

African Pentecostalism and Media Appropriations: Picturisque Contextualisation of Evil in the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, Nigeria

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Abstract

The MFM is a deliverance ministry *par excellence*. Over the years, the ministry has continued to call attention to the African worldview of evil. To validate the reality of evil in the minds of people, the MFM has mediated the concept of evil through the several drawings showing the “faces” of evil on the books and magazines published by the ministry. This study which is grounded in qualitative research method employs historical survey, participant observation and review of relevant literature to reflect on the dynamics of the print media in the MFM. The findings indicate that the “faces” of evil are in all the deliverance books written by Daniel Olukoya, the General Overseer of MFM, and other publications of the group divulge among other things, that the print-media depictions of evil in the MFM is a way by which the group contextualises the reality of the concept of evil in the minds of her members. This key feature significantly back up in popularising the MFM as a warfare ministry well-informed of Satan’s antics and possessing the ‘methodology’ of dealing with the malevolence.

Keywords: Contextualisation, Deliverance, Evil, Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM), Religious Pictures

Introduction

This study examines the significance of the picturesque depictions of evil in the print media productions of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM). MFM is a quintessential example of a deliverance ministry. Since her founding in Nigeria in 1989, it has continued to lay emphasis on the African worldview of evil. To make evident the reality of the idea of evil in the thoughts of people, the

MFM more than any other African Pentecostal Church or group, has mediated the concept of evil through the several pictorial depictions or drawings showing the “faces” of evil in her publications, in particular, books and magazines. A central question the study addresses is that which relates to the significance of these pictorial displays of the faces or images of evil by Daniel Olukoya and the MFM. Thus, of what relevance are these pictures?

Among other things, the study gives attention to discussions on a theory of Religion and Media; a brief history of Daniel Olukoya and MFM Church; a discussion on the use of media among Nigerian Pentecostals groups, Media depictions of the ‘faces’ of evil by MFM, and the significance of the ministry’s print-media picturesque representations of evil. To provide information on these issues, the study employs a combination of methods. First, the study uses of relevant literature on a theory of religion and the media, the history of the MFM and Pentecostal appropriations of the media in Nigeria. Second, the study benefit from personal participant’s observations on the field among MFM churches in Nigeria, the Netherlands and the United States of America. Third, the study selects and discusses some print-media of the MFM, and the images on them, depicting evil. And, fourth, the study utilises information from the official webpage of the MFM.

In all of these, the study shows that among other things, the media has largely assisted many African Pentecostal churches in attaining media visibility and popularizing the beliefs of such groups in the public domain, and this results in enlisting of members for such groups. In relation to the MFM church, her media depictions of evil

reaffirms the group's commitment to self-perceived divine mandate of combating malevolent spirits. It is significant to note that, the MFM is not the only Nigerian Pentecostal group that appropriates the media; indeed as many studies have shown, several other Nigerian Pentecostal groups continue to appropriate the media in one form or the other.¹ However, among these African/Nigerian Pentecostal media appropriations, we may assert that it is only the MFM that has added to her print media vivid, clear images of evil, as a way of contextualizing the concept in all the print-media publications of the group, and this merits some investigations.

Theoretical Framework

Religious Media Theory

Media theory refers generally to the complex social-political and philosophical principles which organise ideas about the relationship between media and society. A major aspect of media theory is the Normative media Theory.² The theory concerns itself primarily with what the media ought to do in the society, in contrast to what the media actually does. More often than not, it is expected that the press and the media reflect the basic beliefs and the major assumptions held by a society, however, this is not often the case. Thus, it is expected that the different cultures, principles, etiquettes, ethics, priorities and others, the society holds would be reflected by, and through, the media.³

There are five important dimensions of normative media theory. First

¹ See Asonzeh Ukah, see also Ezekiel Ajani.

² This is a secular media theory, which for all intents and purposes, is related to all forms of the media.

³ Normative Media Theory,

https://www.le.ac.uk/oerresources/media/ms7501/mod2unit11/page_07.htm (Accessed April 20, 2022).

is authoritarian theory which holds that, sometimes, media and public communication are subject to the supervision of the government. Second is the free press theory which supports complete freedom of public expressions through the media and totally rejects any governmental interference in the media, particularly, the press. The third is the social responsibility media theory which argues that the media should be free, however, it must accept obligations to be of good service to the society. To ensure its practicality, there must be media regulations. The fourth dimension of the normative media theory is the developmental media theory which holds that, although media freedom is desirable, it should be subordinate to a society's socio-economic and political developments. The fifth is the alternative media theory, a normative theory of the media that favours the media which is close to the grassroots of the society. It serves as a voice for grass-roots social groups and helps to keep radical criticisms alive in the society.⁴

When applied specifically to religion, the relevant theoretical framework for our discussion on the media in the MFM is the Religious Media Theory. It is noteworthy that it has much relationship with the Normative Media Theory discussed above; that is, the media reflecting the local beliefs of the society. Taisto Lehtikoinen discusses Religious Media Theory to mean the holistic character of religiously-motivated communication.⁵ Thus, whenever religion uses the media, this holistic dimension is expected to be present. It is the presentation or communication of important Christian ideologies present in Christian

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Taisto Lehtikoinen, *Religious Media Theory: Understanding Mediated Faith and Christian Applications of the Media* (Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 2003), 34.

