions as pure and beneficial. However, it is interesting to note that people who subscribe to this view do not always insist that their religion alone is authentic. They believe different religions can offer good values and truths, even salvation, alternatively defined to their adherents (2005: xiii). This view promotes the validity of different faiths and implies the freedom to participate or consult other religions for the desired benefits (Gilkey, 1992:40).

In its technical usage, scholars have considered Anaxagoras's philosophies, especially Leucippus and Democritus in the ancient times and William James in the modern period as 'pluralist' (Olawoyin, 2005: <https://www.theartsjournal.org/index/site>). Hunnex submits that on the above premise, Pluralism is "the metaphysical doctrine that reality consists in many reals" (1986:74). This writer disagrees with Hunnex's submission that "reality consists in many reals." That is because while the assertion could be argued to be valid in philosophy and logic, it is entirely inconsequential in Biblical theology. Before the era of postmodernism and its unique features, Christians were easily known and identified by complete devotion to Jesus Christ as the one and only Saviour of the world and neither philosophy nor times should alter this universal reality.

Contrastingly, in contemporary times, the unity of Evangelicals on this core issue has been eroded by philosophies and many ideologies exist that contest the supremacy of Christ as the exclusive path to salvation and eternal life. In the initial submissions, many people who claim to be Christians have had to choose one among three fundamentally different answers to the core question, "*Is Jesus the only Saviour?*" These answers can be stated succinctly: No! Yes, but . . . Yes, period! (Nash, <https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/midwestern-journal-theology>). The belief that Jesus is not the only Saviour is termed as *Pluralism*. To the proponents of this view, there are many paths to salvation, and Jesus is only one of them. The unqualified affirmative answer (Yes, period!) is the category where many evangelical Christians belong. This view is called exclusivism because it teaches that there is one exclusive way whereby men and women can approach God and receive salvation. The only way is Jesus Christ. Some scholars have sometimes named this position *restrictivism*.

Nash further contends that the name *restrictivism* is used because of the teaching and belief that salvation is restricted to only those who come to have explicit faith in Jesus Christ (Nash, <https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/midwestern-journal-theology>). Zackariasson observes that exclusivists typically claim that people in one tradition should regard truth claims on other traditions as false (2019:35). Exclusivism asserts that only one set of belief claims and practices can ultimately be true or correct. This view answers the question "Is Jesus the only Saviour?" with an unquantifiable "Yes." Nash opines that exclusivism rests on two foundational theological bases: the conviction that Jesus is the only Saviour and that only explicit faith in Him leads to salvation (Nash, 1994:9). In a strong position, Netland's submission is in tandem with Nash's when he writes that the tenets of Christianity are valid. At the same time, the claims of other religions, which contrast with Christianity, are false. He presents Jesus as the unique incarnation of God, the only Saviour, and that it is only in Him that salvation is found (Netland, 1991:9). Barnes cites Davies and sums up religious exclusivism as if the beliefs of one religion are true, the



opinions of some other religion (or religions) must be false. He defends it against what he sees as the recent excesses of Pluralism in religious education (Netland, 1999:9).

The third category is the qualified affirmative answer (Yes, but . . .). That is called inclusivism because the proponents believe that the scope of God's salvation is significantly more expansive than that of exclusivists. It is so vast and broad that it includes many people who have not explicitly believed in Jesus. This set of people believes that other religions are intrinsically valuable and should be appreciated. Proponents think Christians, Muslims, and adherents of indigenous religions worship the same God. They argue that each person should be allowed to serve God through a religion of their choice, and none should seek to convert another to other religions. Arguably, that has become the view of many Christian leaders and seminary professors, as well as many pastors, Christian workers, and denominational leaders who were introduced to the theory by their professors (Nash, 1994:10). This all poses a significant challenge to Christian educators, missiologists, and Church leadership, who should be more committed to mentoring and disciplining converts to avert producing half-baked Christians who become merely nominal.

From the preceding arguments, it is glaring that Religious Pluralism, also known as inclusivism, is directly contrasted with exclusivism. John Hick, a significant proponent of the former, describes "exclusive" as the assertion that one's faith alone is valid and sufficient. In contrast, Pluralism is the belief that reality, truth, and salvation are inherent in other religions (Hick, 2010:713). Sweetman contends that Hick's standpoint is bolstered in the argument that the range of faith originates from man's limited and various descriptions of God, which he mates with the "noumenal world." He contends that because people are limited in knowledge, conflicting perspectives in the description of God are inevitable. Thus, all religions are with the various views of the noumenal, which is God. Accordingly, all religions have a varied picture of God, and none possesses exclusive knowledge about Him (2007:149).

