



- Review Essay -

Religiosity, Power and Greed – A Review of Olukorede Yishau's *In The Name of Our Father*

Olugbamila O. ADEGUNLE¹

Keywords: Society, Machiavellianism, Pentecostalism, corruption, politics, society.

“You”, he pointed at a light complexioned lady, with heavy breasts and moderate buttocks. “While I was praying, I saw you in a virgin land and two men were beckoning to you. One was stall and dark, while the other one was light complexioned. And you were confused, you didn’t know, which one of them to follow.”

The lady was nodding her head as pastor David spoke.

“Only one of them is good enough for you. The dark one is manageable. You’ll buy three packets of candles, three Lux soap and you’ll bring one thousand Naira with which I’ll do some other things. You’ll need to take a bath in a stream that flows. This will wash away whatever problem you may encounter in your bid to marry him. When will you bring all these things?”

“Tomorrow sir.”

“That’ll be fine. As for you,” he pointed at the dark ugly lady, “Your mother-in-law is behind the low turnover you’re experiencing in your business. What you need to do to change the face of things-is beyond you. There is the need to go into the forest to remove the padlock, with which she has tied your happiness. Don’t worry. I’ll do it for you. The Lord of Hosts will help us. But you need five thousand Naira. Can you get that amount?”

¹ Olugbamila O. Adegunle is a veteran journalist with over two-decade experience in the Newsroom. He had his first degree in African Language, Literature and Communication Arts from the Lagos State University and his Master in Linguistics, African and Asian Languages (Yoruba Literature) at the University of Lagos. At present, Adegunle is a PhD student at the Department of African Language and Culture, Lagos State University. He currently teaches at the Department of Nigerian Languages, College of Languages and Communication Arts Education, Lagos State University of Education (LASUED), Lagos, Nigeria.

Corresponding author's e-mail: alatasuesue@gmail.com

‘Yes, yes,’ she spluttered

“So, when do I expect you’?”

‘The day after tomorrow.’

‘Is that not too far?’

‘I’ll bring it sir,’ she further assured.

“And you Aduke, though you brought your friends, as we were praying, I saw a big river was about to consume you. But it is something we can avert. So, only your ears should hear; so, let’s go to my office...”

Introduction

In The Name Of Our Father is a novel that encapsulates religiosity, greed, betrayal, promiscuity, moral bankruptcy and the sit-tight syndrome of political leaders in Nigeria, and by extension Africa. The novel, set in the Nigeria of the last decade, presents an alternate history of Nigerian life under the military era of the 1990s. The author, an award-winning journalist Olukorede Yishau, satirises religion, particularly within the Pentecostal clan, wielding same as a web that encompasses certain societal ills, and how religion cumulatively works on the psyche of unwary Nigerians (Ewejobi, 2014). The reviewer adopts the Machiavellian Theory for this work in view of the ‘the end justifies the means’ proclivity of many political and religious leaders in Africa today.

Anchoring the fiction on two themes-religiosity and dictatorship, the author highlights the desperation of many, a Nigerian, for spiritual liberation and succor in a society that emblematises poverty, squalour and seeming hopelessness on one hand; while unraveling the determination of a dictatorial leader to stay put in power regardless, on the other. The cover page of the book shows a dark-goggled, high-ranking military officer looking menacingly. That image itself is a sad reminder of the period Nigerian sunk under the military jackboot; where law melted into decrees, and where fundamental human right and other rights were trampled upon when a nation, its institutions and people become puppets to the holders of gun. Overall, *In The Name Of Our Father*, is indicative of economic, social and cultural degeneration the country currently represents, and how every Nigerian has directly or indirectly been culpable.

Synopsis of the Book

From the blues appears a ‘Man of God’-Prophet Titus Cornelius Jeremiah, formerly Alani, a man with a sordid past. Alani, a wretch by all standard, had eloped from Lagos, after impregnating his girlfriend who committed abortion for him but died in the process. He arrived the village to meet with his wife and only son who a few years ago, he sent home when things turned sour for him in the city, only to realise his son had just died tragically. Determined to fight life to a standstill, he moved back to Lagos, to his old-time friend and now Pastor David whom he once helped many years ago. David reciprocated the gesture by introducing Alani into an occult group-the Brotherhood. And as Alani would soon discover, each member of the secret cult constitutes the movers and shakers of the society.

