

RELIGIOUS REVIVALS IN NIGERIA: MARXIST CRITIQUE

BEKEH UTIETIANG

Introduction

Within the last twenty years, Nigeria is experiencing an upsurge in religious revivals among Christian churches. These revivals which usually attract thousands of people from across the country, offer non-Christians an opportunity for conversion, or to be born again as the popular expression goes. There are also an opportunity for Christians to recommit their lives to Christ and come to a fuller understanding of Him as their personal Lord and Savior. These revivals have become so popular in the country that there is never a weekend that goes by without numerous revivals taking place. Apart from the laudable experience of conversion and re-commitment mentioned above, these revivals have also come to be characterized by sermons of prosperity, hereafter referred in this paper as prosperity gospel.

Religious revivals in this paper shall mean any Christian event opened to the public in which the purpose is to reawaken Christian faith, and generally characterized by praise-worship songs, testimonies, and passionate sermons; and emphasis placed on miracles, financial prosperity, and anointing. These events are usually promoted with the modern means of communication available and people are promised ahead of time of miracles they will receive. As Pastor Adeboye, a former mathematics professor, now turned pastor of the Redeemed Christian Church of God some years ago said about a revival he was organizing called “Holy Ghost festival.” He said, “The entire purpose is to

win souls for Christ. I expect heaven to come down to earth and also to let people know that Jesus Christ is still the miracle worker.”¹

In this paper, we shall first make an analysis of the social problems in Nigeria. Because of the vastness of these problems, only the problems of poverty, corruption, and disease would be treated. This would form the background for the Marxist critique of the Nigerian religiosity characterized by revivals. When this is done, we shall take a general look at these revivals and centering principally on their messages of prosperity. We will also focus on the ministry of Reinhard Bonnke, the most popular revivalist in Nigeria. Thereafter, we shall discuss Karl Marx theory of religion and attempt to use it to interpret the Nigerian situation.

Nigeria’s Social-Political Problems

To understand the social problems in Nigeria, one has to have some general understanding of the history of Nigeria. In 1914, Lord Lugard, the British Governor of Nigeria amalgamated the Northern and Southern protectorates and called them the colony of Nigeria, Nigeria being the name suggested by his mistress. The consequences of this was that two regions that had nothing in common, both culturally and religiously were merged together and this is the foundation of the religious and ethnic clashes and violence that Nigerians will experience after independence. Six years after Nigeria’s independence in 1960, a civil war broke out between the Igbo South and the rest of the country. The reason for the War is ethnic, geographic and cultural differences. Major

¹ <http://www.cbnturningpoint.com/Spiritual/RevivalInNigeria.asp>

Abubakar writes, “This situation had its genesis in the geography, history, culture and demography of Nigeria. The immediate cause of the civil war itself may be identified as the coup and counter coup of 1966 which altered the political equation and destroyed the trust existing among the major ethnic groups.”² Following the civil war were military dictatorships and failed democracies. Throughout the years of military dictatorships and failed democracies, the country became so corrupt that the leaders never paid attention to the social needs of the people. The people had their own fate in their hands, while they looked into the future without hope.

If a research was ever taken to find the most used word in Nigeria, poverty would make it top in the list. Nigerians have known poverty and feel what it is to be poor. In a country with abundant of resources, workers go for months without salaries or compensations. Making the matters worst is the level of unemployment. Though there are no recent government published data on unemployment in the country, the office of statistics estimated the national unemployment rate to be 7.0% in 1987 and urban joblessness to be 9.8% in the same year.³ Estimates today may triple those in 1987 reasons being that the population has increased, the number of enrollments in higher institutions has increased, but the economy has not improved, retrogressing and forcing many people out of business. Studies have shown that while only 125,000 students were enrolled in tertiary institutions in 1985, by 1990, there was an estimated enrollment of about 150,000 to 200,000 students, representing an increase of 75,000 students within