Similarly, Hick's submission proposes that no one religion can claim to be more authentic than another or represent the only available route to salvation (2007:149). In his view, every religion is therefore unique and should be appreciated.

Furthermore, the analogy of blind men used to describe an elephant primarily based on the part each person has access to, is a familiar similitude that pluralists often employ. In their view, though all the blind men (religions) are accurate, however, none possesses the full description of the elephant (God) (2007:149). From the analogy of the blind men and the elephant, it is observed that pluralists do not necessarily attribute ultimate power and means of salvation to any particular religion or prominent personality since all are authentic ways to God. That position is, therefore, in sharp contrast to the Biblical stance, which projects Jesus Christ as the only way and means of salvation. Pluralism is, thus, a direct attack on the root of Christianity.

Forms of Religious Pluralism in Nigeria

Religious Pluralism is a reality in the Nigerian context and has some visible manifestations: First, it appears in the form of worldviews and ideologies in the society. Affirming that worldviews and ideologies are forms of Pluralism in Nigeria, Ogunleye comments that long before the emergence of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria, an average indigenous Nigerian was involved in worshiping recognized and revered deities that are believed to protect, prosper and bless the people (<https://abjournals.org/ajsshr/papers/volume->). For instance, there are sects such as Ifa worshipers, Ogun worshipers, Sango worshipers, Egun gun, and Orunmila worshipers among the Yoruba people of western Nigeria. Among the Igbos of eastern Nigeria, there are sects such as



worshippers of Ala, Amadioha, Mmuo, Eze-elu, and Chuku-Abiama. Among the Hausa people, there exist Bori cults and other traditional worshippers' platforms (<https://abjournals.org/ajsshr/papers/volume->). Dime, cited by Ogunleye in his work, attests to the situation discussed above and adds that there were innumerable religious cults in pre-colonial Nigeria, such as Igodo, Bouabu, Sango, Ekpo, Olokun, and those indigenous faiths were pluralistic in nature (Ogunleye, <https://abjournals.org/ajsshr/papers/volume>).

Despite the growth and spread of Christianity in Nigeria, the worship of various deities and spirits has persisted to date. The challenge with worshiping various spirits lies in one's worldview and perception that all the different gods are expressions of God Almighty. Hence, individuals are at liberty to choose to worship any deity as a form of loyalty to the Supreme God. Ajayi opines that various types of spirits are considered expressions of God among Africans, especially the Yorubas (https://www.africastyles.com/culture/religious_tolerance). The implication of subscribing to the wrong ideology and worldview that perceive multiple deities as expressions of God is that there is no attempt to present the Gospel to the lost since all profess to serve the same God. In addition, Christians are expected to spread the gospel message to those involved in idol worship, and sin, who are also part of those with the wrong worldview. Such Christians, not regarding Biblical injunctions, freely visit native doctors, Odu-lfa, Muslim-clerics, herbalists, prophets, Babalawo's, or priests in any given indigenous religion when faced with life's challenges. This practice is directly associated with the Ibo's philosophy, "*Onye Chukwu n'azooo, ya zowa onwe ya*" meaning that He that God should save (from problems) should, first of all, seek to protect and save himself. That is similar to a Yoruba ideology, "*Ọlọrun o kọ ajoo*" meaning that God is not against self-help when people seek a solution for their problem" (Ishola, 2017:111).

As a Church pastor, the writer had a counseling session with a church member some time ago, who confessed her involvement and visitation to a native doctor. According to her, she got married over eight years ago but has no child. This challenge led her to adopt a self-help mechanism by consulting a native doctor, known in her dialect as '*igbe*' water spirit, who prescribed certain items to purchase to carry out rituals for her to conceive. In agreement with the author's view and experiential knowledge, Adewuyi is concerned about the danger of Christians' pluralistic tendencies. He recounts how a particular church pastor in Northern Nigeria had employed a sinister means to defend himself and the congregation during Church service. An armed bandit had surrounded the Church during worship. In response and defense to their attacks, the pastor instantly opened his mouth and let out some swarms of bees that began to sting the bandit to death (Adewuyi, interview with the author, Ogbomoso, 16/03/22). On another occasion, a Church member in a local assembly in Kaduna disappeared during a Church service and reappeared with cultic regalia and guns within a short while. Having been 'empowered,' he confidently fought a set of Boko-Haram groups that attacked the Church (Adewuyi, interview with the author, Ogbomoso, 16/03/22). These are a few out of several other similar cases. Those examples indicate that even among Christians, there is a need for more evangelism, missions, and discipleship that will be commensurate with Christ's expectation of an ideal Christian.