After his initiation, the Brotherhood had assisted Alani with some funds to set up his own ministry-Amazing Grace Chapel. Alani also adopts a new nomenclature-Prophet Titus Cornelius Jeremiah, shortened as Prophet T.C. Jeremiah because of his new calling. Not long after, he had travelled along with Pastor David to India, and that trip further opens the floodgates of breakthroughs for his ministry.

Having been spiritually fortified, Prophet Jeremiah bewitched his members, and acted like Lord of the Manor. He used his burgeoning fame to extend his ministry and connect with some high-heeled in the Nigerian society, up to the Presidency. Nevertheless, his path soon crossed with Justus Omoeko, a daring journalist and nemesis who already had a dossier of the prophet’s atrocities. Omoeko is hell bent on capturing the cleric’s scandal in his yet-to-be-released book-*Angels Live In Heaven*. Prophet Jeremiah’s cat was about to be let out of the bag. Such a disgrace must not be allowed. The story then erupts into scenes of power play, shenanigans, and scheming between the two personae that eventually climaxed into Prophet Jeremiah’s sad end.

Here however, the reviewer attempts to not only pinpoint the Machiavellian tendencies in religion and politics as demonstrated by the book; he also highlights the endemic corruption which has been the hallmark of governance in Nigeria for years coursing through varying military era up to the present dispensation. He identifies varying character traits either in the positive or otherwise, which all coalesced to bring the country to the brink, while religions serve a confluence that further heats up the fireworks.

Writing Technique

In The Name Of Our Father flows across 30-chapters, split into two independent halves - ‘The Gathering Storm’ and ‘The Storm’

By adopting a story within story technique, the author weaves a blundering tale across two dramatic personae-Justus Omoeko, the protagonist, and Prophet Jeremiah, the antagonist. Omoeko is the uncompromising, daring but defenseless journalist who fails to acknowledge the fact that his philosophy of 'journalism without intimidation' could be better practiced in saner climes than Nigeria. His innocent obduracy coupled with his insistence towards ethical practice turns out his albatross.

The book opens to Omoeko, now a frustrated journalist who has been slammed by series of threats by Prophet Jeremiah, owing to the book the former is writing which supposedly contains sordid details of the latter. Shortly afterwards, another letter, fifth in the series, was soon delivered at his doorstep, but this time laced with more frightening contents '*...Mr. Journalist, do you know what happened to Dele Giwa? (Dele Giwas was an astute journalist/ editor who was killed via a parcel bomb in October 1986 in what many analysts suspected as assassination)... That useless book you are working on must not see the light of the day. If it does, the light will be permanent snuffed out of your life.*'

However, having given it a thought, Justus felt he had nothing to lose again, it is either death or the book. He revisits the manuscript and then, in a flashback, the story dissolves full throttle into cascading scenes that showcase various details of Prophet Jeremiah ugly underbelly and how he, (Justus) almost paid with his dear life when he was eventually roped into a phantom coup. In the end, Omoeko was freed. And back in the Newsroom, he, again, reflects on the rough road he once treaded in his resolve to uphold the truth. He realises that the loss of his relationship with his fiancée and his sojourn into prison was all a handiwork of Prophet Jeremiah's power and political shenanigans.

Theoretical Framework

The reviewer adopts the Machiavellian theory for this work.

Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), was a political and social scientist of Italian descent from Florentine who wrote *The Prince*, as a guide for would-be rulers where he offered tips on how they can successfully administer their subjects.

Machiavellianism as a political ideology is known for its inclination towards winner-takes-all; that is, amassing and retaining political power by all means possible. Over the years, the theory has since been experimented in other facets like religion and sociology. Interestingly, Machiavellianism has been incorporated and interpreted in different shades and guises among politician and religious leaders in Nigeria and Africa by extension. The sit-tight approach of many a Pentecostal shepherd as well as political leaders across many African countries is a case in point.