² Abubakar A Atofarati, *The Nigerian Civil War: Causes, Strategies and Lessons Learnt*, in, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1992/AAA.htm>

³ <http://countrystudies.us/nigeria/56.htm>

five years.⁴ Even if we take conservative estimate of only about 25,000 increase every five years, the estimated enrollment in 2005 would be 250,000. The World Bank report on poverty in Nigeria says between 1985 – 1986, 34.1% of Nigerians lived below the poverty level and by 1996, those living below the poverty line were 56%. Their report also shows that 60% of rural dwellers and almost 48% of urban dwellers live in poverty. In their general analysis, Nigeria ranked the 12th poorest nation in the world.⁵

One of the important question asked is, why poverty in a country with so much natural resources and crude oil? The biggest problem for Nigeria has been corruption. The Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria captures it thus,

Corruption is responsible in large measure for the broken promises, the dashed hopes and the shallow dreams that have characterized the existence of the multitude of Nigerians in the last few decades. The choice before us is clear: We either go to war against corruption in all its ramifications or we shall soon be totally consumed by this hydra-headed dragon.

That corruption is the biggest problem with Nigeria is not a secret. Transparency International, a watchdog for corrupt governments in the world rated Nigeria last year as the sixth most corrupt country in the world.⁶ The President, Olusegun Obasanjo in his inauguration speech as the democratically elected president of the country in 1999 insisted that they would be no sacred cows in his bid to fight corruption in the country. His attempts to fight corruption through his anti-corruption commissions have not changed the sorry situation of corruption in Nigeria. As Tayo Odunlami reports, “In

⁴ <http://www.onlinenigeria.com/education/index.asp>

⁵ <http://www.africaeconomicanalysis.org/articles/gen/alleviatingpovertyhtm.html>

⁶ http://www.efcnigeria.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=670&Itemid=2

Nigeria, corruption remains a way of life, especially in government and business.”⁷ This position can be easily substantiated with reports from Transparency International. In its study, about 11% of Nigerian households interviewed said they had given a bribe in 2004 to gain a favor from government or business.⁸ Though 11% may look as a very small number, when you consider the fact that only one third of Nigerians live in urban areas, whereas two thirds of the people live in rural, agrarian communities, 11% would be a significant number. People living in rural and agrarian communities will have very less to do with the government, if they do at all. While Transparency International does not tell us where they carried out their research, a fair assumption would be that this was carried out in urban areas. Two third of the 130 million population of Nigeria would be 43.3million. 11% of 43million would be 4.7million. For 4.7million Nigerians to give some form of bribe in one year to get a favor is a very significant number.

Chronic diseases are a big social problem in Nigeria. Every Nigerian would claim to have a relative that has died prematurely of a chronic disease. The World Health Organization report shows that chronic diseases account for 24% of all the deaths in Nigeria. This year alone, about 2,014,000 persons have died in Nigeria and out of this number, 478,000 persons died of chronic diseases. Their projection is that within the next five years, over 5million Nigerians will die from chronic diseases.⁹ Also, the country is being challenged by HIV/AIDS. Adult HIV prevalence increased from 1.8% in 1991 to 5.8% in 2001. The United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS has estimated that about

⁷ <http://www.publicintegrity.org/ga/country.aspx?cc=ng&act=notebook>.

⁸ <http://www.transparency.org/content/search?SearchText=nigeria&SubTreeArray=1>

⁹ http://www.who.int/chp/chronic_disease_report/en/

3.5million Nigerians are living with HIV/AIDS. It is projected that the number of annual infections in 2010 would stand at about 360,000.¹⁰

In the face of these social problems, Nigerians stand helpless. How do they find answers to their problems? What gives them hope? Perhaps, it is not the government because the people feel the government is not doing much. Would it be religion?

