

Re-Discovering God's Truth in the 21st Century an Exploration of Christian Faith and the Quest for Peaceful Living in Nigerian Society

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ABSTRACT

The 21st century has ushered in unprecedented changes driven by rapid technological waves, shifting societal attention from truth. Today the world is battling with issues of globalization, climate change, and social justices. Philosophers and theologians have engaged in academic findings examining human clashes leading to general societal failures altering peaceful coexistence of human race. The quest for Gods truth is paramount today; on this note the paper adopted the qualitative approach to help examine the trajectory of sudden departure of Gods truth. The research discovered that the world is marked by injustices, divisions, conflicts, discord, banditry, corruption, and all types of evils parading in our streets. Therefore, search for this truth has shown the central importance of human dignity with regards to the reality and facts about their divinities. Different studies have often emphasized human clashes and the general failure in the communal and institutional peaceful living. These structural and institutional failures came largely from the negligence, corrupt mindset, and compromises. Departing from this trajectory, the paper seeks to rediscover God's truth for the enhancement of peaceful living in our communities. The pursuit of peaceful living in the community is more urgent than ever. At the heart of this research lies a call to rediscover and embrace God's truth as a guiding light towards unity, understanding, and cohesions among all individuals. This particular study has global significance in solving human crisis that have totally disconnected and alienated Nigerian societies, organizations, and ethnicities from enjoying peaceful coexistence. Seen from this perspective, the study has significant contributions to the discourses on peaceful living, religious differences, protracted enmity, discrimination, and ill-treatments. Similarly, this study enriches the contemporary discourses on honesty, justice and integrity, for if God's truth is discovered, peaceful coexistence is guaranteed.

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Introduction

Nigeria as a pluralistic society stand at the cross road because of religious exploration, cultural dynamism, and rapid societal influences affected by secularism, inter religious conflicts, poverty, and the artificial intelligence (AI). Historically, "Christianity was introduced to Nigerians in the 15th century by the Portuguese missionaries and the British colonialist who came in the 19th centuries. Christianity spread across different communities often intertwining with indigenous religious belief and practices" (Adewale 24). Ojo said, "the time before the advent of the colonialist power, Christianity witness the proliferation of denominations in the body of Christ, few among them includes: Catholic church, Anglican, SIM ECWA, Baptists, and the wind of Pentecostalism, which grew up rapidly in the late 20th century introducing a dynamic shift in the orthodox way of worship and practices, emphasizing personal encounter with God and the efficacy of faith in daily life" (17).

Definition of Terms

God's truth: refers to the ultimate reality and righteousness that comes from Gods nature and character. It's not just about

speaking the truth, but about whom God is and what He does. God's truth is rooted in His being and everything He does reflects His truthful nature. He is the source and the standard of truth, eternal and unchanging. His truth stands firm forever, providing a solid foundation for faith and life. God's truth is fully revealed in the bible, the scripture which provides guidance, wisdom, and understanding for living according to his will. Jesus Christ is the embodiment of Gods truth, as he declared in John 14:6.

Peaceful living: Refers to a state of calmness, serenity, and harmony in one's life. It involved emotional balance, positive relationship, contentment, mindfulness and getting along with others, resolving conflict and promoting understanding.

Harmony: means a state of being balance, and coherence, where different elements work together in a pleasing and consistent way. Building strong supportive connections, listening, understanding, and being understood, also having ability to manage disagreement and finding mutual beneficial solution

Cohesion: Refers to the state of being united, sticking together either individuals, or group sharing common goals and values.

Building trust, understanding and sense of community

Rediscovery: is a process of finding or experiencing something again often with new perspective or appreciation. It may be gaining new insight, understanding oneself better, redefining personal goals and values, reflecting on memories, renewing or transformative experience, allowing individuals to re-evaluate their priorities, values, and goals, and find new meaning and purpose in life.

Theoretical Discourse

Secularism and Globalization

As Nigeria increasingly became connected to global trends, secular ideologies, began to challenge traditional religious beliefs. Uche (12) said, "The western idea of materialism, media, and technology has introduced culture that often-altered religious truths [1]. Nigerian cultures were considered primitive or irrelevant". Furthermore, many Christians in Nigeria were confronted with these questions of global secular waves, generating doubt about the authenticity of believer's faith and the applicability to modern life. Besides, Nigerian religious records are marked by significant conflicts between the two foreign religions of Christianity and Islam particularly the Northern part where Islam fundamentalism has gained footage. In his contribution, Danjuma (18) said "conflict between religious groups have led to violence and diminishing senses of security for many believers, and these forces Christians to confront their beliefs in the face of adversity, promoting exploration of Christian faith" [2].