However, the acceptance, adoption, promotion and flourishing of this immoral politics can only be possible in a society where there is little or no moral inclination. For instance, in the book under review, Prophet Jeremiah assumed the role of Alpha and Omega of his church leadership. He had the Elders Council, his ministry's highest decision-making body, in his pocket. To the Elders Council, Prophet Jeremiah represents both the spiritual head of the ministry and leader of the Elders Council put together. So, no one dares challenge him, or breathe out a word about his philandering, or worse still, his rapacious looting of the church treasury.

In fairness to Machiavelli, some of his propositions have been found to be a potent tool in governance, religious settings as well as in corporate spheres. Nevertheless, one thing that cannot be taken away from his philosophy is how a ruler can achieve his goal willy-nilly. And in truth, if a careful look could be taken into peoples' daily interpersonal relationship across board, then Machiavellian theory could not be farther from the truth.

It is common knowledge that in a day-to-day relationship, individuals have often thrown morality to the dogs. What is left is the supplanting of decency by moral, spiritual, and emotional bankruptcy. People have now grown accustomed to seeing wickedness and being cunning as lifeline towards achieving their ultimate desires. It is obvious that in interpersonal relationship, many people have jettisoned morality and replaced good and virtuous behaviours with wickedness and callousness.

Gbatar (2023), in contextualising Machiavellian theory in Nigeria politics, submits that politics is carried out on the principle of who gets what, when, where and how at whomever expense, adding that 'this lack of love and concern for other counterpart and the masses in the motives of the Nigerian political actors is resultant to a lot of mischief, slander, libel, lies, reckless elimination of lives, destruction of property, among other political evils that envelop the Nigerian political atmosphere, making it a dirty game.' Substantiating Gbatar, Oyekunle (2010) affirms that events in Nigeria has shown that thuggery, attacks, use of money, molestation, threat, rigging, and all forms of electoral malpractices, all showing traces of Machiavelli, were employed to win and secure political power,

Akhaine (2020) likens Machiavelli approach to a political theory that is more or less a formulation for a systematic understanding of political phenomena that is rooted in power. Further, by secularising the realm of the state, Akhaine says Machiavelli then establishes the autonomy of politics as an amoral enterprise.

In his opinion Ajayi (2021) contextualises Machiavelli theory in religious practices in Africa. He states that using religions and moral pretence to prank

unsuspecting members, just as Prophet Jeremiah did in the work under review, is another form of Machiavellianism. He states thus:

Though many could use religiosity and moral pretence to deal unscrupulously with other people, the truth is that they have exhibited Machiavellianism in that regard, for majorly, Machiavelli holds to cunning and immoral means of reaching targeted goals. This implies that we can have another version of this theory apart from its famous political interpretation that it is purposefully meant for.

Using the Skinner's theory which reiterates that in human behaviour, stimulus evokes a response which leads to reinforcement, Ajayi (2021) argues that tendencies for Machiavellianism among political and religious leaders in Africa could not have festered if the citizenry have remained above board. He posits that since the citizenry, as is seen in *In The Name Of Our Father*, have learned to circumvent standard; this has also rubbed off on its polity. According to him,

A close look at every section of the country reveals the reflection of cunning, dubious and immoral ways of achieving personal goals without making moral recourse to the ideal and stipulated means of getting things done. This implies that Nigerian society is not hostile or allergic to immorality. If the system and ideology are friendly to lawlessness, politics cannot be an exception, and if people are morally inclined, immorality will not flourish in Nigerian politics... the manifestation of immorality of different kind in Nigeria makes the nation a victim of Machiavellianism. The notion that one can do wrong thing and escape its consequential punishment is rightly obvious in Nigeria. This occasions the continuous record of violence, kidnapping, robbery and rape. Since the perpetrators know that they can escape with such act as this is evident in the inability of the nation to bring to book many of those who have indulged in such evil before...

And in truth, Prophet Jeremiah's excess could have been checked if the society in which he operated had maintained some degree of decency.