⁶ Ibid, 35-36.

traditions. There are three major aspects of Religious Media Theory. First is the Normative Religious Media Theory. As earlier hinted, the internal and external dimensions of the Normative Religious Media Theory relate to the overall philosophy or ideology of a given society which places some expectations and limitations on the media. This is closely related to the ideal of 'Normative Media Theory' in the mainstream media. This theory expresses the normative theologically-based thinking on the appropriate ways religious institutions should use the media. Normative expressions of Religious Media Theory present themselves through such things as 'communication doctrines of churches,' 'media and communications theology,' 'religious ethics of the media,' and so on.⁶

Second is the descriptive Religious Media Theory. This describes the societal, cultural and media system framework and determinants that enable or limit actualisation of religious communication in the society. Here there are no normative elements; rather, they are derived. The third is Religious Media Theory as ritualism and cultural. This relates to the audience of the media. This dimension of the media is interested in the meaning-making processes and negotiations of the media by the audience. It also relates to the functions of the media in social life and culture. This cultural theory explains the significance and process of meaning-making and ritualism in mediated religion.⁷ These three dimensions of the Religious Media Theory- Normative Religious Media Theory, Descriptive Religious Media Theory - and

⁷ Ibid, 37-38.

⁸ M.A Ojo, *The End-Time Army: Charismatic Movements in Modern Nigeria* (Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World-Press Inc., 2006), 31.

the dimensions of ritualism and culture are all present in the print-media appropriations of the MFM.

Brief history and taxonomy of Pentecostalism in Nigeria:

Three major phases are discernable in the history of Pentecostalism in Nigeria. The first phase covers the origin of the movement from the early 1900s to the 1960s. This first phase of Pentecostalism in Nigeria was associated with the *Aladura* movement, which laid emphasis on the baptism of the Holy Spirit, taught and practised by the group as early as from the 1910s. It is clear here that the Pentecostal movement in Nigeria began as an indigenous initiative. However, it was in the 1930s that the concept was fully developed. Thus, until the 1930s, Nigerian Pentecostalism was unrelated to the world-wide Pentecostal movement.⁸ Around this period, some of the leaders of the *Aladura* churches came in contact with Faith Tabernacle, an American Pentecostal group and, later, with The Apostolic Church, which was a British Pentecostal body.⁹ These two churches soon had a strong influence on the leaders of the *Aladura* movement. Through them, the basic tenets and beliefs of the *Aladura* were reinforced and given an additional twist and term.¹⁰ As indigenous Pentecostal groups grew in Nigeria, by the 1930s, more foreign denominational Pentecostal churches also began to spread in the country. Notable ones included the Assemblies of God, the Apostolic Faith and the Foursquare Gospel Church.¹¹

⁹ J.D.Y Peel, *Aladura: A Religious Movement Among the Yoruba* (London: International Africa Institute and Oxford University Press, 1968), 55.

¹⁰ Olufunke Adeboye, "Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa: The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Nigeria" in Fourchard, Andre Mary and Rene Otayak (eds.) *Enterprises religieuses transnationales en Afrique de l'Ouest* (Karthala: IFRA, 2005), 439.

¹¹ Adeboye, 440.

The 1940s to the 1960s continued to witness the expansion of both the indigenous and foreign Pentecostal groups. This period was characterised by revivals engendered by individuals like S.G Elton, one of the representatives of the Apostolic Church missionaries from Britain. Another notable figure in this period was Evangelist Billy Graham who came on the invitation of the Christian Council of Nigeria in 1960. Although not a Pentecostal himself, his crusades revolutionised evangelistic activities in Nigeria. Prominent features of the crusades were claims of divine healing, baptism in the Spirit and other Pentecostal manifestations. Soon, Pentecostal emphasis on healing, tongues and so on began to spread in and beyond Nigeria, particularly among the young literate person in Nigerian. The media, tapes, books, and the, television helped tremendously in influencing the youths with the Pentecostal doctrines.¹²

The second phase of Pentecostalism was from the 1970s to the 1980s. This was a period of the rise of trans-denominational Pentecostal movement. The 1970s and 1980s witnessed a Pentecostal revival which was a continuity of the Pentecostal tradition of the first phase. Among other things, the major actors in the second phase had previous contacts with some of the leaders of the first phase. Furthermore, Ruth Marshall rightly notes that this second generation of Pentecostals largely amplified the holiness message which was emphasised in the first phase. The Pentecostal revival of this second phase was characterised with the preaching of perfection and strict personal ethics.¹³

¹² M.A Ojo, *The End-Time Army: Charismatic Movements in Modern Nigeria*, 35.

¹³ Ruth Marshall, "Power in the Name of Jesus": Social Transformation and Pentecostalism in Western Nigeria Revisited" in Ranger T. and Vaughan O. (eds.), *Legitimacy and State in Twentieth-Century Africa: Essays in Honour of A.H.M Greene* (London: Macmillan Press, 1993), 11.