Ethical Dilemmas of Christians in Nigeria Today

Today in Nigeria, Christians wrestles with ethical issues in conformity with what (Chukwu 10) posited that, "ethical issues ranging from corruption, social Justices, proliferation of internet access, numerous social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Tik-Tok, YouTube, WhatsApp, Tweepers etc. exposes believers to global interactions about morality, and ethics in the society" [3].

Methodology

Christianity in Nigeria today is swimming through numerous challenges in maintaining its relevance and faith in God, sleeping out on the Gods truth as a result of negligence. Secular influence and artificial intelligence have affected the society at large, resulting to sudden departure of peaceful living. This methodology aims to provide framework for rediscovering Gods truth in the context of this super technology era, establishing strong biblical understanding, focusing on the teachings of Jesus Christ. Also to examine the historical, social and cultural Christianity to identify it challenges, and engages Christians of the day, to reflect on the basic theological and biblical principles. Also to incorporate different approach to gain deeper understanding, and emphasize the important of spiritual discipline, prayers, bible studies to help them rediscover Gods truth. Only adhering to this method Christians can rediscover the forgotten absolute truth and be relevance and stay peaceful in this 21st era.

The Nature of Gods Truth

The concept truth, specifically divine, or absolute truth varies across different religious traditions and philosophies. The truth in Christian's perspectives refers to the proclamation of Jesus in John 14:6, Jesus said "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the father except through me". (NIV) This statement underscored belief that truth is inherently linked to the divine. Other faith, such as Buddhist and Islam present their unique understanding of ultimate reality and moral truth differently. The

challenge of 21st century hangs not only in defining this truth, but how to apply it's amidst wider world secularism.

One of the most influencing factors of Gods truth in this modern age is technology and artificial intelligence. The internet has democratized access to lots of information and facilitated global interfacing, allowing individuals to explore theological concepts and engage in discussion across cultural boundaries. These online platforms and social Medias have enabled rapid dissemination of religious content across the nations. However, technology also breeds skeptics. Therefore, the rate at which misinformation, secularism, and competing narratives enables Christian's obscure authentic spiritual teachings leading to confusion is alarming.

God's truth can be understood as the eternal and unchanging principles, values, and teachings believed to be revealed by a higher spiritual or divine power. These truths are often seen as embodying fundamental concepts of love, compassion, justice, wisdom, and moral guidance that form the basis of various religious and spiritual traditions. The different religious beliefs like Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism etc. are proofs of this fact. The variation is of little significance as to whether and how each of these religion searches for God's truth is conducted. (Gideon 57-61) contributed "While interpretations of God's truth may vary among different faiths and belief systems, some common themes include the importance of love for one another, practicing kindness and compassion, seeking justice and righteousness, cultivating humility and forgiveness, and honoring the inherent dignity and worth of all creation" [4]. Ultimately, God's truth is thought to offer a moral compass and spiritual guidance for individuals and communities to live in harmony with one another, with the natural world, and with the transcendent source of divine wisdom and goodness. Embracing and embodying God's truth is seen as a pathway to personal growth, ethical living, social cohesion, and spiritual enlightenment.

There have been diverse studies on the truth; throughout the centuries, humanities search for God has led the world into uncountable pathways called "truth" which has resulted into numerous religious expressions of faith found throughout every community and religion around the world.

God's truth as a concept in this study is undertaken with an ethical outlook for the negotiation of peace to regulate intergroup behavior in the community. This is because every individual is left alone to define his truth existentially. The relativity of truth has made understanding the truth very difficult to be accepted regardless whether it pleases people or not which creates crisis in most of the communities. This is because boundaries and policies are building around themselves just to maintain their position. Others sees the truth as facts, believes, opinions that are accepted as true by the majority. "In most communities, the quality of being true as well as that which is true is subjected to the individual [4].

In John 18:38, the question of what is truth was posed to Jesus by the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate. Since he was not interested in an answer, and Jesus did not give him one. Perhaps Pilate view truth as too exclusive to grasp. This attitude or believe toward the truth is shared by many in our communities today in Africa. This of course implies that people of different communities determine for themselves what is right and what is wrong. For this study, truth means that which conforms to Gods teachings as essential realities. For instance, Jesus posited that, you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:22).

The role of the scriptures in ensuring peace living

In the quest to discover God's truth many Nigerians turn to scripture as the foundation for every Christian faith. (Oluwa 21) said, "the rise of bible study groups and theological education reflect a yearning for a deeper understanding of biblical text and their relevance in contemporary society. He added that theological Seminaries, Bible colleges, secular Colleges, and Universities across Nigeria are engaging students in critical theological discussion promoting contextualized interpretation of the bible that address social issues.