Second, Pluralism manifests in Syncretism, the fusion of diverse religious beliefs and practices (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/religious-syncretism>). Syncretism is the amalgamation of synthesized religious forms, meanings, symbols, ideologies, and procedures. In the 1980s, such a religious group was established by Tella with the name "The True Message of God Mission" other names ascribed to the Church are "The Will of God Mission," "Ifeoluwa Mission," and "Oke-Tude" (<https://imirronline.com.ng>). It was a combination of Christianity and Islam, intending to ensure peace between the adherents of both religions. The founder claimed that his action was



based on divine instruction. In the same vein, Prophet Dr. Samsondeen O. Saka, the head pastor/Iman of Mount of Losing Bounds, also known as Oke Tude, founded the "Message of God Mission" in the 1990s, with its headquarters in Ojota, Lagos. The gathering is a combination of Muslims and Christians. Saka claims that God sent him to bring the two religious adherents together and make them understand that they are serving the same God in different ways. Each worshipper has both the Bible and the Quran (<https://imirroronline.com.ng>). Tella contends that Saka borrowed his idea in establishing a similar group to his. One significant difference between them is their approach to world evangelization. Saka is militant and aggressive in spreading his message of peace and Chrislam to the world. On the contrary, Tella is relaxed and passive, believing the world will come to him for the acceptance of his message (Torell, <http://www.eaec.org/bibleanswers/chrislam>).

The results of syncretic practices are always weird and unacceptable to God in worship. Christians should remain with the distinctiveness and the power of their faith. Merging the traditions of different religions such as Christianity and Islam or offering animal or human sacrifices wearing of charms for protection, consulting witch-doctors, or believing that Christ plus any other deity or personality can lead to God, are all indicative of a fundamental gap between one and God. It is glaring that both Tella and Saka are pluralists. Such persons need conversion and discipleship.

Third, religious pluralism finds expression in a reversal of Christians to African indigenous Religion. Missiologist, Akinwale Alawode, expressed some fear that many Christians are reverting to charms and diabolical powers while still professing Christ. He shared an experience where three members of a particular evangelical Church at Ibadan disappeared during Church service. Later, they appeared to continue the worship service. The reason for their disappearance was a strange noise that suddenly permeated the environment. They had felt that there was danger and had to save their lives. It was discovered that only one of the men wore a protective charm to Church, but because he had body contact with those sitting beside him, they were all 'protected' by the alternative 'god' (Alawode, 2022). These are some scenarios that reveal the extent to which pluralism is posing a threat to the Christian faith and missions.

Okediran has also observed that in South Western Nigeria, most families have adherents of various religions represented. It is, therefore, not unusual to have family members solidarize with others in worship in their different religions. For example, it is common to have a Christian wife who occasionally joins her Muslim husband to worship in the mosque because she views all religions as the same (Okediran, Interview with the author, NBTS, Ogbomoso, 10/03/22.) Okediran is a missiologist and currently, a Ph.D candidate of Inter-cultural studies, who further notes that during most religious and cultural festivals in his immediate environment in Oyo state, some Christians freely celebrate and enjoy meals with non-Christian worshippers, whether the food is dedicated to strange altars or not. That is a form of Pluralism, and it should be discontinued. The writer strongly concurs with Okediran. Christians should be willing to adhere to Biblical principles regarding marriage, business, and other forms of partnership and interpersonal relationships. They should adhere to the scriptural injunction that admonishes believers not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers since righteousness and wickedness have nothing in common (1 Corinthians 6: 13-15).

Effects of Religious Pluralism on Christian Missions in Nigeria

1. Religious Pluralism creates barriers to Gospel witnessing: Religious Pluralism and its attendant conflicts have continued to create a social divide among people of different faiths. The existing division consequently, make it difficult for them to relate harmoniously. That has made it difficult for Christians and Muslims to coexist and work peacefully for



decades in Nigeria. That creates a significant impediment to the proclamation of the Gospel by Christians among Muslims. Christian missions thrive in an environment of peace and harmonious relationship. Sadly, many lives have been lost in the North of Nigeria, leading to questions about whether Nigeria is indeed one nation. In some cases, it has also led to reprisal killings in the Southern part of Nigeria (Nweke, 2019:120). Therefore, it becomes challenging for Christian missionaries in the South to proclaim the gospel message to the Northern Muslims when both groups consider each other an enemy. Further, Christians with pluralist ideology cannot effectively witness Christ to herbalists, Muslim clerics, or native doctors they consult with during life crises that arise.

