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APOCALYPSE IN REVELATION 6:1-8: IS IT A SIGN OF THE END T

Inyaregh, Aor Abel, Ph.D and Simeon Lember Aande PhD

Abstract

The novel corona-virus arose in China towards the end of 2019 promptin worldwide impact by affecting many people, causing economic uphea church service' interruption, sicknesses and killing many others. lightning spread has twisted terror and devastating consequences around world. Johannine apocalyptic eschatology is explored to delineate theology of revelations about "the four horsemen of the apocalypse" wh portrayed a sign that the end times are approaching and will predominantly austere. The Pale Rider unleashes pestilence and unless four horsemen gallop on patrol to do their bidding, the scroll will rem unread because the victory of the Lion-Lamb will not be comprehensi COVID-19 pandemic is construed as one of the signs of the end times an precursor to the end of age. The aim and objective of this study is to unra the mystery behind the pandemic. Revelation 6 and Ezekiel 14 particula help to establish a context for judgments during the "church age" a unfaithfulness of the nations that provoke such a response from God. T paper adopts a hermeneutic approach to ascertain the current dilemma a phenomenon that has transpired all over world history, but which at proper time can effortlessly be spiraled by God to be the events that wo trigger up to the very end of history. The study reveals that God is unbrid His final judgments. The study recommends observance of COVID- protocols, prayers, fasting and repentance as a panacea to this gory act.

Introduction

The Corona-virus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) is a contagious disease that discovered towards the end of 2019 in the Chinese province of Hubei in Wuh blowouts to other countries across the world[1]. Within the first three months of disease had devastated the whole world, killing thousands of people, and leavi others infected and bedridden[2]. The socio-economic way of life of the world wa with the most instant interference of social distancing recommended for all peopl of curbing the escalation of the disease. The expression "stay at home" turn out to as a policy to border people's exposure to the virus. Many economies the world into a complete shutdown. Curfews were enforced in many countries. Cunningha "The sudden occurrence of pandemics has often been traumatizing for societies a globe with the initial search for answers more often associate with religion. This true of the major pandemics that the world has ever faced like the Black Death, S and HIV/AIDS"[3].

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PEDAGOGICAL ROLE OF NIGERIAN CHURCH LEADERS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORONA VIRUS (COVID 19) PANDEMIC

Peter Olanrewaju Awojobi, PhD.

Abstract

Corona virus pandemic has been rated as the most devastating health crisis that the world has ever experienced in the 21st century and its appearance in any society around the globe has been treated with utmost caution. The emergence of Corona virus has elicited responses as some persons have linked it with the conspiracy of one world government or the Bible's prophecies about pestilences and diseases that the world will experience at the end time. In Africa especially Nigeria, there are those who believe that Corona virus does not exist at all. On the other hand, there are those who claim that the virus is for the rich and not for the poor. This has led to non-observant of the safety protocols as directed by the Government and the rejection of Corona virus vaccines in some religious quarters as a mark of the beast or Satan. This article examined the Pedagogical role of Church leaders in the fight against corona virus pandemic with the view to proffering religious solutions to the spread of this invisible and unbeatable soldier of our time. This paper adopted historical and phenomenological methods of research. Findings showed that Corona virus is a contagious disease which currently ravaging the world over and it is not the first pandemic to ravage the world. Talks on corona virus have dominated discussions in recent times because its negative impacts on people cut across nationality, religions, races and ethnicity. This pandemic has affected the socio-economic lives of the humans across the globe. Most Churches in Nigeria are observing Covid – 19 protocols as directed by the Government. Church leaders in Nigeria are to champion the enforcement Covid – 19 safety protocols by constantly teaching their members to observe them in other to curb the spread of the virus in the nation. Church leaders should encourage their rich members to donate money towards the production of vaccines and enjoined those infected in the church to use the vaccines to contain the pandemic. The paper concluded that Church leaders and Christian faithful in Nigeria among other things are to pray fervently for divine intervention to contain the virus.