Methodology

The reviewer adopts the qualitative approach by extracting a handful of quotes in the book from different themes such as greed, lust, power, poverty, desperation, avarice, wickedness, politics, religion, and ritualism among others as espoused by the author, substantiating same with copious references from scholars. Besides, some key characters whose roles are emblematic of inclination by Nigerians to seek a lifeline in any circumstances they find themselves at any point in time were highlighted. These roles not only have both negative and positive impact in the development of the book; they equally culminate in the dramatic flaw of the protagonist. Also, through other references from scholars, the reviewer validates some of the societal ills in Nigeria as explained in the author's work, comparing them with views from earlier researchers in religion, politics and sociology.

Literature Review

According to Ogbaji and Swart (2015) religion constitutes an inextricable part of African society; and as such, political and socio-economic activities are often flavoured with religious expressions and rituals. On his part, Mbiti (1999:15), asserts that Africans are notoriously religious since religion permeates all departments of life so much so that it may not just be easy to isolate one from another. Mbiti further argues that it is difficult to define religion, and most importantly in the context of African traditional life. Despite this difficulty, he asserts that for Africans, religion pertains to the question of existence or being.

Mbiti's view resonates with Chitando et al. (2013:5-7) that an African's choice of religion as a lifeline demonstrates how intricately he is imbued with religious consciousness wherever he finds himself. Going by the aforementioned views, it may not be out of place to admit that African worldview on religion equally rubs off on their socio-political and economic life in like manner economy and politics also seep into religion.

Africa has been known to practice its indigenous religion which is today called African Traditional Religion (ATR) long before the invasion of the colonialists. However, the introduction of Christianity by the colonialists, as well as Islam which came much earlier than Christianity in 1803 through an Islamic Jihad of the Fulani Scholar Usman Dan Fodio, which led to the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate (Kukah:1993), appeared to have distorted ATR. Even as ATR legacy still remains a compelling force which has and still continued to have influences on identity and values of Africans, both Christianity and Islam appears to have relegated ATR to the backstage, while becoming the very basis of authority in African society.

Metuh (2002:vii-xvi) says Christianity has been in existence in Africa for more than two thousand years with glaring evidence which can be seen in the proliferation of religious houses scattered in many parts of Africa to date. Kalu (2010a:11-15) on his own, postulates that African political and economic elite have often resorted to religion in their struggle for the acquisition of wealth, status and political power. In African societies such as Nigeria for example, Kalu says the state provides a source of power and wealth than any other institution in society which is competed for often with vast cruelty. Against this backdrop, religion is tactically deployed as an instrument of competition, which Kalu says could be both 'pervasive and complex' (Kalu 2010d:36). Further, he postulates that religion is employed in the political and economic spheres by those who legitimate their power by appealing to ritual sources often found in ATS. This claim, he further attests, enable traditional secret societies

to serve as instruments for mobilising economic and political power in contemporary African society (Kalu 2010d:37).

Agi (2008:133) for instance, cited examples where religious leaders in Nigeria abdicated their prophetic role and became government megaphones. Although, they were either used to laud government agenda, or to douse tensions emanating from pieces of information that were hitherto confidential but now in the public domain, such gesture did not come without the clerics being pampered with cash and other luxuries to perform such task.

Uzuegbunam (2021) recounts how the Western colonialist invaded Africa ostensibly to spread the gospel of the Holy-Bible, but secretly to conquer Africa or use religion as a tool for segregation and perpetual economic exploitation. Today Uzuegbunam says western colonialists have not only succeeded in their agenda, they were also able to set African nations up against each other by using religion as an ideal tool for attaining internal dislocation and conflict, which, according to him, has continued to keep African countries underdeveloped many years after the European have since withdrawn, following attainment of independence by many African countries.

Uzuegbunam fears that the next form of colonialism threatening to wipe out Africa from the face of the earth is religious colonialism. He put forward his arguments thus;

The immigrant religions (Christianity and Islam) have displaced the indigenous religions and permanently distorted the values and aspirations of the indigenous African people. Today, it is clear that the African has neither regard nor sufficient fear or trust in the structural elements of the immigrant religions. For instance, African office holders are sworn into office with the Bible or the Qur'an, and, for lack of regard or fear for these elements, they defy their oaths of office with impunity, and with minimum restraint. It is also evident that the only oaths which the African feels bound to is the oath taken before the shrines of the indigenous African religions. This shows that although the immigrant religions have taken over the public space in Africa as vestiges of foreign invasion and colonization, yet, the heart of African is still tied to, and still reveres the facilities and elements of the indigenous African religions.