2. Dilution of the power of the Gospel: Christians are supposed to shine as a light in the dark world and serve as 'salt' to give taste and beauty to the world of sin. However, it is saddening when they begin to romance with the world system by involvement in pluralistic practices, using charms for protection, and being involved in other misconducts. Their disposition tends to dilute the power of the Gospel. An unasked question in the minds of prospective converts would be, "If your God/Christ is powerful enough to save, heal and bless, why bow to other god's in a quest for power and protection?" - That causes a significant impediment to Christian missions.
3. Opposition and resistance to the Gospel: Pluralists, especially inclusivists, who fail to see Christ as the only legitimate path to salvation, often view Christianity and Christian missionaries as intruders, seeking to impose their religion and belief on others. This perception makes those involved resist every effort gospel proclaimers make to reach them with the word of God.
4. Assumed superior outlook of the Gospel: To some philosophers, it is an act of arrogance and pride to declare that one's religion alone is the correct and authentic one, while all others are considered illegitimate. That view is affirmed by Ruether's comment when she writes, "the view that Christianity, or the Biblical faith, has a monopoly on religious truth is an outrageous and absurd religious chauvinism (Ruether, 1987: 141). This position poses a significant challenge to Christian missions because people may not be willing to identify with a religion they consider to be proud and arrogant.
5. Other religions are viewed as available alternatives; Many people who are not ready and willing to deny themselves and follow Jesus wholeheartedly, as well as those who consider Bible teachings as strict and demanding, view other religions as alternative means to God. Akano emphasizes that in contemporary times, many Christian ladies are willing to marry adherents of other religions with opposing ideologies to Christianity because they would not want to be controlled by some Biblical teachings not pleasant to them (Akano, Interview with the author). Therefore, Christian missionaries' efforts are frustrated when those they are called to reach with the Gospel do not consider themselves to be in need of the Gospel because of the various alternatives they believe they have available to them.
6. Poverty, insecurity, and an unfavourable environment for Missions' activities; Today in Nigeria, the high level of insecurity is such that involvement in Christian missions is becoming a 'death sentence' for missionaries. Most of the insecurity problems are caused by religious bigots, who are pluralists. Where there is insecurity, insecurity is one of the most severe threats to national integration because it has a bearing on the country's socio-economic, scientific, political and educational systems. Crises emanating from religious Pluralism have continued to destroy national development and the peaceful environment needed for Christian missions to operate effectively. Hundreds of human lives are lost, properties running in to billions of Naira are damaged, and foreign investors in Nigeria withdraw their capital, leading to poverty and economic hardship (Nweke, 2019:120).
7. The pressure of assimilation; another major challenge faced by Christian missions, is the enticement to surrender to numerous antagonizing philosophical thoughts against exclusivism. Daily, Christian missionaries face the challenge of giving up their unique



differences and accepting that Christ was one of the prophets of God and a great teacher. At the same time, the Bible is a cultural relic. Christians indeed need to hold on to their differences if they are to have anything authentic to offer the world (Pellowe, 2015: https://www.cccc.org/news_blog).

8. Religious Pluralism leads to the raising of nominal and immature believers in Christ rather than in making disciples: When Christian converts embrace the ideology and lifestyle of Pluralism, they tend to remain stunted in their spiritual growth and in their relationship with Christ. Therefore, all avenues to spiritual maturity are blocked because one's devotion is divided. A little trial of one's faith sends them to consider other multiple alternatives to God.

Christians' Responses to Confronting Religious Pluralism in Nigeria

The focus of this paper segment is to identify and suggest ways through which Christians could address the challenge of religious Pluralism for an effective Missions enterprise in Nigeria.

i. Intentional Discipleship: Discipleship is a process through which people who profess faith in Christ are groomed to make them become like Christ. Commenting on the significant role of discipleship in a believer's life, Oswald observes that the word 'disciple' means a learner and state that it occurs in the New Testament 269 times, "Christian" appears only three times and believers" only two times. He argues that this indicates that the task of the Church is not so much to make "Christians" or "Believers" but "Disciples (Oswald,1994:8). Through discipleship, a believer is rooted in Christ and, consequently, remains loyal to the Lord despite life's existential crises. Robert E. Coleman submits that the commission of Christ to His followers is seen in the words *go*, *baptize* and *teach*, which are all participles deriving their foundation from one controlling verb, "Make Disciples" (Cloman, 1993:101). Churches and Christian leaders should be deliberate in planning discipleship programmes that will not only lead believers to spiritual maturity but also expose them to the reality and dangers of subscribing to religious Pluralism.