Religious Revivals In Nigeria

Religious revivals in Nigeria were originally associated with Pentecostal denominations, but today this would not be true because of the involvement of some mainline churches in Revivals. The Catholic church for instance through its Charismatic renewal movement organizes revivals that par with those of the Pentecostal churches. Olufunke Adeboye divides the history of Pentecostalism in Nigeria into three phases. The first phase is between 1930 and 1960. In this phase there was an interaction between indigenous Christian churches like the Aladura and the foreign Pentecostal churches. The second phase spanned between the decades of the 70s and 80s. Activities during this period included interdenominational campus fellowships, biblical inerrancy and the preaching of messages of holiness. The last phase which is of interest to our paper is the contemporary phase which started in the 90's. Adeboye says the characteristics of this phase is the relaxation of holiness doctrines, while the emphasis is on prosperity gospel and faith. A few of the churches also emphasize deliverance and healing.¹¹

¹⁰ http://www.usaid.gov/pop_health/aids/

¹¹ Olufunke Adeboye, A Comparative Study of Pentecostal Challenges in Africa and Latin America. (Lagos: University of Lagos,) pp. 2-3

Denominations of these third phase usually accomplish their goals through mega revivals that attract thousands of people.

Between the 25th and 30th of January, 2000, the Christ for All Nations Church, a big revivalist group in Nigeria headed by Evangelist Reinhard Bonnke had a revival in the city of Benin, Nigeria. It is reported that 1,158,798 people signified surrender to Christ, and 819, 154 people completed decision cards.¹² This is a large number of people bearing in mind that the whole city of Benin has only about 800,000 people and a good number of people also traveled from outside the city. This speaks of the popularity of such revivals. We will explore Bonnke's ministry in more detail later in this paper.

The Deeper Life Christian church founded by Pastor Kumuyi for instance, have a program called Miracle Revival Hour. This event is attended by thousands of people weekly. It is held every Thursday in Lagos and in Jos every Friday. This event according to Musa Gaiya is a "period committed to prayers for healing and miracles. It is one of the most significant aspects of Deeper Life worship."¹³ Apart from this event, the Deeper Life Church has a revival during every major Christian celebration such as Christmas and Easter and these revivals draw thousands of people. Somini Sengupta and Larry Rohter of the New York Times reports that the traffic between Lagos and Ibadan highway in Nigeria on a Friday is higher than a Los Angeles rush hour. Reason being that thousands of people from across the country drive to the 12,000 acre Redemption camp where there is a weekly all night revival.¹⁴

¹² http://www.openheaven.com/articles/kingdom_revival/artcle.asp?id=32

¹³ Musa A. B. Gaiya, The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria, a paper presented at the Centre of African Studies, University of Compenhagen, July, 2002

¹⁴ <http://www.nigeriavillagesquare1.com/changingchurch.html>

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal, a movement of renewal within the Roman Catholic Church is also famous for its revivals. Every two years, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement holds a national revival which draws a crowd of over 300,000 people from across the country. This is different for other Charismatic revivals taking place in different Catholic dioceses and parishes in the country.

Having established that these revivals are widespread in Nigeria, what messages do the people hear in these revivals? As earlier stated, these revivals promise prosperity, healing and miracles. People in these revivals are promised abundance and prosperity. A classic statement in these revivals is,

God has promised that his children shall not be at the tail but at the head.” Pastor Adeboye for instance in his Redemption Camp revival told the people, “There will be no more sickness ... There will be no more failure ... I have heard God speak and I can tell you, I have heard the sound of abundance.”¹⁵

The message of prosperity is so much emphasized that it is a cause of worry even to some conscientious preachers. Pastor Timothy Fabiyi of the Yaba Anglican Church, Lagos said,

We seem to be superimposing prosperity theology over and above the study of salvation. ... Yes, the Bible says that we shall prosper, but then we must obey. Everybody is running madly in search [of material things] ... this in fact may be contributing to some of the crimes in the society.”¹⁶

What Fabiyi is saying is substantiated with hundreds of criminal cases in the country committed as a response to a prosperity gospel. For instance, the Christ Embassy