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of truth to the Christian worldview. It is truth alone that sets men free from the bondage of sin and all of its miseries (John 8:32) establishes the grace in which Christians stand in solid hope of future glory (Col 1:5-6). Truth is the essential safeguard against seduction and apostasy (Lk 8:13; 1 Tim 4:1) and it is by living in conformity with the truth that Christians purify themselves from their sins (1 Pet 1:16). It is our personal relationship to the truth, through faith in Christ, which separates us from the evil world in which we once walked in darkness and secures for us access to God and fellowship with Him (Jn 3:21; Rom 5:12, 16; Eph 2:8-10). Any denial, rejection, distortion or neglect of truth constitutes a serious offence against God, His grace and saving power in Christ. God's truth is captured in the brief and powerful statements which underscore the depth of its significance: "The sum of your word is truth" (Ps 119:60); "this is eternal life, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17:3); "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6); "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17). For a better understanding of God's truth, the Bible says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1), this word refers to Jesus Christ. Because Christ is God's incarnate and possesses the divine essence, and God's disposition. This truth originates from Christ.

This paper affirms that, truth comes from God and it is expressed through Christ, and everything Christ says is the truth. Furthermore, Ephesians 5:9 declares that truth is a fruit of the Spirit, while Philippians 4:8 suggests that for the Christian, truth is the point of departure for all other intellectual pursuits. (Taylor, 184-186) However, the knowledge of the word of God conforms one to rediscovering God's truth [5].

The Importance of God's Truth for Peaceful Living

In a country where social injustice, corruption, inequality, moral decline, terrorism, discrimination, extremism, and violence have spread, implies that the fear of God has departed from people's hearts, because people divorced the truth and peace is obviously absent. Whatever we do, God's truth is central to our lives, and the use of truth underpins the basis of every other relationship. Understanding God's truth gives us insight. If the Nigeria will unite, and work together to advance the culture of mutual respect, to encourage dialogue, to defend their cultural belief, to defend justice with the influence of God's truth, peaceful coexistence will be achieved in the country [6]. Many Christians in Nigeria are devoted to rediscovering God's truth through active social engagement. Today's churches are increasingly involved in addressing societal phenomenon such as poverty, education, healthcare services (Igbokwe 220) The inability to rediscovering God's truth has made peaceful living in our African communities impossible amidst the various efforts to live together in harmony as a people. The peace in our communities has been truncated. Where peaceful living is absent violence, war, or fear takes over.

The Bible has made significant contributions to the world peace at different levels (Albert 11). God's truth (Bible) has always publicly stood for societal peace and harmony and against violence. It is widely accepted that violence and conflicts are the major hindrances to the development of our communities. They inflict human sufferings through death, destruction of livelihoods, constant displacement and insecurity. Violence and conflict disrupt the process of production, creates conditions for pillage of the communities' resources and diverts their application from development purposes to servicing war. Violence and conflict are thus responsible for perpetuating misery and under development in our community Peaceful coexistence is a universal phenomenon that every community desires and wishes to enjoy endlessly. Traditions, cultures, religions and societies do have different prescriptions to attaining and enjoying peace. Whenever and wherever there is peace there tends to be development and longevity is enjoyed (Salawu 10). To this end, the Bible which is God's truth teaches peace and encourages all adherents to pursue peace and live peacefully with one another in every community.

One of the climaxes of Christianity or Christian virtue is peace. Christians are enjoined to embrace and live peacefully with their neighbors'. The scriptures say "Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it (Psalm 34 vs. 14). Blessed are the Peace makers for they shall be called the children of God Matthew 5 vs. 9). Let him eschew evil and do well; let him seek peace and ensue it (1 Peter 3 vs. 11). Follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12 vs. 14). If it be possible, as much as it lies in you, live peaceably with all men (Rom 12 vs. 18)

Conclusion

Contemporary public opinion has come to assume that we live in the post-truth era, in which judgments on the most relevant realities of human life have been left in the hands of mere emotions. In such a context, it is very opportune to redirect our gaze toward the concept of God's truth, in order to help to adequately ground our relationships in Nigerian communities in essence, truth is vital, directly influencing our lives. We act upon what we believe to be true, thus shaping the way we live. Truth also affects how we see ourselves.

However, truth in this study is Christ who is the fullest revelation of truth- "the express image" of the divine. This revelation through Christ, anchored in Scripture and expanded through a personal relationship with God, responds to the human condition in a way that surpasses any other presentation of truth. Consequently, we, as human beings, must come into personal contact with this divine revelation. Rediscovering and examining God's truth revealed in nature and in human society is paramount to peaceful coexistence. We should also see the Holy Scriptures as foundational in clarifying the contours of God's truth and discern its relevance for our lives. Above all, we are to personally encounter Jesus Christ and experience with Him a vibrant, truth-affirming relationship with this, people are expected to live in peace and harmony in the community having discovered God's truth.

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