Introduction

The emergence of Corona virus disease in Wuhan, China in 2019 and its wide spread across the globe has thrown the world into a serious crisis. It has caused the nations of the world to lockdown and this has continued to have adverse effects on polities and economies. Some nations in the world today are experiencing economic recession now because of the corona virus lockdown. Many people that were gainfully employed before the emergence of corona virus have lost their jobs. This pandemic has increased the rate of mortality as millions of people all over the world have died and still dying due to the virus. Many people across the globe have tested positive to the virus and are now in isolation centers, homes and hospital undergoing treatment. Corona virus pandemic has created tension, fear, panic, confusion,

hunger, anger and so on in people. This has raised a great concern for institutions, organization and peoples from all walks of life across the globe on how to respond appropriately to this pandemic.

In Africa especially Nigeria, there are those who believe that Corona virus does not exist at all and as such they do not observe the safety protocols as directed by the Government. They claimed that Governors and corporations are lying with the virus so as to get money from the Federal Government (Wobodo, 2020: 283). On the other hand, there are those who claim that the virus is for the rich and not for the poor. This is evident by persons that have been infected so far in Nigeria who were mainly politicians, business tycoon, and those who travelled abroad for vacation. To some religious leaders Corona virus as a sign of the imminence of the tribulation which will usher in the rapture and the second coming of Jesus Christ. This situation became complex by the claim that those responsible for the emergence of corona virus are the ones behind the New World order conspiracy theories. Many of these depict info- war between China and America particularly on mainstream and social media. This research explores the role of Nigerian Church leaders in the fight against Corona virus with the view to proffer spiritual solutions to this deadly disease.

Church Leaders

It is expedient at this point to discuss the two basic words that constitute the fulcrum of this section of the paper. They are: church and leader. The word "Church" is from the Greek word *ecclesia*, meaning "the called out ones" (Wotogbe-Weneka, 2009). The word Church has metaphor to diver meaning in history of Christianity. In Boer's view (2003), "It was in Palestine, the historic land of Israel that the church of the New Testament first appeared in history". In the Old Testament the word Church is translated *qahal Yahweh* meaning the community of God. Whereas, from the Jewish background the word *edhah* meaning assembly like synagogue, a place where people gather for worship was used (Achunike, 1996). It should be noted that the Greek word ecclesia is a synonym of the Hebrew word *qahal* Yahweh and Jewish word *edhah* meaning Church today. The Church now extends to concrete buildings instead of people who gather for worship (Achunike, 1996). However, as far as Adetumbi (2017) is concerned, the church is a congregation of people who share the same faith in Jesus Christ. He went further to assert that the word church as used in the New Testament did not present church building, but community of believers in Jesus Christ. The Church therefore referred to various strands of Christianity such as churches, denominations like the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, African Independent churches, Pentecostals and the Neo-Pentecostals (Wobodo, 2020).

On the other hand, a leader is "a person who influences a group of people or organization towards the achievement of a goal". (Mouton, 1964). Going by this definition, a Christian leader can be said to be an individual who has been selected, appointed or anointed to lead the people of Christ with the goal of winning souls to Christ. A leader by its meaning is one who goes first and leads by example, so that others are motivated to follow him. To be a leader, a person must have a deep-rooted commitment to the goal that he will strive to achieve. A leader with a purpose need guidance (Prov 3:5-6) and will get it through meditation on the Word of God. The leader need people's assistance to achieve his goal and therefore must integrate his (or the organization's) goal with his followers' personal goals and then communicates this goal in such a way that they embrace it too and the goal becomes a

respected and as such their words are weighty in the eyes of their followers. It is important that the Church leaders engage in disseminating information that will enhance better life for the people they are shepherding.