In this phase, American Pentecostalism largely exerted its influence on the movement. This was done through repeated evangelistic visits to Nigeria, provision of Pentecostal literatures on various doctrinal issues, tele-evangelism and the radio. The Nigerian university campuses provided a significant platform for the Pentecostal revival of this phase. In many of these campuses, particularly in the south-west were interdenominational Christian student groups popularly called 'fellowship.' The earliest among these was the Deeper Christian Life Ministry which was established in 1972, by William Folorunso Kumuyi who was, at that time, a lecturer at the University of Lagos. It was in 1982 that the ministry became a full-fledged church.¹⁴

This phase was also characterised by massive evangelism as the group sought membership. In this period, Pentecostalism was largely concentrated in the major urban centres of south-western Nigeria. Although the use of English language gave impression of the movement as elitist, as occasion demanded, there were simultaneous interpretations into the vernacular. Olufunke Adeboye (2005) was right in noting that the movement was opposed to the mainline churches largely on their perceived coldness and apathy. In addition, the movement frowned churches which embraced traditional African beliefs in whatever form. In this category are the *Aladura* churches that are derogatively referred to by the Pentecostals as *white-garment churches*. This is because some of the *Aladura* churches like the Cherubim and Seraphim and the Celestial Church of Christ, wear white

¹⁴ Matthews Ojo, "The Deeper Life Bible Church in Nigeria" in Gifford Paul (ed.), *New Dimensions in African Christianity* (Ibadan: Sefer Books, 1993), 165.

garments to the church for worship.¹⁵ This development merits further discussions in other fora. This is because the *Aladura* churches as we have noted were the precursors of the Pentecostal movement in Nigeria.

The third phase of Pentecostalism in Nigeria is the contemporary epoch. This is dated from the 1990s to the present. In terms of a population explosion of the movement, and the proliferation of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria, this phase is unprecedented. Adeboye (2005) notes that the mass conversion and the influx into Pentecostalism at this period may not be unconnected with the hardship people suffered under the military regime, particularly that of General Ibrahim Babangida (retired), which was characterised largely by inflation and corruption.¹⁶ Soon, there was the shift in the emphasis of most of these Pentecostal groups from the *holiness doctrine* to prosperity and faith. Some Pentecostal churches founded in this period include Christ Embassy (1991), Fountain of Life Church (1992), House on the Rock (1994) and Daystar Christian Centre.¹⁷

Concurrently, other Pentecostal churches like the Redeemed Christian Church of God rapidly expanded as two sets of congregations emerged within the group- the classical and the model parishes.¹⁸ The Deeper Christian Life Bible Church also witnessed tremendous expansion as it decentralised its worship at the Gbagada headquarters and expanded into cities and villages in Nigeria. In this

¹⁵ Adeboye, "Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa: The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Nigeria" *Enterprises religieuses transnationales en Afrique de l'Ouest* (Karthala: IFRA, 2005), 442.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Leke Ogunewu, "Charismatic Movements and Theological Education: Past, Present and Future" *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* Vol. XII (2) (2008), 64.

¹⁸ This was not a division, but simply a variety of churches within the RCCG. Initially, the churches of this group were predominantly in Yoruba land, but with the introduction of the Model Parishes, the churches soon spread to other ethnic groups within Nigeria.

period also, the MFM expanded remarkably, as the group made inroads into all the nooks and crannies of Nigeria through her deliverance messages. The known Pentecostal churches in Nigeria are well above one thousand with most of them having branches across the nation.¹⁹ Another important feature in the present phase is the transnationalisation of Nigerian Pentecostal churches. By the mid 1990s, many of these churches had established branches in Europe and North America. Through these churches, they continue to replicate the Nigerian Pentecostal passion and relish in the West.

Typology

On the issue of their typologies, described in terms of their functions, Deji Ayegboyin classifies the Pentecostal Movement in Nigeria into three, namely, the prosperity organisations, the holiness groups and the deliverance ministries. In these classifications, the MFM clearly falls within the deliverance ministries group due to her ardent emphasis on, and practice of, deliverance.²⁰ Matthews Ojo, on the other hand, categorises Pentecostal groups in Nigeria into six groups. These include: First the faith seekers who lay emphasis on a deep relationship with God; second, the faith builders who emphasise the need to realise individual potentials; the third, the faith transformers who seek to change socio-cultural and religious milieu of their contexts; fourth are the reformists who seek to rekindle renewals within their groups on the basis of Pentecostal spirituality; fifth are the deliverance churches which specialise in liberating people from perceived satanic bondages; and sixth are the modernists who simply adopt the religious

¹⁹ Musa Gaiya, "The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria" a paper presented at a seminar at the Centre for African Studies, University of Copenhagen, on 12th October, 2001, 6.

