

## **Prayer as Technique for Making Money: Citizenship Education as a Solution to this Problem**

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### **Abstract**

In recent times the objectives of prayers in Christian churches have changed grossly. Rather than a way of communicating with God and attainment of holiness, it has become a kind of business enterprise for some Reverends and Pastors. When prayers are organized in churches, they turn them into avenues to make money by sale of stickers, cassettes, olive oil, etc. These clerics, clergies have ready made answers to all problems in the track of life. This paper highlighted various techniques which Pastors, Evangelists and Reverends use prayers to extort money from their members and its implication on the society. It advocates the use of citizenship education as a panacea to this negative trend in the church.

### **Introduction**

It is an indisputable fact that prayer has become one of the techniques of making quick money in Nigeria. Some unemployed graduates and school drop-out have become Pastors and Evangelists over night in their bid to extort money from their unsuspecting members and live big. These charlatans or “businessmen” have ready made answers as regards all problems of life. It is their stock in trade to trace the cause of all misfortunes of life to ancestral curses, real or imagined. They prescribe one crusade or prayer session. These crusades and prayer sessions which can be on family, kindred, village, town and recently state or national levels are given captivating captions like “Healing the family root”, ‘Dry bone shall rise again’; ‘ Anointing breaks the yoke’, and so on. Prior to these sessions, flyers and posters are printed, mass media advertisement are featured on televisions and radio, “advertising agents” are dispatched to the roads and streets announcing or rather fore telling the miracles that God will perform... The financial exploits made on the ignorant masses during such sessions are better imagined than told. These businessmen turned clerics turn their crusade grounds into avenues to make money by selling T-shirts, stickers, facing caps, books, cassettes, etc which members are made to believe can change their lives for better.

This moral and social decay among Christians call for change of attitude and life style. Therefore citizenship education which is designed to inculcate values, decency, fair play, respect for others, tolerance, sincerity among others is a necessary tool in checking these bad practices in the Christian folk today.

### **The Concept of Prayer**

One of the greatest services the church could perform to humanity is prayer. Onyia (1996), maintains that the principal tool of the church of Christ is prayer. The Bible enjoins Christians to pray for those in authority and pray for peace of the nation. Prayer is an essential part of any religion, although defying any unanimous definition. Prayer more than any other subject has received unparallel definition by spiritual writers and scholars. Atta (2006) sees prayer as both a person’s act of worship of God, or any other object of worship and the words used in such worship. He continues by saying that prayer is a demonstration of an individual’s or a group’s belief in God. The church, in the course of her chequered history had in taking cue from her founder, Jesus Christ, stressed the role of prayer in man’s relationship with God. St. Paul also dedicated some chunk of his writings to discussing

prayer- enjoining the early Christians to pray always - without ceasing, and in every situation.

However, at one time, the efficacy of prayer was an issue decidable by experiment as shown in the Old Testament story of the contest between Elijah and the priest of Baal. Daul, (1974) and Ashifatu (1993), asserted that though the efficacy of prayer is not usually put forward as an empirical issue, it is assumed that whatever happens to humanity is the will of God. But however, Ashifatu on the other hand stressed that on the basis of abstract ideas, man's goal to reach an elevated state of consciousness and to fulfil his human potential to the utmost is attainable through meditation and prayers.

### **Citizenship Education**

The term 'citizenship education' is variously defined. It means different thing to different people, in ordinary conversation. Mezieobi (1992) states that citizenship education is a concept that defies any precise definition... For him, citizenship education refers to the educative means in a sovereign state where by the citizens or individuals become socially integrated into the social milieu, acquire social skills and competencies, become socially sensitive and actively participate in their social responsibility for maximum productivity and development. Dubey (1980) sees citizenship education as indoctrinating individuals in things considered as a society's basic values. Beard (1932) maintained that citizenship education is that education for the development of all-round, balanced individuals who would be stable enough to adapt to the ever changing world and initiate good deals that will enhance national development.

To achieve this aim, citizenship education should be made a compulsory subject in seminaries, school of theology, colleges of education, polytechnics, and universities. Visiting lecturers or part-time lecturers from universities and polytechnics could assist in teaching the course in the seminaries or colleges of theology where the formation of prospective Pastors and Reverends take place. In addition, appropriate objectives of citizenship education should be formulated and properly documented in the curriculum of seminary schools. It should also specify the concepts to be taught in order that the objectives may be realized.