In the Nigerian society, religious pedagogy is undertaken in three major levels. They are: family, the worship community and the schools (Berekiah, 2009: 126). Prior to the arrival of the colonial masters in Africa, the family, and the cult were the major vehicles of socialization and religious education. During this time, the ethnic groups and tribes existed independently and family and tribal bond was very strong. Thus, it was very easy to foster a uniform religious belief and practice among the peoples. During the colonial period, the Church through the agency of the Clerics took the lead in the provision of quality education. This was because Christianity is a religion that can be better understood through proper communication of the fundamental truth as revealed by God. However, in the post colonial era, education was taken away from the Church and given to educational institutions which are secular in nature. It should be pointed out that, a good number of educators have made useful contributions in the lives of many of our youth in our tertiary institutions.

Church leaders such as pastor, prophets, evangelist, bishop and any other titles are presented as one who is set apart for God's service. They are seen as ambassador of God and a physical representative of God on earth to effect His divine rule. The Church leader is expected to be a custodian or guardian of knowledge. As a guardian, the leader is to give proper guidance in matter of right and wrong. Like the Old Testament Priest in ancient Israel, the Church leader is expected under God to interpret the written code in such a way as to make it applicable and practicable in the contemporary text. The church leader is an interpreter of the mind and will of God.

On the issue of safety protocols as directed by the Government, such as washing of hands, social distancing, the use of facemasks, vaccine and the likes, Church leaders are to take the lead in ensuring 100% compliant. Church leaders are to mobilize charity or funds from God fearing rich/wealthy members of the Church to develop drugs and vaccines to contain the pandemic. Christian scientists should work assiduously to develop drugs and vaccines and thoroughly screen any vaccine developed elsewhere before used. To facilitate understanding, the Pedagogical role of Nigerian Church leaders will be discussed under the following headings:

Teaching

To teach means to impact knowledge. One of the main duties of a Church leader is to properly disseminate correct information to his audience. The Church leader is expected to be current and rightly divide the word of Truth to the congregation (2 Tim. 2:15). As the watchdog, his responsibilities include sourcing for information on things or issues that will put the lives of the people he is watching in danger. The Christian teacher is faced with the challenge of making their philosophy of teaching explicit and consistent with the Christian worldview. This is because a philosophy of teaching makes efforts to articulate a systematic scheme of thought which can guide practice. Teaching is usually the fruit of its philosophical roots (Pazmino, 1997:81). Church leader is expected to impact correct knowledge on his followers so that they can respond properly to the challenges facing them.

common goal. To be a leader one must have followers. To have followers, a leader must be worthy of his followers trust. Some individuals are more effective than others at influencing people because effectiveness in leadership has been attributed to (1) persuasion skills, (2) leadership styles and (3) personal attributes of the leader (Rogers, 2015: 199). When people are convinced of a leaders love and interest for them and, they trust and will follow their leader everywhere he goes.

Church leaders are therefore the persons appointed by God and recognized by the people as representatives of God among his people. He or she may be called by any title. Some of the acceptable titles in many denominations today are: bishop, pastor, prophet, prophetess, evangelist, and so on. However, in this paper, a church leader is anyone occupying a leadership position in the Church.

Corona Virus (covid 19): Origin/ Effects

Corona virus is a disease that currently ravaging the countries around the globe. The term COVID – 19 is the acronym for Corona virus disease that emerged in the city of Wuhan, a business hub in China's province of Hubei in late 2019. Residents who lived in Wuhan had some link to large seafood and live animal market, which suggest that the mode of transmission of corona virus was from animal to person (Ozili, 2020). This disease was labeled as a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) on January 30, 2020, but the official name for the virus was announced on February 11, 2020 by World Health Organization (WHO) as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Corona Virus (SARS-CoV-2 2019). The disease has infected millions of people and has been responsible for the death of hundreds of thousands of people around the world (Jewell, 2020).

The first patient of this deadly virus started experiencing symptoms in Wuham, China on December 1, 2019. By July 23, 2020, corona virus cases have affected 213countries and territories around the globe. It is the latest of the seven corona virus that have plagued humans in recent times. CoV -2 is closely related in features to the sars corona virus (SAR-CoV) which occurred in China's Guangdong Province in 2002- 2003 and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome corona virus (MERS-CoV) which emerged in Saudi Arabia in 2008 (Iorjaah & Ugegili, 2020: 106).