²⁰ Deji Ayegboyin, "...But deliver us from evil... The Riposte of the MFM and its Implications for the Reverse in Mission" *Orita* XXXII.1&2 (June and December 2005), 36.

styles of Pentecostals.²¹ Going by Ojo's categorisation, our case study, the MFM belongs to the fifth group the deliverance churches. The sixth category according to Ojo represents the members of the old African Independent Churches who believe that they have to present their faith in a modern and acceptable form to a more-enlightened society. Some have sympathy for Pentecostal spirituality or have shared in Pentecostal activities, and are mindful of the marketing success of the Pentecostals, which they want to replicate in their own constituency.

Nigerian Pentecostals and the use of the Media

Our discussions on the use of the media among Nigerian Pentecostals here is, in some respects, a scratch on the surface. We may assert that the Nigerian Pentecostals, over the years, have been involved in the use of the media for faith propagation and evangelistic purposes more than other Christian denominations in the country. In the work titled, "Charismatic/Pentecostal Appropriation of Media Technologies in Ghana and Nigeria," Rosaline I.J. Hackett explored the burgeoning use of the media by Pentecostal and Charismatic groups in Ghana and Nigeria. Hackett rightly notes that the appropriation of media technologies by the Pentecostals facilitates the dissemination of the word to the masses.²² Nigerian Pentecostals have been appropriating the media for evangelistic purposes in the past five decades. W.F. Kumuyi, the founder of the Deeper Life Bible Church Lagos, began

²¹ Matthews Ojo, "Of Saints and Sinners: Pentecostalism and the Paradox of Social Transformation in Modern Nigeria". *An Inaugural Lecture Series* 227, delivered at Oduduwa Hall, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria on Tuesday, 8th June, 2010 (Ile-Ife, Nigeria: Obafemi Awolowo University Press Limited, 2010), 25-31.

²² Rosaline I.J Hackett, "Charismatic/Pentecostal Appropriation of Media Technologies in Ghana and Nigeria" *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 28, Fasc. 3 (Aug., 1998), 258-277. BRILL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1581571>

using a tape ministry as a successful evangelistic tool back in the 1970s.²³

As each media platform appeared in the secular world during each of the phases of the growth of Pentecostalism in Nigeria, the Nigerian Pentecostals rightly appropriated such opportunities by utilising such media for the advancement of the kingdom of God and the popularisation of their groups.

Since the revivalism of the Pentecostal movement in the 1970s in Nigeria, an interesting phenomenon has been their progressive appropriation of the media. Four major phases are distinguishable: first is the era of the use of print and tape media in the 1970s in the form of tracts for faith propagation and handbills announcing the group's programmes. One of the leading Pentecostal groups that utilised this medium was the Deeper Christian Life Bible Church. In this first phase, the productions were usually in black-and-white, using the available letterpress print technology of that era. In addition, the cassette tapes helped in the recordings of the sermons of W.F. Kumuyi which were sold to members and others, for spiritual edification and propagation of the faith.

The second phase, from the 1980s into the 1990s was the era of the use of radio and television for propagations and the promotion of their programmes. Many Nigerian Pentecostal groups seized the opportunity to go on air to broadcast their programmes and popularise their group identities and ethos. One of the earliest groups to broadcast their programmes on the television was the Idahosa World Outreach Ministries with headquarters in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. The

²³ Hackett citing Matthews Ojo, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 28, Fasc. 3 (Aug., 1998), 263.

late Archbishop Benson Idahosa was one of the early Nigerian *Pentecostal Church fathers* who labored much in the growth of Pentecostalism in Nigeria and other parts of West Africa. This second phase also witnessed the use of compact discs (CD) and video compact disc (VCD). Through all of these, the Pentecostals continued to disseminate their teachings, ideals and peculiarities in Nigeria and beyond.

The early 2000s witnessed the proliferations of the television media by some Pentecostal groups, with many owning their private local, and digital satellite television stations. Some of these are Emmanuel Television, owned by T.B. Joshua and his Synagogue Church of All Nations; DOVE Television Station owned by the Enoch Adeboye and his Redeemed Christian Church of God, and others. By the late 2000s, to the present (2022), many Pentecostal groups have moved into the fourth phase of the mass media, profiting largely from the era of the social mass media- the Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, Telegram, Zoom, etc. An example of such groups that have made much use of the mass media in varied forms is the Redeemed Christian church of God (RCCG).²⁴ Apart from the RCCG, almost all other major Pentecostal groups in Nigeria- the Classical Pentecostal blocks, the Charismatic Penetecostal Movements like Living Faith World Outreach (Winners' Chapel), Rhema Chapel International Ministries, the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, as well as the Neo- Pentecostal Movements, like the Synagogue of all Nations,

²⁴ See Ezekiel Ajani, "Dynamics of Media Appropriation by Nigerian Pentecostal Churches: A Focus on the Redeemed Christian Church of God" In Gbemisola Adeoti, Femi Abiodun, Ibrahim Oloosun and Olusegun Oloadosu (eds.) *Humanities, Security and Social Media*, The Faculty of Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife (Ibadan: Bookminds Publishers, 2019). 122-141.

continue to appropriate the media copiously. One advantage of this last phase is the ability to reach young folks in the society, through the mass media and, equally remarkably several Pentecostal groups have continued to popularise their group dynamics and group distinctiveness.