Uzuegbunam's submission however compels Ogbaji and Swart (2015) to wonder whether African religiosity gives impetus to poverty and corruption on the continent or whether religion has a crucial role to play in the liberation of African societies from poverty and corruption. According to them,

The enormity of corruption in African society in the midst of intense religiosity inevitably raises serious questions about the kind of Christian, Islamic and traditional religious morality that exists in this predominantly religious continent. Moreover, one may ask: ... If Christianity, Islam and traditional religion are the norm, how, then, should the remarkable rise in instances of corruption, the looting of public treasuries, electoral malpractices, cultism, bribery, armed

robbery, kidnappings and other forms of criminal activity in so many African societies be explained? What constitutes the actual moral authority of Christians, Muslims and traditional religionists?...

Something noteworthy here is that all the aforementioned scholars agree on one thing - that aside that Christianity and Islam succeeded in distorting African values and ATR, they are today deployed as a negotiating tool in politics, and social status. Little wonder, the protagonist of *In The Name Of Our Father* - Prophet Jeremiah works his way from his modest beginning to Aso-Rock where he was asked to head all the marabouts whose services were sought to provide a spiritual bulwark to the Head of State who also desired is to rule his subjects forever.

Characterisation

The author identifies certain character traits, commonplace in the Nigerian context, all which combined to bear on the protagonist both positively and negatively. Some of them are highlighted thus:

Rebecca

Rebecca is Prophet Jeremiah's former mistress now turned wife. Rebecca's case is a shining example of many unfortunate young ladies in which the Nigerian trajectory forced into prostitution, alongside her friend Georgina. As a hookup girl, the prophet picked Rebecca on the street, albeit, for a one-night stand. Nevertheless, there seems to be an irresistible force between the pair as what started as mere 'business' metamorphosed into intimacy. They got married thereafter. Nevertheless, reality soon sets in after Rebecca had suffered six miscarriages within two years of their marriage, a fallout of the charm that was procured for Prophet Jeremiah courtesy of the Brotherhood.

Beyond her ordeal nonetheless, Rebecca equally ranks among minister's wives in Nigeria whose statuses bestow upon them limitless life of opulence. Being called *Mummy G.O* in a ministry so big with many branches scattered across the country is enthralling enough. This is not to talk of money and power that serves as accompaniment. Rebecca has the world at her fingertips! All the same, her joy is seared by her inability to bear her husband a child. This also lends credence to the social stigma that is trademark of barren women in the African setting. As a way of wriggling out of her difficult corner, she, in concert with her husband, had hatched a plan: she is going to pretend as a pregnant woman by repackaging her stomach to make it look bulging; and then travel abroad for some months and return with a baby, in order to give the impression that she delivered a child while overseas.

Nkechi

Another character is Nkechi, a desperado and go-getter. Nkechi is one of Prophet Jeremiah's church members cum mistresses. However, she was not in that relationship for fun, but love of money and substance. From a very poor background, Nkechi recalls her humble beginning where she survived, alongside her parents, in a room and parlour 'face-me-I-slap-you' apartment. She would rather not replicate that kind of life. She would cling on anything to fight her way out of poverty, for good.

She got pregnant for Prophet Jeremiah; and a scandal that would rock Prophet Jeremiah's ministry was underway. This was going to turn out a scandal for both of them.

And here is Nkechi, being presented with a golden opportunity. Prophet Jeremiah had appealed to her to keep the pregnancy although with a promise of a better life. Besides, Nkechi could not track the paternity of the pregnancy to Prophet Jeremiah, since she was equally having another affair with a younger fellow at the time. But that meant a little to her. She had her eyes on the kill. Nkechi, now living in a well-furnished apartment of hers with a brand-new vehicle courtesy of Prophet Jeremiah's generosity, found irresistible the paraphernalia of wealth and good life she was once denied as a young girl but which Rebecca, the prophet's wife enjoys. She therefore was not going to allow such opportunities pass her by. She pranked Rebecca who had taken a short leave to the United Kingdom with an anonymous letter stating her (Rebecca) husband's sordid details with another woman, a development that forced Rebecca to tearfully end her marriage with Prophet Jeremiah.