As of July 28, 2020, there were 868,541 confirmed cases of COVID- 19 in 55 African countries; 18,178 deaths and 506, 825 recoveries (allafrica.com; www.africanews.com). Today, a number of African countries have imposed a range of safety protocols to prevent and contain the spread of the virus. The first confirmed case of corona virus disease was announced on 27 February, 2020, when an Italian citizen in Lagos tested positive for the virus. Nigeria recorded a second case of corona virus on March 9 2020 in Ewekoro, Ogun State when a Nigerian citizen that had contact with the Italian citizen was reported to have been infected with the virus. As at July 22 2020, the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) have confirmed 38, 34 cases. The number of discharged cases stood at 15, 815 and 813 death. Since that time, Nigeria has continued to record significant increase in the number of cases inflicted with corona virus disease.

There have been so many conspiracy theories around the world with regards to COVID – 19 since its outbreak of the pandemic in China. In Nigeria, there are two prominent versions of

In biblical literature, teaching was done stage by stage by various agents who were engaged in education. These agents included parents, prophets, priests, sages, scribes and rabbis. Basically, teaching was equated with life in the Old Testament (Prov. 4: 13). The book of Deuteronomy is concern with passing on the basic content and norms essential for the life and faith community. Teaching in the traditional and acceptable ways provided continuity across the generations, especially, in times of transition and change. True church leader is expected to teach God's truth without twisting it to make it popular. The leader lives in accordance to the will of God and the scriptures. The goal of all faithful teaching and proclamation of God's word is to turn others from error of their ways to the true God. The leaders are messengers of God; the people have the right to expect sound and divine instruction from (Eichrodt, 1969: 395). The church leader is the person who stands before or waits patiently and constantly on God (Psa. 25: 14). Like the Prophets in the Old Testament, the church leader is to receive messages from God and delivers same to his audience. He or she is seen as a member of the divine council. The people expect the leader to be able to discern the divine will in any situation.

Church leaders can respond to corona virus outbreak by teaching via ICT and other media on the need for Christians to stay safe in this time. As watchmen, they are to enjoin their church members to adhere strictly to the instructions on COVID- 19. It should be noted that a Nigerian Pastor Chris Oyakhilome, the President of Believers Love world, also known as Christ Embassy claimed that the virus started in a 5G smart city in China and as such link the corona virus pandemic to the biblical antichrist and fulfillment of end time prophecies (Oyakhilome, 2020). This is not correct because experts claim that the virus has nothing to do with 5G. However, because Oyakhilome has millions of followers across the world his position on the virus will be the view of many of his followers and this will have negative impacts on their lives. It is the duty of any Church leader to know the truth about a matter or an event before disseminating it. Ignorance is a disease and can kill but the truth has the ability to liberate. On this Jesus declared: "You shall know the truth and the true shall make you free" (John 8:32).

Repentance

Nigerian society is a secular State, constitutionally. Due to this, Nigerians are passionate about religion and as such the society is bustling with various forms of religious activities. As a multifarious religious society, Nigeria has three main religious groups: Christianity, Islam and African traditional religion, the roles of religious leaders is very crucial in this situation. There are also minority groups of various foreign religions. Prior to the emergence of Corona virus pandemic, the Nigerian nation have been going through series of crises. For instance the activities of Hoko Haran in the north eastern part of Nigeria have become scary and dangerous to the citizenry because the Nigerian Government is even finding it difficult to tackle them. The cases of kidnapping, rape, banditry, cattle rustling, extrajudicial killings, insecurity, corruption, unemployment and the like are on the increase on a daily basis. The Nigerian society was already tense before corona virus came. The emergence of Corona virus pandemic aggravated the tension in the nation.