Daniel Kolawole Olukoya and his MFM Church

Daniel Kolawole Olukoya, the founder and General Overseer of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries was born in 1956 to the family of Mr and Mrs Olukoya, a retired police officer and petty trader respectively. He started primary education at St John's Christ Apostolic Church primary school in Akure, Ondo state, the hometown of his mother and later moved to Lagos to complete his primary education at the St Jude's Primary School, Ebutte-Meta. Thereafter, he proceeded to Methodist Boys High School Lagos for post-primary education. From there, he went to the University of Lagos, where he studied Micro-biology and finished with a first class honors degree.²⁵ After graduation, he taught as a Research Assistant in the Nigerian Institute of Medical Research (NIMR), Yaba, Lagos. From there, he proceeded to the University of Reading, United Kingdom on the Commonwealth scholarship, where he studied Molecular Genetics and obtained a PhD degree. He returned to Nigeria in 1984 to continue his appointment with NIMR. He equally served as a lecturer and external examiner to University of Lagos and University of Benin among other Nigerian universities. By 1993, Olukoya had risen to the post of the head of Genetics Department. In 1998, due to ministerial pressure, he

²⁵ Olayiwola, 2008, 17.

resigned his appointment, having risen to the post of the Deputy Director-General of the Institute. In his field of specialization, he had an indigenous laboratory of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology. He is accredited with many scientific publications. Olukoya became converted in 1974 and began pastoring what he referred to as his first church in 1981. Olukoya, who was a member of the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), left the church in 1988, as a result of an unresolved conflict.²⁶

The MFM started in 1989 with a prayer group of seven already meeting in Olukoya's house in Yaba, Lagos State shortly before his exit from CAC in 1988. The prayer group eventually transformed into a deliverance ministry. In the same year, when the membership increased to 24, the group moved to the Nigerian Institute of Medical Research (NIMR), and organised a school of prayers on Wednesdays and a mid-week service on Thursdays. Still in 1989, due to further constraints of space, the group moved from NIMR to a bigger hall at 60, old Yaba Road, Adekunle, Ebutte Meta, Lagos. Again, the number soared higher and the church soon constituted a source of traffic hold-up for motorists in the old Yaba area where it was located. This development made the church to relocate to 13, Olasimbo Street, Onike, Yaba, in 1994. Within same months, full Sunday service began, and the name Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries was affirmed as the name of the group.²⁷

The expansion of MFM continues to be a subject of interest, not only within Nigerian/ African Pentecostalism, but also within global

²⁶ Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, http://www.mountainoffire.org/about_go.html, accessed May 20, 2016

²⁷ Ayegboyin 2005, 37.

Pentecostalism. This is because, since her founding in 1989, MFM has continued to record significant expansion within Nigeria, Africa and other continents of the world. In Nigeria, MFM has been established in nearly all the states, with an average of 15 to 20 or more branches per state. As at 2009, Lagos alone had over 70 branches. In Africa, MFM is in at least 20 countries apart from Nigeria. These include Uganda, Kenya, Togo, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Namibia, Malawi, Liberia, Ghana, Ethiopia, Cote d'voire, Congo Brazzaville, Central Africa, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Benin Republic and Tanzania. Other branches are located in Europe, Asia and North America.²⁸

It is conspicuously displayed on all the websites of the group that the MFM is a full-gospel ministry which is “devoted to the Revival of Apostolic signs, Holy Ghost fireworks and the unlimited demonstration of the power of God to deliver to the uttermost”. The official logo of the group designates a mountain burning with fire, and enclosed within two concentric circles. The mountain, which symbolises MFM, is believed to be higher than any problems individuals may have while the fire is symbolic of God’s presence and His power when evoked, is believed to consume Satan and his cohorts.

The group lays emphasis on absolute holiness within and outside of individuals. This is viewed as the greatest spiritual “insecticide” and requirement for making heaven. MFM is a do- it-yourself gospel ministry, where individual members are trained to wage war and fight spiritual battles to dislodge the plots of enemies and that of Satan. The beliefs of the MFM are conspicuously printed in her magazines and other documents of the group. Likewise, her various website glaringly

²⁸ <http://www.mountain OF Fire and Miracles Ministries>

contain these beliefs.

Picturisque depictions of Evil in selected MFM publications

Drawings or artistic impressions convey meaning wherever found whether on cardboards canvass or in books and others. It is stated in the imprint page of many of Olukoya's books that the artistic cover illustrations are drawn by Shade Olukoya, his wife. The different imageries often drawn largely depict the understanding of both Olukoya and Shade on the various themes of the books. From the over 100 book titles by Daniel Olukoya, we venture the discussion of the artistic impressions of eight publications. The first is titled *Prayer Rain* (Figure 1). This is a book of 645 pages containing several varieties of prayer points on numerous subjects. This very popular book has been translated into many Nigerian, and a few foreign, languages. The artistic impressions on the cover are four hands clasped in a pattern that depicts prayer. Above it are showers of rain dropping over the hands (Figure 1). This clearly indicates the contents as redolent of a book of prayers. For instance, in the section on 'deliverance for children', one of the prayers is "I decree that no sickness or plague will come upon the baby, in the name of Jesus."²⁹

The second book is *Command the Morning*. This is a book of 81 pages. The artistic impression on this book is that of a man kneeling down in the posture of prayer in the early morning as he agonises in prayer (Figure 2). As the title and impression depict, it is a book of prayer aimed at teaching the believer how to "command the day and shake wickedness working against one in the atmosphere."³⁰

²⁹ Daniel K. Olukoya, *Prayer Rain* (Lagos, Nigeria: MFM Press House, 1999), 439.