Pastor Hezekiah

Pastor Hezekiah is Prophet Jeremiah's resident pastor. He exemplifies a microscopic few of church leaders in Nigeria that suddenly found light in the midst of darkness, and now ready to speak truth to power. As an insider, he had stayed in Amazing Grace Chapel long enough to understand its lopsided foundation. He made his intention to quit the ministry known to Prophet Jeremiah who did not buy into the idea. To Pastor Hezekiah, the lionisation of money and sexual pervasiveness in the church are enough cause for him to throw in the trowel.

...I've formed this impression that we lay too much emphasis on money in this church. During our last revival I discovered that so many dubious means were used to get money from the people who attended the revival. You know I've lost count of men of questionable characters, people in government who are enemies of the common folk who come here for one request or the other. They bring plenty of blood money and gifts and their request are granted. There is also this funny aspect of it all: sexual harassment of ladies in the church. Even my wife was a victim...

Afraid that Pastor Hezekiah might blow off the lid about his ministry's shady details, Prophet Jeremiah arranged for his kidnap and subsequent extermination. To Prophet Jeremiah and Pastor David his partner-in-crime, Pastor Hezekiah's action is a sacrilege against the Brotherhood.

General Idoti

The last of the characters is General Sani Idoti, the country's Head of State. General Idoti is a sad reminder of Nigeria military era. Through a character like him, the author again reminisces the military incursions into the Nigeria political space, and setting the foundation for large scale corruption and flagrant abuse of human rights.

General Idoti symbolises a pornographic looter! He also encapsulates the sit-tight syndrome of many African leaders. He came into power via what seemed another coup d'état having sacked the head of the Interim National Government. He had earlier, in his address to Nigerians, promised to organise a transitional government that would midwife a full-blown democracy. However, power and sycophancy soon drive in him the notion of an omniscient leader. The grandeur of power and money becomes too seductive for him to resist. Rather than make good his promise, he set up five political parties supposedly to adopt him as a consensus life president.

General Idoti's proclivity for kleptomania soon gets the better of him. He becomes paranoid, considering as friends those who agree with his thoughts, and seeing others with divergent views as enemies. In light of this, every effort must be put in place to silence the opposition; and this is how Prophet Jeremiah came into the picture-to provide General Idoti with spiritual fortification.

For General Idoti, he had learned of Prophet Jeremiah's bulging fame and therefore considered him the most qualified of all the candidates to lead his spiritual warfare. He appoints Prophet Jeremiah as the Chief Security Officer of his spiritualists and marabouts. For Prophet Jeremiah however, it was simply a case of a predator and his prey; a very corrupt but spiritually weak leader who needs him to consolidate his hold on power. In Prophet Jeremiah mind, the whole arrangement is mere business of exploiting another gullible leader to fatten his pockets. General Idoti is now one of his biggest catch and he would not let go until he milks him dry.

Prophet Jeremiah was analysing the man he was due to meet the next day. And the picture he got was that of a man scared of even his own shadows, and such people could easily be enslaved and he was more than prepared to enslave General Idoti after providing the spiritual counseling. He was going to make a super slave out of him. And in turn, he would make billions of Naira. He was not bothered about the morality of what he was about to do. Afterall, the money belonged to Nigerians, and he was a Nigerian!

And then the picture of a life of Eldorado begins to swirl in his head. He imagined himself driving ten Lamborghinis and driving all ten of them at once. Of course he would be in one, while others would be in his convoy. He would also buy a private jet; increase the branches of his church from the current eighteen to fifty...

Trends in Pentecostals

The author brings to bear the phenomenon of Pentecostal churches mushrooming almost at every corner in the country; and how it only takes a twinkle of an eye before such churches blossom as desperate miracle seekers, throng such places in quest for divine intervention. This also bears credence to Karl Marx's maxim-'Religion is the opium of the people'. Even if the miracles do not come as expected, the mere fact that the Pastor or Prophet prophesied or laid hands on members during the service, is enough testimony that certain lives have been 'celestially touched'; and all they need do is to foolishly admit that they experienced miracles even when evidence points to the contrary.