Unfortunately, the religious institutions that should be the conscience of the society had failed the public on many instances. Most of the Nigerian citizens that are involved in the vices mentioned above are either adherents of Christianity or Islam. Religious leaders in Nigeria

the conspiracy theory as it relate to the source of the pandemic. Some Nigerian opines that disease for the elite, the wealthy and those in the corridor of power. This assertion was strengthened by the fact that the first sets of people that tested positive to the virus were elites and top-ranking politicians. They include: Mallam Abba Kyari, Chief of Staff to the President of Nigeria, Mr Bala Mohammed,the Governor of Bauchi State; Mr. Seyi Makinde, the Governor of Oyo State;Mallam Nasir El- Rufai, the Governor of Kaduna State; Mr. Okezie Ikpeazu, the Governor of Abia State; Mr. Rotimi Akeredolu, the Governor of Ondo State etcetera. It is believed in some quarters in Nigeria that politicians mentioned above contacted the disease when they travelled abroad (Ayeni, 2020). On the April 17, 2020 Mallam Abba Kyari the Chief of Staff to President Mohammadu Buhari died as a result of COVID- 19 complications.

It should be noted that Corona virus outbreak was not the first pandemic that have ravage the world. Historians have documented at least four great plagues that devastated the world before the corona virus pandemic. They are: the Antonine plague of Galen between165 CE to 180CE, the plague of Cyprian which erupted in Ethiopia in 250 CE, the Bubonic plague also known as Black Death broke out in Europe in 1330 and the Spanish Influenza also known as Spanish flu from 1918 to 1919 (Owojaiye, 2020: 30-34). The response of the Church to the plagues was that of love, sacrifice and care for those infected and affected and these actions challenged non-Christians to the extent that many were converted to Christianity.

Out of the four plagues mentioned above the Spanish flu or Influenza was the most deadly and global of the pandemics in human history as at that time. This development gave birth to some of the most renowned revival movements in the history of Christianity in the world. For instance, it was during the outbreak of the Spanish influenza in the 1900s that Protestantism, Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism started gaining ground in Africa. In Nigeria, the revival of 1930 by Ayodele Babalola of Christ Apostolic Church, a famous *Aladura* (owner of prayer) was a response to a pandemic. The *Aladura* group of churches is an African Indigenous movement that believes in the efficacy of prayer. According to Komolafe:

> Confidence shown in the effectiveness of prayer to deal with the influenza epidemic of 1918 testifies to the special nature of *Aladura* Christianity. In the African worldview, diseases and misfortunes are sometimes understood to be manifestations of evil agencies and must be confronted by spiritual means of higher powers. It is understandable, then, that the *Aladura* churches devoted themselves to prayers and to prophetic therapies in order to tap into the supreme power of the high God amidst human devastation and spiritual depression (2013: 113).

During this period, missionary efforts, speaking in tongues, aggressive evangelism, faith healing, prayer, and exorcism became very popular. The Church from time immemorial has never folded its hands in times of global heath cries. It has always been part of the solution.

Pedagogical Role of Nigerian Church Leaders in the Fight against Corona Virus (Covid 19)

The role of Church leaders in an ethnically diversified and religiously pluralistic society like Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. In a pluralistic setting like Nigeria, Church leaders are

have failed inculcate good values in their congregation or member. It should be noted that adherents of religions that are ill-informed of the basic tenets of a religious faith, those that do not have direct access to the scriptures, and those that depend on others for discerning the mind and will of God that are always used to perpetrate hostilities. It is also those whose consciences have not been properly tutored that perpetrate various forms of social vices.

Church leaders are to teach the Divine will and call people to repentance. As a nation we have failed in our responsibilities to God and humanity. The most urgent corporate task of the Church as commanded by Jesus Christ is to "… go and teach all nations … teaching them to observe all things, whatever I commanded you…" (Matt. 28: 19-20). Correct teaching of God's word will bring repentance. Sometime, the outbreak of disease is as a result of sin. Interestingly, the outbreak of corona virus brought some sobriety and has caused many to consider repairing their relationship with God.