³⁰ Daniel K. Olukoya, *Command The Morning* (Lagos, Nigeria: MFM Press, 2004), Front cover page.

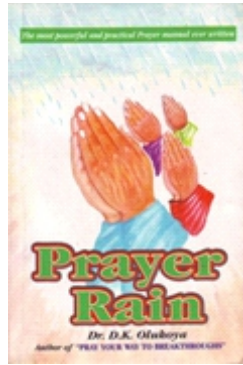


Figure 1

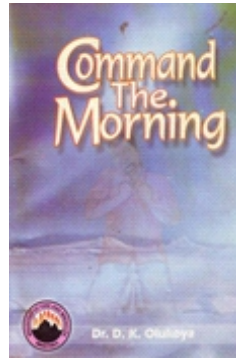


Figure 2

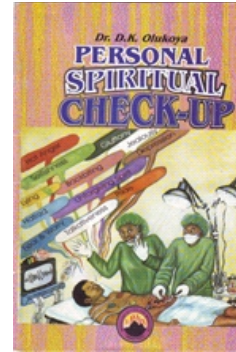


Figure 3:
Personal Spiritual Check

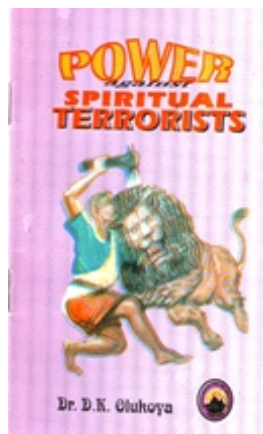


Figure 4:
Power Against
Spiritual Terrorists

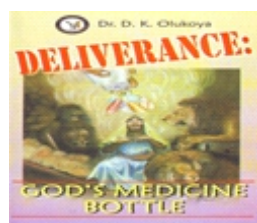


Figure 5:
Power Against
Dream Criminals

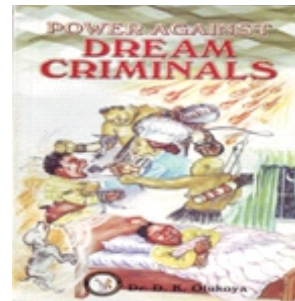


Figure 6:
Deliverance. God's
Medicine Bottle

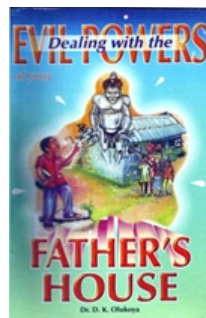


Figure 7:
Dealing With the Evil Powers

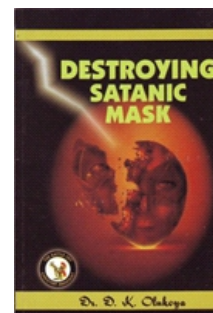


Figure 8:
Destroying Satanic Mask

The third book in this discussion is *Personal Spiritual Check-up* (Figure 3). The cover illustration shows a man in a hospital theatre. Besides the man on the bed are two surgeons operating on a patient. Vices like hot anger, selfishness, lying, backbiting, gluttony, jealousy, unforgiving spirit, depression, fear and worry, talkativeness and pride are indicated as the diagnoses. The surgeons are depicted expressing great surprise at the vices in the patient.² This cover illustration, at a glimpse, gives the reader an idea of the contents of the 53 page book. The cover illustration seems to suggest that when individuals carry-out personal spiritual check-ups, they would realise the many vices in their lives, hence, the need to pray for deliverance from these vices (Figure three).

The fourth book is *Power against Spiritual Terrorists*. This is a book of 33 pages. The cover illustration is that of a young man with an axe attacking a fierce-looking lion which is attacking the man (Figure 4). Amongst other things, the illustration seems to suggest the need for an aggressive response against spiritual terrorists (typified by the lion). The contents of the book are prayer points against ‘spiritual’ terrorists (demons, vampires, etc.) who use threats and violence to obtain negative results in people’s lives. A sample prayer is, “Every spiritual terrorist positioned to steal my destiny, die by fire!”³¹

The title of the fifth book is *Deliverance: God’s Medicine Bottle*. The cover illustration shows a man in the lion’s den, surrounded by six lions. On the ground besides the man are the leftover bones of people already devoured by the lions. Directly above the head of the man is a hand holding a bottle opened with tablets of different shapes and sizes