The above view is also in sync with the postulation of Olufunke Adeboye (2012), who, in her article with the title: 'A Church in a Cinema Hall?' Pentecostal Appropriation of Public Space in Nigeria' argues that the proliferation of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria for nearly three decades was not only enhanced by media technology for proselytisation, but also by taking over public spaces such as warehouses, cinemas, hotel, night clubs, racecourses, shopping plaza, and other venues previously considered 'demonised or unholy for such worships, and creating friction with other users of these site.

Aside, the author successfully brings to bear the survival instinct that drives many desperate Nigerians like Prophet Jeremiah, into heeding the 'divine call'. Seeing the pulpit as a meal ticket, the 'clerics' devise 'abracadabra' of 'signs and wonders' and the unsuspecting church goers philosophically accept what can best be described as mere illusions or coincidences, as genuine miracles. This trend, common in Pentecostalism is also re-echoed by Ewejobi (2014) in her review of Chimamanda Adichie's book-*Americanah*, where church owners prey on the congregation that are partly culpable 'with their credulous act; all reflected in the arrays of ludicrous absurd testimonies.'

Soon it was time to leave for their homes. And virtually everyone left without any miracle happening in their lives. The few occurrences that looked like miracles were really not miracles. They were mere coincidences. But since the miracle seekers were mostly gullible, they could not distinguish between miracles and mere coincidences. Another noticeable trait in Pentecostalism, according to the author, is the rechristening of names and titles. Having accepted the ministerial call, Alani

suddenly takes on a new name-Titus Cornelius Jeremiah, and higher ministerial office-Prophet- to further authenticate his ministerial authority.

Nevertheless, amid the seemingly pervasive religious brainwashing, the author demonstrates that not all Nigerians are victims. This stark reality also comes as an eye opener to Prophet Jeremiah himself, that some of his members could be discerning. Prophet Jeremiah and his then girlfriend Rebecca had gone to a bar. They soon found themselves in a circle of four middle age men who seem to fully appreciate the avarice which appears to have become not only entrenched but omnipresent in most Pentecostal churches nowadays. In the heat of argument, one of the quartets recalls a tendency of moral bankruptcy in a church in his neighbourhood...

The way churches are run in this country now reminds me of nothing but business laced with some tinge of 419. I was in Zamfara last December, and a so-called prophet who has his church in Ibadan came to town for a revival. I noticed that a lot of efforts was placed on the receiving of offering. Within the five hours that the revival lasted, five polythene bags, big ones, with different colours were passed round to collect money from the surging crowd. And before they pass round these bags, they would announce the colour of the bag being passed around to the congregation...to prevent any other smart person from collecting money that would not be remitted to the church.

Power Play

The friction between Justus Omoeko and Prophet Jeremiah represents a battle between the weak and the powerful in the Nigerian perspective. It further captures where the former could prey on the latter, capitalising on the Nigerian often weak institutions and, leaving the downtrodden at the mercy of his creator. Here, the author presents Justus, a moralist, idealist and an uncompromising journalist, who refuses to acknowledge that Nigeria is not yet ripe for the kind of adventure he is about to plunge himself into.

Prophet Jeremiah was ready to risk anything to ensure Justus' new found project doesn't see the light of day. The prophet first set Omoeko up by sending to his fiancée-Ife, a photograph of him and his ex-girlfriend in a restaurant on the latter's birthday. The development brought cracks and eventually put paid to their courtship. Not done yet, Prophet Jeremiah arranged to have Justus roped as a co-conspirator in a coup d'état. Justus' crime was a column he wrote a few years ago with the headline-'The Coming Coup'. Even though the timing of the coup d'état was at par with the columnist's; yet Justus saw himself among some top military officers he had either read or written about but never seen up close. Now he was being cross examined as a co-conspirator in a phantom coup which led to him being handed a life imprisonment, alongside some top military officers before his term was eventually commuted to 10 years, following international appeal.

Justus' ordeal best pigeonholes the threats journalists in most part of Africa come across. With poor remuneration, inconsistent salary and other fringe benefits, a handful or no life insurance cover, and of course weak or ineffective security system, journalists become easy prey to the high-heeled in the society who use their influence to intimidate the media and by extension, hinder the press from performing its noble task as the watchdogs of the society.