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Corrie Cutrer, Christian Today, February 5, 2001, Vol. 45, No.2, p.40

Church in Nigeria has undergone series of scandals in which members embezzled money from their public offices and are purported to have donated large sums to their church in return for God's abundant blessings.¹⁷ Usually in prosperity gospel, the people are told to plant a seed of faith, the much they sow, the more financial rewards they will receive from God. I was in one of such revivals organized by Evangelist Emmanuel Onwudike of the True Assembly of God Church in which he told us God is willing to bless every one of us abundantly with financial riches. He told us that when he was at the revival the previous December, that he drove just a used Toyota but that this year, he is driving a brand new Mercedes Benz. He assured us that the God whom he serves is not a God of poverty. When that was done, he challenged the people to begin to give generously to him so that he would pray God to give them his blessings generously. Occurrences like this one are not hard to find throughout Nigeria. People have heard prosperity gospels so much that they have come to associate poverty with being cursed. Usually, heavy financial donations are made to pastors to break the curses of poverty. The simple reason the pastors preach a gospel of prosperity is to bring them large numbers which in turn results in large offerings.¹⁸

There is no healing ministry in Nigeria that spans the breath of that by T.B. Joshua and Reinhard Bonnke. This paper would concentrate only on Bonnke because of controversial circumstances surrounding the ministry of Prophet T. B. Joshua. He has been denounced by the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, an umbrella body incorporating all Protestant Churches in Nigeria. Their reason is that T. B. Joshua is not a

¹⁷ The News Magazine, Lagos, June 9, 2003

¹⁸ Corrie Cutrer, Op.cit.

true Christian or minister but a practitioner of Shamanism. On his Church website, T. B. Joshua claims to have healed many people of HIV/AIDS. He has their pictures published before and after the cure together with their medical certificates proclaiming them HIV free.¹⁹

Reinhard Bonnke was ordained by the German Pentecostal Church. He pastored a Church for seven years in Northern Germany before moving to Africa as a missionary. In Africa, he felt God calling him to be an itinerant preacher and he has since been doing that ministry. Bonnke is about 64 years old. His ministry in Nigeria which is always in the form of revivals has over the years attracted thousands of people. Corrie Cutrer writes that in the year 2001, 550,000 people gathered on an 80 acre of bare ground in Lagos to listen to him preach. Some lines from his message were, “Jesus is the Savior of Nigeria! ... All Nigeria is going to heaven! ... Paralyzed people are going to walk, ... Come back tomorrow night ... Don’t miss your miracle.”²⁰ During one of his revivals at Calabar, Nigeria, it is reported that many signs and wonders confirmed his message. According to George Canty,

*By a word of knowledge Reinhard called a woman out with a tumour of the womb, and that tumor instantly disappeared. Mr. Imoh Isong ... blind for five years, instantly saw again and so did many afflicted men and women. Deafness and crippling conditions gave way before the power of Jesus.*²¹

¹⁹ <http://www.themaninthesynagogue.org/allsets.htm>

²⁰ Corie Cutrer, Op. Cit

²¹ <http://www.pastornet.net.au/renewal/journal16/16h%20Global.htm>

Many people in Nigeria however are still very skeptical of Bonnke's ministry as well as people back in his country. Elaine Anderson a SIM international missionary in Nigeria believes that Bonnke's ministry gives the impression that if you do not get a miracle, you do not have faith. Back in his home country, Germany, people remain suspicious of him or have never heard him.²²

Karl Marx's Theory Of Religion

Karl Marx did not have a theory per se of religion. He was very dismissive of religion and so he paid little attention to it in his writings. His position on religion can only be appreciated in the light of his economic theory. This paper would only give a general survey of his economic theory as it relates to religion. Observing the depressive life of factory workers in England, Marx argued that their labor was being alienated from them. He said instead of labor to be a free activity of humans as they support their social lives over against the world of nature, it has now become something alien to man, partly because of the evil notion of private property.²³ Private property is a stage in his materialist view of history. His materialist view of history holds that private property is a later development of humans. In the beginning, people lived together and worked together in unity to generate and support the social networks. Later, agriculture was being developed as well as the concept of private property. It is this duo that created a division