³¹ See Daniek K. Olukoya, *Personal Spiritual Check-up* (Lagos, Nigeria: MFM Press, 1996), front cover page.

dropping over the head of the man in the den (Figure 5). This illustration suggests that it is the medicine poured on the individual from above that has prevented the lions from devouring him. In the book, Olukoya argues that deliverance is the only medicine in God's bottle through which the individual is, and can, be set free.³³

The sixth book is *Power against Dream Criminals*. This is a book of 276 pages. The cover illustration shows an individual dreaming as he sleeps on the bed. In the dream, he is being bitten by a dog while someone is feeding him food with a spoon. Also in the dream, an archer is flogging him while a giant also drags and uproots his hair (Figure 6). From this illustrations on the cover, the nasty experiences the man on the bed is having can be construed as an example of a human who is overwhelmed by "dream criminals". In the book, Olukoya gives prayer points to be offered to overcome dream criminals. The third prayer point in the list is: "let the stubborn pursuers die in the Red sea, in Jesus' name."³⁴

The seventh book is *Dealing With the Evil Powers of My Father's House*. The cover illustration shows a house with a giant standing in the middle of it. In the hands of the giant are chains with which the members of the house are bound up. Also, in the illustration is a man holding a Bible and speaking against the giant who has captivated the members of that home (Figure 7). Apparently, the cover seems to explain the title. The believer with the Bible is the one presumably, dealing with the evil powers of his father's house. In the book, Olukoya argues that, in every household, there are evil powers which must be dealt with in prayers. One of such prayers is: "Every evil power of my father's house, what are you doing there? Die by fire!"³⁵

³³⁻³⁵ See Daniek K. Olukoya, *Power Against Spiritual Terrorists* (Lagos, Nigeria: MFM Press, 1998), 6.

The eighth book in this discussion is *Destroying Satanic Mask*. The cover illustration shows a bright oval-shaped figure with a mask in it. From the skies above the mask, lightning appears which strikes the mask and breaks it into two (Figure 8). This cover illustration at a glimpse explains the contents of the book. It illustrates prayers which can break and destroy satanic gimmicks or unmask the devil wherever he is hiding and, consequently, destroy him. In the book, Olukoya explains that the enemy, Satan, may use the face of another person to attack an individual. According to him, it is through aggressive prayers that the enemy can be unmasked.³⁶

How to Obtain Personal Deliverance is the title of the ninth book. The cover illustration shows an individual with a Bible under his arm praying aggressively against Satan who retreats into the dark. Satan is depicted as a black-robed figure with two horns and a tail (Figure 9). In the 73 page book, Olukoya explains deliverance as release from captivity or expulsion of evil spirits from a person or thing.³⁷ Furthermore, he identifies 32 ways of obtaining personal deliverance; some these are through warfare prayer, listening to the Word of God, through praying in tongues, through praises, through breaking evil curses, through breaking evil covenants, and so on.³⁸

Understanding the Picturisque Depictions of Evil in the MFM

Having viewed and discussed eight selected publications of the MFM with images depicting evil, the question at this point in time is; “What is the significance of these images”? We maintain that, among other things, a major significance of these pictures is that they help to

³⁶ Olukoya, *Deliverance: God's Medicine Bottle* (Lagos, Nigeria: MFM Press, 2002), viii.

³⁷ Olukoya, *Power Against Dream Criminals* (Lagos, Nigeria: The Battle Cry Christian Ministry, 2001), 226.

contextualise the reality of evil and malevolent spirits in the minds of the members of the group and others related to the group in one way or the other, particularly in the African context. A few years ago, in Amsterdam, while discussing on the seventh book listed above titled, “*Dealing with the Evil Powers of My Father’s House*”, with a Dutch student, he retorted that, as a Dutch Christian, he would not think of evil in that way (figure 7). Rather, he riposte that he would think of evil, perhaps in terms of drug addiction. An implication of this is that the picturesque depictions of evil, on the cover pages of Daniel Olukoya’s books, may find more significance in the African context. Thus, it becomes important to pursue further the matter of the contextual significance of these images by understanding better the phenomenon of contextualisation.

Dean Gilliland in the article “Contextualisation,” informs that there is not a single generally accepted definition of the term. He argues that it is the goal of contextualisation which better defines the term. In his opinion, the goal of contextualisation in theology is to enhance an authentic understanding and experience of Jesus Christ or the gospel in human situations.³⁹ In the process of contextualisation, “the Church continually challenges, incorporates and transforms elements of human culture...”⁴⁰ The incorporation and transformation of culture are largely geared towards a proper understanding of the gospel message and the quest to make the gospel relevant to the context of the recipient, such that the message is no longer alien or superficial, but concrete, related and relevant to the

³⁸ Olukoya, *Dealing with the Evil Powers of My Father’s House* (Lagos, Nigeria: MFM Press), 6-7.

³⁹ Olukoya, *Destroying Satanic Mask* (Lagos, Nigeria: The Battle Cry Christian Ministries, 2009), 6-9.