### **Using prayer as a Technique for making money**

The noticeable upsurge of churches and independent prayer groups is not unconnected with their emphasis on miracle, prophecies and the likes, which appeal to greater majority of the populace today – even if these are unfounded. The quest to find a solution for every problem in life has increased the number of prayer groups of various inclinations in the church, today. Hence, most of the faithful are ready to travel miles, climb mountains, and visit whatever river once a solution to their problem is anticipated. It is equally true that the desire for wealth has led many to take to such prayer ventures as a means of livelihood. Hence, in some cases, there are fees for prayers as well as tithing to facilitate one's welfare. The sale of stickers, olive oil from Jerusalem or Israel candles, soap, scents and some other items to the unwary participants in such prayers, as aids to receiving divine attention also has pecuniary undertones.

Some churches collect registration fees before one can be a full member of the church. Daudu (2000) opined that most of the prosperity ministers lack adequate Biblical education and training. This often leads to wrong interpretation of the Bible. Some passages are often explained out of context or without adequate knowledge of their historical backgrounds. Zeal without knowledge often leads to error and greater ignorance. While one may rejoice at the increase in the number of churches and ministries, one may also shed tears because of the lack of quality in some of the teachings people receive just for the sake of money.

It is now a common practice in most churches where prayers are combined with fund raising programs such as bazaar and launching. Bazaar is one of the techniques prayer groups

or churches use to make money. Some churches engage in bazaar sales to make more money for the church. Bazaar is likened to a market where the church sells at an exorbitant price to the highest bidder. The church exploits the masses to get money at all cost and even makes their members to run into debts. People have turned bazaar to be avenue where they show their wealth, and their pride and flaunt their influence at the faces of the poor. This make the poor feel insulted and blame God for their lacks.

Launching which is a feature of the secular world is now brought into the church of God for money making. There is nowhere it is stated in the scriptures that if the church wants, it could call for launching. The desire of the church to get money has made the church to loose its focus, which is evangelism. Instead, they have chosen wealth and materialism, which are not eternal but rather perishable.

Some churches have turned wedding into a forum for making money. Some churches demand for certain fee to be paid by the would be couple before they are joined together. They demand crates of mineral, food items and meat for priests or pastors that will perform the solemnization of marriages. Special offerings are also made during wedding and the money goes to the church.

Tithe is another area the church get a lot of money. Some have provided cards for their members to record their tithes. Some churches even demand the monthly salary of their members and tell them the amount they are to pay as tithes. They emphasize more on tithes by telling their members that if they do not pay tithes, God will not make them prosper. And also if they pay tithe, God will forgive all their sins. Almost every church today emphasizes the paying of tithe as against other essential things that lead to salvation.

Apart from paying tithes, some churches and praying ministries obtain money by placing fines on any erring member. Agbaje (2006), observed that the embattled founder and General Overseer of the Christian Praying Assembly, (CPA), Reverend Emeka Ezeugo, a.k.a. King usually fine any erring member. According to him, if you cough in the church, you will pay fifty naira fine, if there is any disorderly conduct, the person is fined twenty five thousand naira. Most of our so called Pastors, Evangelists are gamblers in sheep's clothing. Some have no spiritual and academic acumen. They answer Rev, Dr. and Rev... Prof. when they have not entered any tertiary institution. They reap from the gullibility and ignorance of the members. They preach what people want. They put more emphasis on prosperity and riches.

In some churches and prayer ministries, consultation fees are paid before one is allowed to see the Pastor, Evangelist, or the Visioner. The amount paid varies, depending on the choice of the individual. For instance the amount paid for emergency consultation is higher than the amount paid for ordinary consultation. Booking for special family prayers cost fortune. People pay as much as one hundred thousand naira before Pastors, Evangelist or Visioner visit their families for special family prayers.

Some men of God also form the habit of telling almost everybody they come across that he/she is possessed of evil spirit and needs deliverance prayer. The common motive is to extort money or defraud the unsuspecting people. There was a story reported by Sun Newspapers dated August 16, 2008, titled "Delivered to Death". Here, a woman was led to see a Pastor to deliver her only daughter after a prophetess prophesized she was possessed of evil spirit. The said Pastor told her that the girl would undergo a three day prayer session and demanded the sum of five thousand naira. After three days, the woman went for her daughter only to meet a gory sight of her naked lifeless body with congealed blood on her private part which showed she was raped to death. In this case, the Pastor not only defrauded the woman, but also murdered her only child.

**The implications of using prayer as money making venture**

The quest for power, money and fame has led many Pastors, Evangelists and Reverends into prayer business through ungodly practices. Some have gone into occultism, ritualism and all kinds of voodoo practices in order to perform fake miracles that will attract more people to their churches or prayer ministries. Kalu (2008), observed that many pastors involve themselves in all kinds of unholy practices in order to attract unsuspecting members of the public, who regard them as powerful men of God. Kalu narrated how a Ghanaian Pastor was arrested in June by detectives at the Entebbe Airport as he attempted smuggling an electric-shock device that when activated would send shock waves through anyone he touches, making them assume that they had been touched by the Holy Spirit. It was gathered that many Nigerian Pastors use the device to hoodwink unsuspecting members of the public, who regard them as powerful men of God.