ii. Intercessory Prayer and Spiritual Warfare: Christian Missions is a warfare against the forces of evil. Likewise, the struggle against philosophical ideologies and worldviews that oppose the core of the Christian trust cannot be done in the arms or strength of the flesh. That is critical and calls for intercessory prayer. God frees the minds of those enslaved by employing such satanic strongholds through effective intercessory and spiritual warfare prayers (Ephesians 6: 10-18, 1: 18). There is no doubt that the challenge of Pluralism calls for strategic warfare prayers. That is affirmed in the word of God, which informs that "The god of this ages has blinded the mind of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:4). Spiritual warfare can be used by God to destabilize the manipulations of the devil in the mind of people so that they will know and believe in Christ as the only legitimate way through which one can be saved.

iii. Teaching and Preaching of God's Word: Jesus's assertion in the Gospel of John that "You shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall set you free" (32:8) resonates with this. Through the teaching and preaching God's undiluted word, people will know and practice the truth. Church leaders should be intentional in disciplining converts. They should apply the biblical principle that says, "All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, correction, and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). Teaching sound doctrines and preaching diverse types of Sermons-apologetic, doctrinal, evangelistic, and expository, should all be employed by Church leaders to counter religious Pluralism.

iv. Involvement in the Entertainment Industry: The entertainment industry's role in promoting Pluralism in the Nigerian context is very common and unarguable. The contents of most movies



and musical lyrics in contemporary times promote religious Pluralism as an ideal practice. In the lyrics and tunes of some songs and most Nigerian movies, Christians are shown patronizing herbalists and native doctors for solutions to their problems. Such films and songs make some impression that consultation with herbalists or other mediums is standard. To combat this menace, the Church should be actively involved in the entertainment industry to bring glory to God. They should write songs and produce movies that will not only correct the erroneous impact of the entertainment industry but also educate the masses on the reward of faithfulness, loyalty, and devotion to the one and only true God.

v. Power Evangelism: This is the practical demonstration of the power of God as proof that the Gospel message is authentic and supreme over all other religions. It collaborates with Apostle Paul's submission that "The kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in Power" (1 Corinthians 4:20). During Christ's earthly ministry, He engaged in power evangelism in which He healed the sick, cast out devils, restored sight to the blind, made the disabled to walk and brought back the dead into life (John 11:38-44, Matthew 8:1-15, Mark 1:29-31, Luke 4:3). The apostles of Jesus also employed power evangelism in their time, leading to the mass conversion of even those who were once pluralists (Acts 3:1-10, 5:12-16). Therefore, pastors, evangelists, missionaries, and individual Christians should seek to rely more on the power of the Holy Spirit to engage the supernatural power of God, which is a sure way to exult Christ above the lure of pluralists.

vi. Technological and Print Media: in the era of mass and social media, Christians should utilize all avenues in social media to write and educate the masses as to the dangers of religious Pluralism. Christian authors should also publish articles, books, magazines, and Christian-oriented literature to enlighten believers on Pluralism and its dangers to the Christian faith. Theological educators and curriculum developers should also include courses addressing such threats in their lists of seminars and classes offered in Colleges of Theology and Seminaries.

Conclusion

The paper has established that religious Pluralism is a reality in the Nigerian context. Its manifestation and effects are identified in the various mainstreams of society's religious and social systems. ReligioPluralism first appears in the form of ideology and worldviews. That is followed by syncretic practices and revert to African Indigenous practices by those that profess Christianity. The paper also reveals that some of the adverse effects of religious Pluralism on Christian Missions in Nigeria include: creating barriers to gospel witness, dilution of the power of the Gospel by Christians, who are involved in that practice, opposition and resistance to the preaching of the Gospel, among others.

To overcome these challenges, first, individual Christians should be thoroughly disciple in their local Churches. That will equip them to stand firm in the faith rather than compromising and assimilating religious Pluralism. Second, Christian missionaries should adopt effective mission strategies to counter Pluralism's adverse effects. That includes intercessory prayers and warfare prayers, involvement in the entertainment industry, teaching and preaching the word of God, and reliance on the Holy Spirit for the demonstration of God's supernatural power as a way of authenticating God's supremacy over all deities and lesser spiritual beings that attract people to religious Pluralism. On the foregoing, pastors, Church leaders, and missionaries should be intentional and strategic in confronting the menace of religious Pluralism in Nigeria.



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