²² Corrie Cuter, Op. cit

²³ Pals, Seven theories of Religion, p.133.

of labor and the separation of classes that was based upon power and wealth and this in turn created the social conflict that drives society.²⁴

People feel alienated because they do not feel the extension of themselves in what they produce. The factory owners alienate also their labor from them. As Pals writes, “alienation begins once I think of the product of my labor as an object apart, as something other than the natural expression of my personality for the benefit of a community.”²⁵ Marx thinks the factories and their means of production, are taking away man from himself because his talents which should benefit the community as a whole, now becomes a commodity to sell.

There are possibly two aspects of alienation in Marx’s thoughts. These are alienated labor and the need for human beings to assert their communal essence. Marx argues that human beings exist as a community and what makes human life possible is “the vast network of social and economic relations which engulf us all.”²⁶ His argument is that the role of religion is to take care of this alienation that exists in human material life and when this material life is emancipated, religion will also die. He believes that religion takes advantage of the communal essence of a people and create a false community of equals. Where religion is no longer able to play this role of a fake community of equals as was the case with the post-Reformation, “the state fills this need by offering us the illusion of a community of citizens, all equal in the eyes of the law. But

²⁴ Austin Cline, Guide to Agnosticism/ Atheism, http://atheism.about.com/od/philosophyofreligion/a/marx_4.htm

²⁵ Pals, Op. Cit. 133

²⁶ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/marx/>

the state and religion will both be transcended when a genuine community of social and economic equals is created.”²⁷

Marx says as capitalism alienates us from our labor, so does religion takes our highest ideals and aspirations and projects them to god.²⁸ The whole notion of projection is not new in Marx. Karl Marx borrowed this idea from Feuerbach. Feuerbach’s position convinced Marx because he wrote that the alien being talked about by Hegel and other Christian theologian is nothing else than humanity.²⁹ According to Austin Cline, there are three reasons why Karl Marx dislikes religion. The first reason is that religion is irrational, a worship of appearances that avoids the recognition of the underlying reality. Second, religion “negates all that is dignified in a human being by rendering them servile and more amenable to accepting the status quo.” And lastly, Religion is hypocritical because it professes valuable principles, yet sides with the oppressors.³⁰

Marx’s central views on religion are found in his introduction to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right. Spare us the long quotation. He wrote,

The foundation of irreligious criticism is: Man makes religion, religion does not make man. Religion is indeed the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man who has either not yet won through to himself or has already lost himself again. But man is no abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is the world of man, state, society. This state and this society produce religion, which is an inverted consciousness of the world, because they are an inverted world. Religion is the general theory of this world, its encyclopaedic compendium, its logic in popular

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Austin Cline, Op. Cit.

²⁹ Pals, Op. cit. p.139

³⁰ Ibid.

form, its spiritual point d'honneur, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement and its universal basis of consolation and justification. It is the fantastic realization of the human essence since the human essence has not acquired any true reality. The struggle against religion is therefore indirectly the struggle against that world whose spiritual aroma is religion. Religious suffering is at one and the same time the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.³¹

Marx in this text brings together most of his assumptions or beliefs about religion.

Marx here deals with how an abstract human being could exist. His conclusion is that it is not possible. This is because man is the world of man, state, society, and “the conception of God was a necessary conception in an inverted world. Once the world was right side up, the idea would not be needed.”³² One important thing we want to look at from the citation above is his position that religion is the opium of the people. What he is saying is that religion does not go deep to the cause of man’s problem but tells them the status quo is good. Religion is an illusion, one that has evil consequences. All it does is to provide excuses and reasons for keeping things the way they are in the society, just the way the oppressors like them.³³

How religion does this is to assure the people of a happy life in the next life. This makes people feel good in the present society and see no reason for them cause a revolution; this makes people accept the circumstances in which they go through in the

³¹ Karl Marx, “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right: Introduction,” in, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels on Religion, introduced by Reinhold Niebuhr (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), p.41

³² Cyril Smith, Karl Marx and Religion, Marx Myths and Legends, March 2005.