Prayer

The importance of prayer of those in Church leadership cannot be over emphasis in the time of crisis. Leaders are expected to mobilize and teach their followers to pray to God in difficult situations. In Nigeria, for instance, when the Government announced the arrival of corona virus some church leaders took the opportunity to invite their members and the entire Christian community to go back to God in prayer. Prior to this time, there was already a growing hostility against prayer (Owojaiye, 2020: 131). The coming of Corona virus to the continent of African especially Nigeria restored the lost fervency in prayer. Special prayer meetings were arranged by Church leader to pray for those infected and affected with the virus and for complete victory over the pandemic. Prayer is a tool for salvation, deliverance, revival and any form of crisis (2 Chron.7: 15).

Love for One another and Obey Authority

One of the greatest commandments is to love one another. This has become part of the tenets of faith in the Christian faith today. God is love and the person that love is born of God. According to Jesus "by this shall men know that you are my disciples in deed if you have love one for another" (John 15: 17). The church leader is expected to teach all the principles of love for God and for humans. Church leaders are to encourage their members to obey to take precaution, stay safe and obey the directives from the government and health workers. Christian faithful are to display love, patriotism and unity by observing all the safety protocols as directed by government or its appointees. The leadership of the church is to model biblical Christianity by mobilizing its members to be patriotic, loving and obedient to constituted authorities (Panya, 2020). It is love that will make the people to obey the directives of the government because they are for the good of all. It should be noted that some religious leaders were arrested for flouting Covid – 19 protocols. This did not give the Church a good image especially among the non- Christians. The Bible enjoins Christians to obey and submit to constituted authority because they have been appointed by God (Matt. 22: 21; Rom. 13: 1-17). Consequently, disobeying them is tantamount to disobeying God. Our true identity in Christ is made obvious in this world when we submit to constituted authorities, love and pray for those who persecute us.

Holy Living

Christians should make it a responsibility to pursue holy living. While it is true that corporate worship occupies a strategic place in spiritual growth of a Christian, it must be preceded by a personal commitment to Christ. The Christian is that individual that has given his life to Christ. Knowing Christ is a personal thing. After the salvation package of God has been appropriated, it is the duty of the individual to make a lifelong personal commitment to a daily walk with Christ. Part from the Government lockdown of confinement, self-isolation for the purpose of communing with God was a practice that was commonly modeled by Christ (Matt. 14: 23; 26:36,39,42,44; Mark 1: 35; 6: 46; 14: 32, 35; Luke 5: 16; 6: 12; 9: 18). Church leaders should teach the principles of spiritual self-isolation as means of connecting with the divine. This principle promotes occasional self-withdrawal for the purpose of self-evaluation and communion with God. This will enhance spiritual maturation. COVID – 19 lockdown is a good opportunity for Christians to concentrate on God. Church leaders are to encourage Christians to advantage of the period of lockdown to dig deeper into the scriptures with members of their families. During the physical lockdown, husbands, wives and children who were always going to work had to stay home for days because virus. It was indeed a time of reunion, devotion to God and rest or relaxation for many.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, the COVID- 19 global pandemic that is currently ravaging the globe and the world is still struggling with it. This study brought to the fore the teaching responsibilities of Church leaders in Nigeria in the fight against the spread of Corona virus. Church leaders in Nigeria must wake up to their teaching responsibilities by guiding and guarding their followers to know and to do the right things in order to prevent and contain the spread of the virus in our nation. The Church leaders must preach and teach their member to obey all the safety protocols as directed by the Government. Church leaders and members must consider it a duty to intercede for the nation on the virus. The Church must ensure that proper theological education is given to prospective Church leaders in other to avoid heretical teaching and preaching among the Clergy under the disguise of conspiracy theory on corona virus. The Church leaders and the Government must work together to find a lasting solution to this health crisis.

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