Conclusion

In The Name Of Our Father extrapolates that in any society ravaged by poverty, most of her citizenry suffer disorientation, an occurrence that makes them hardly discerning, especially between religion and realism, and sheepishly submitting to the former in the most philosophical fashion, ending up as worse victims than they once were. It establishes the interconnectivity between religion and politics, noting that until the leaders in the two spheres learn to tread on the path of righteousness, Nigeria's dream of Eldorado might still be mere imagination.

*All quotations are made from:

Yishau, Olukorede. S. (2018). *In The Name Of Our Father*. Lagos, Nigeria: Parresia Press.

References

- Adeboye, O. (2012). A Church in a Cinema Hall? Pentecostal Appropriation of Public Space in Nigeria. *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 42(2), 145-171.
- Adegboye, M.B and Olagunju, A.O. (1996). Nigerian People and Cultures. In Adegoke Kasali Affez, Bello, O.O., Adegboye, M.B., Popoola, T.A. and Ogunsiji Opoola Ayo (eds.), *General Studies for Higher Education*. Modekeke, Osun State: Decency Printers and Stationary Ltd.
- Agi, J. E. (1987). The Influence of Religion on Politics in Nigeria; Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow. In S. Dugbemi (ed.), *Alternative Political Features for Nigeria*. Lagos: Nigerian Political Science Association.

- Ajayi, S. D. (1921). Socio-Ethical Dimension of Machiavellianism in Nigerian Society. *Global Journal of Human-Social Science: Arts & Humanities - Psychology*, 21(7).
- Ake, C. (1996). *Democracy and development in Africa*. Washington: Brooking Institution.
- Akhaine, E.C. (2020). Machiavelli's Political Theory and Leadership in Nigeria. *Socialscientia Journal of the Social Sciences and Humanities*, 5(2).
- Awoniyi (2015). African Cultural Values: The Past, Present and Future. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 17(1).
- Chitando, E, Adogame, A & Bateye, B. (2013). Introduction: African Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa: Contending with Gender, the Vitality of Indigenous Religions, and Diaspora. In A. Adogame, E. Chitando, & B. Bateye (eds.), *African Traditions in the Study of Religion, Diaspora and Gendered Societies* (1-12). Farnham: Ashgate.
- Egberongbe, W. (2003). *African Traditional Religion: We Are Not Pagans*. Lagos: Nelson Publishers Limited.
- Ewejobi, D. I. (2014). Reflection of Religion-Review of Chimamanda Adichie's Americanah. Hirenth. *Journal of Humanities*, 1(1).
- Gbatar, L.E. (2023). *The Machiavellian Power Politics: The Nigerian Experience*. <https://www.academia.edu>. Assessed on 23/05/2023
- Kalu, O. (Ed.) (1980). *The History of Christianity in West Africa*. London: Longman.
- Koenig, H.G. (2009). Research on Religion, Spirituality, and Mental Health: A Review. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 54(5), 283-291.
- Kukah, M. H. (1993). *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria*. Ibadan: Spectrum.
- Mbiti, J.S. (1999). *African Religions and Philosophy*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Heinemann.
- Metuh, E.I. (2002). "Introduction," in E.I. Metuh (ed.), *The Gods in Retreat: Continuity and Change in African Religion* (v-xvi). Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers.

Mommoh C.S. (ed) (1989). *The Substance of African Philosophy*. Auchi: African Philosophy Project Publishers.

Oyebade et al, (2018). A Comparative Study of the Character of Omolúàbí in An African Moral System and Nietzsche's Nobleman Theory in Western Ethics. *LWATI: A Journal of Contemporary Research*, 15(3), 169-192.

Oyekunle, A.O. (2010). Machiavellian Politics and the idea of Public Morality in Nigeria. *International Journal of Multi-disciplinary Research*, III (1&2).

Uzuegbunam, E.N. (2021). Religious Factors Employed for Africa's Exploitation and Impoverishment: A Call for a Change of Status-Quo. *Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies (SGOJAHDS)*, 4(4), 203-214.