<http://marxmyths.org/cyril-smith/article2.htm>

³³ Pals, Op. Cit. p. 138

factory believing they have a reward in the afterlife. It is important here that Marx divides the society into base and superstructure. The aim of the superstructure was to keep the base stable. The base consists of material necessities such as food, clothing, shelter and medicine while the superstructure includes things such as arts, philosophy, ethics and religion. So for him, religion is used as a tool for containing the tensions that arise as a result of the clash between the proletariat and the bourgeoisies.

His position on religion is simple and clear: Religion is a projection of the human person's capabilities to a god that does not exist. It belongs to the superstructure of the society and its goal is to maintain the status quo which is the suppression of the proletariat by promising them a happier life in the supernatural world, a world that does not exist.

Marx's Critique Of The Nigerian Situation

Given the socio-political circumstances described in the first part of this paper, how will Karl Marx respond to the question, why do people go to the religious revivals in Nigeria? People come to these revivals, he will say, because they make them feel good. Keep in mind that these revivals preach a prosperity gospel, these revivals assure the people of their salvation; and these revivals claim to heal the people from their diseases. Religion in the case of Nigeria, Marx would think, is an opiate that gives the people a very good feeling in the midst of the hopeless circumstances surrounding them. People are going to these revival events because they are being promised a pie in the sky. If people are not getting the miracles and breakthroughs they are looking for, why do they

still attend these revivals? Marx's response would be that people attend these revivals over and over again, hoping that someday, they will get their miracle or breakthrough. Marx would argue that these promises are unrealizable because God does not exist.

Marx would also critique the false sense of community found in these revivals. He will argue that people attend these revivals because there is a promise that everyone is equal before the eyes of God. These revivals will fill in that natural need in them for community which the society has denied them through capitalism and private property.

Evaluation Of Marx's Theory

Karl Marx theory is a failure when tested with the Nigerian situation. His theory does not explain why people go to these religious revivals in Nigeria. Though the messages of the revivals are centered on prosperity, healing, and miracles, this however is not a pie in the sky as Marx would want us to believe. We have recorded above actual people receiving miracles in these events. People are not returning to these events because they are promised a pie in the sky, but they return because they are living witnesses of the powerful deeds that are done in these revivals.

Also, these revivals are not used to suppress the poor or to maintain the status quo. It is interesting to note that the President of Nigerian, General Olusegun Obasanjo attends religious revivals. His Nigerian Declaration on Human Responsibilities in September 1999 are said to be a product of a religious experience he had. These declaration are in no way opiates but even emphasize the natural communal essence

Marx talks about and provides values that are necessary in every ideal society. The President writes,

*I would like to appeal to every Nigerian to seriously consider whether he or she performs his or her responsibilities to his or her fellow citizen and to the state. While I will continue to abide my oath of office I shall expect efforts towards the upliftment of this community, Nigerian will certainly be much happier place for us all*³⁴

In this speech the president is inviting the people to work hard to build true communities. He recognizes that each person in the community has a responsibility for the other, a principle that Karl Marx's theory would support, and he does not promise the people an after life reward but says the country would be a much happier place for everyone to live if the communitarian principles and responsibilities are carried out.

The former President of Nigeria, General Yakubu Gowon also has a revival project, Nigeria Prays, which attracts many prominent Nigerians who come with sincere hearts praying and working for the unity of Nigeria. The Interdenominational National Prayer Network is attended by many prominent politicians in the country, including the President of the country.³⁵ This program which is not sermon based is an opportunity for people to come pray and worship God in truth and in spirit.