It has become a common practice of some pastors who go into ritual killing in order to perform healing and protection for members. Kalu (2008), narrated how police arrested couple said to be pastors for alleged involvement in ritual killing. According to Kalu, Pastor Benjamin Ojobu and his wife Patience, who are members of Ooobu in Asaba, were arrested with a human head believed to be that of a teenage girl. The culprit confessed of using human skulls to do charms for members seeking for prosperity, money and protection.

The quest for materialism and money by our Pastors and Evangelists has also increased the number of churches and ministries in our country. Seers, visioners and healers are as present among us as the air we breath. Prayer houses and fellowship groups are found in every available room. Ogunyanju (1994), observed that churches are springing up at a very fast and alarming rate. Many of these churches are small in size and bear all kinds of imaginable names and are varied. That is why many of the Pastors and Evangelists in these churches and prayer houses use evil and occultic powers to perform miracles and win more converts. It is difficult to differentiate these Pastors from native doctors.

Some Pastors and Reverends here adopted ostentatious life style as a result of the huge amount of money they make from their prayer ministries. They buy luxurious cars, build expensive houses, keep many concubines and indulge in unimaginable immoral behaviour.

#### **The use of Citizenship Education as a Panacea to these Negative practices in the churches:**

Citizenship education is not mere schooling. It should be such schooling that will make the individual to be aware of his duties as a good citizen. Eboh (1993) sees citizenship education as referring to a mode of teaching in which the teacher intends that certain behaviour, knowledge, outlooks and values will be learned by his students. According to the Nigerian Education Research and Development Council (NERDC 1994), the overall objective of citizenship education as a discipline should be to produce good citizens who would take after the present crops of Pastors, Evangelists and Reverends in Nigerian society. Therefore, citizenship education should not be limited to primary and junior secondary, but should be extended to Seminaries and Colleges of Theology. Visiting lecturers or part-time lecturers from universities and polytechnics could assist in teaching the course in the seminaries where the formation of prospective Pastors and Reverends take place.

The content of citizenship education teaches the students symbols of National Identity and how to respect them. Such symbols of National Identity include the National flag, the National Anthem, the National Pledge etc. Students are made to recite both the National Anthem and the National Pledge daily in their schools. Mbaba (2007), maintains that as the students continue to practice these every time, the spirit of National consciousness will be imparted in them, which will make them good and effective citizens. By Implication, it will prepare the students to be good and effective citizens in their future endeavours as Pastors, Evangelists, Reverends, Church members, lawyers etc. Peters (1973), Nwuzor (2002), Onwuka (1981), Ezema (2001), underscore the role of citizenship education as a vital agent

of socialization and moral transformation of citizens. Ezema particularly noted that citizenship education inculcates in the students the spirit of fair play, justice, honesty, tolerance and patience, all of which are indispensable for the well being, progress and general development of every human community.

However, the present crop of church members with their Pastors, Evangelists and Reverend need serious re-orientation of their value system. Lectures and Seminars on change of value for money and materialism could be presented during inter-denominational services by the executives and top members of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). The content of the value re-orientation lecture should be drawn from citizenship education which is enriched with such content as honest service, discipline and orderliness, dedication to duty, leadership and followership etc. This is very necessary because according to Mcmurry (1996), values have powerful influence on people's behaviour because they principally determine what one regards as right, good, ethical, worthy and unworthy. Therefore, this value re-orientation lecture is expected to bring about positive changes in the lives of Pastors, Evangelists and their members.

#### **Conclusion and Recommendations:**

There is an upsurge of churches and prayer groups that use prayer as a means of making money by preaching prosperity and healing and selling ritual articles in the church. Actually, the present situation has dire pastoral consequences for the spread of the Christian message, which the church is supposed to promote.

Therefore the formation of the prospective Pastors should not neglect this ugly trend. Aware of the current situation, the candidates for the priesthood should make greater efforts to arm themselves with the correct teachings of the church, to be able to face the challenges, which the present trend presents. Also, the formators both within and outside the seminary should look out for traits and tendencies that promote such untoward behaviours and practices in the candidates, and correct them before they are established.

The noticeable mushrooming of prayer groups and churches today rather than aid the growth of the faithful in the faith, is a stumbling block to the spread of the message of Christ. It is imperative on all to be on their guard against all these rampaging Pastors and ministers looking for whom to cheat. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) should do a critical examination of the situation, with the view to checking the modus operandi of religious organization, especially one man outfits.

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