Though the President and most of the rich in the country are religious people, they do not use religion as a tool to oppress the masses. Nigerian broadcasters for instance are

³⁴ The Nigerian Declaration of Human Responsibilities. Being a text of an address by His Excellency, President Olusegun Obasanjo on the occasion of the formal launching of the Campaign on National Rebirth on the 10th of September, 1999, at Eagle Square, Abuja, Nigeria.

³⁵ Prayer News, A Quaterly Bulletin of National Prayer Network, Nigeria.

not allowed by the government to show miracles on the television in ways which are not provable.³⁶ If the government was using religion as opium for the people, the more miracles showed on TV, the better it would be for the government. Most of the religious revivalists evangelists are also very critical of the government. Pastor Tunde Bakare of the Latter Rain Assembly in one of his revivals prophesied against the inauguration of the present President of the country.³⁷ These preachers have also remained voices of social justice in the community, inviting the government to work towards changing the social and economic situation of Nigerians.

These revivalists do not make religion an opium of the masses. They work hard at changing the social and economic situation of the people who come to these revivals. Faith Tabernacle, also known as Winners Chapel for instance, has built a University to educate the people. This University is rated as one of the best privately owned University in Nigeria. The founding philosophy of the University is very clear as the excerpts show,

- A departure from form to skill,
- A departure from knowledge to empowerment,
- A departure from figures to future building,
- A departure from legalism to realism,
- A departure from points to facts, and
- A departure from mathematics to life-matics.³⁸

³⁶ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3672805.stm>

³⁷ <http://latterrainassembly.org/prop.htm>

³⁸ <http://www.covenantuniversity.com/aboutus.htm>

The philosophy clearly shows that its goal is to empower the people and to change both their social and economic destinies. It is also the vision of the University to “train students to be *expert thinkers* in their fields, and graduates who shall be mentally resourceful, intellectually equipped, insightfully entrepreneurial, visionary in their assignments and responsive as well as sensitive to leadership demands”³⁹ This philosophy and mission is goal oriented, forming not students who would wait for the joys of a life after, but students who would live a comfortable and joyful life in the present world. The Deeper Life Christian Church, a major revivalist group in Nigeria discussed earlier in this paper is also known for its hospitality ministry. It is called the “Home-Caring Fellowship.” In the spirit of African communal life, this fellowship provides companionship to members in the neighborhood who are lonely, give assistance to members who are having financial difficulties, providing accommodations to stranded students and food for both needy members and non-members.⁴⁰

Marx also argues in his theory that when a classless society is established, religion would die. This would not be the case in the Nigerian experience. Though the state of classlessness has not been achieved in Nigeria and may never be achieved, we can apply his theory to a shift in classes that has taken place in the country. Many people continue to move from one class to another. Classes in Nigeria are not static. Most often, people tend to move from the lower classes to the upper classes, suddenly becoming very wealthy or in the rank and file of those Marx would call the Bourgeoisies. When people in the lower classes who were religious people attending revivals move to the higher

³⁹ <http://www.covenantuniversity.com/aboutus.htm>

⁴⁰ Musa A. B. Gaiya, Op. cit.

class, they do not abandon their religious commitments. They are actually the main benefactors of the revivals. They do this not because they want to use the revivals to oppress the lower class but because they are committed to their faith and they see the hand of God present in their success.

The message of prosperity preached at revivals is not an afterlife promise. Marx analysis of religion focuses on the fact that religion offers the people a happy afterlife. The people who come to these revivals however are told that God wants to change their concrete situation in this material world. They are promised a living testimony of their transformed situation. In this case therefore, Marx theory would not work.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have analyzed Karl Marx's theory of religion and tried to apply it to the Nigerian situation. Though his theory makes an attempt to explain why people attend religious revivals, our critical application of the theory shows that it does not adequately explain the Nigerian situation. It is our submission in this paper that this situation remains open for future scholarly applications of different theories of religion.