⁴⁰ Olukoya, *How to Obtain Personal Deliverance* (Lagos, Nigeria: MFM Press, 1996), 10.

culture alongside, the yearnings and aspirations of the recipients. Additionally, contextualisation is not an exclusive preserve of theology and the church, however, in our discussion here, the interest relates to the contextualisation which concerns the religious life. Thus, in this contextualisation of Christianity, the underlying question is, “What is the Bible saying to me here (in my context) and now?”⁴¹

Gilliland identifies at least seven contextualisation models.⁴² It is of interest in discussing these models to identify what applies most to the MFM of Nigeria in her contextualisation processes. The first model is the adaptation model. Here, the task is that of simply making historical-theological concepts to fit into each cultural situation. Often in this model, Western culture is seen as the norm, and hence other cultures are forced to fit into it. Over the years, it has been discovered that it is a faulty assumption and practice which denounce as illegitimate the realities of other cultures. It was this adaptation model that many earlier missionaries brought to Africa, such that the gospel was dressed in Western culture and largely not contextual to the experiences of the Africans. This made some of the earlier gospel-sowing efforts shallow and unsustainable in many African contexts.

The second model discussed by Gilliland is the anthropological model. Here, contextualisation starts by studying the people concerned. The general assumption in this model is that people know best their own culture. While this claim is true, the rightness of the culture ought to be evaluated in the light of the scriptures. The third contextualisation model is the critical model. In this model, the

³⁸ Ibid, 4-26.

³⁹ Dean Gilliland, “Contextualisation” in A Scott Moreau (ed.) *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2000), 225.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

features of traditional culture-rituals, symbols, practices, songs, stories, myths, customs, music, and so on, are all brought under the critical scrutiny of biblical teachings on such practices and issues. In this model, culture and scriptures are simultaneously evaluated in the quest for new ways of expressing beliefs and practices.

This third contextualisation model enumerated above explicitly relates more to the experiences of the MFM. In her contextualisation, the group is usually critical of many features of traditional cultures, as they bring such cultures under intense examinations in the light of the teachings of the Bible. One of such areas is in the use of African drums. The MFM does not use indigenous African drums. This is because the group believes that, the Bible does not subscribe to its usage as it does some other string instruments which the Bible mentions.⁴³ Christopher Aigbadumah is of the view that a probable reason for this practice in the MFM is the “fear of contamination of spirits” due to links of drums to African ancestral lineage, which the MFM views as the gateway to many evils among Africans.⁴⁴

In addition, the group does not subscribe to the African traditional religious practice of offering sacrifices in any form. The group teaches that Christ has been made the ultimate sacrifice for the sins of humanity, hence, the only tenable sacrifice is that of lives surrendered and yielded to Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, the group greatly challenges the traditional practices of Yoruba traditional festivals which feature the display of

⁴¹ John Onaiyekan, “Current Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa” in J.O Akao (ed.) *African Journal of Biblical Studies* Volume XVI No.1 (April 2001), 5.

⁴² Gilliland, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, 227.

masquerades and ancestors. The MFM strongly contends that the practice is idolatrous and an avenue for demons to operate in the lives of the practitioners. Also, the MFM like many other Pentecostal groups in Nigeria largely contends against the practice of polygamy which the African tradition often accommodates.

The fourth model is the semiotic model. In the semiotic model, culture is read through signs. This model interprets symbols and myths of the past to evaluate the changing of culture. The fifth model is the synthetic model. Here four elements are brought together; the gospel, Christian tradition, culture and social change. These elements are mutually discussed with insights offered by the local people. The sixth is the transcendental model. It is a contextualisation model primarily concerned with what truth means to the subject and to the members of the subject's community. This model appears subjective. The last model discussed by Gilliland is the translation model. This is based on translation science. Here, the nearest possible meaning of an original text is regarded as appropriate in the receiving culture.

It is notable that the contextualisation models enumerated above by Gilliland are simply models which can be found in different contexts. In no way are they presented as set norms or standards. At best, they are simply approaches to the issue of contextualisation. The onus lies on individuals and groups to adopt whichever suits the group or person. For instance, as identified above, it is the critical model which applies more to the MFM of Nigeria on the issue of contextualisation.

⁴³ See Psalm 150 for example.

⁴⁴ Christopher Aigbadumah, *Jesus The Healer: A Theological Reflection on the Role of Christology in the Growth of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Church in Nigeria* (Sarkin Powa: np, 2011), 79-80.

Conclusion

This study examined the significance of the picturesque depictions of evil in the print media productions of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM). MFM, as noted, is a deliverance ministry par excellence. The ministry gives special attention to teachings on demons, and malevolent spirits. In addition, every meeting of the MFM is pre-occupied with ardent prayers against malevolent spirits.

One major question to which the study gave attention was the significance of pictorial depictions of evil on Daniel Olukoya's books and MFM's publications. It was noted among other things that within the African cultural world view that attaches the occurrences of unpleasant things to the activities of demons, the pictorial images of evil provides a contextual reality of evil in the minds of the members of the MFM and thus helps to wage spiritual warfare against all perceived malevolent spirits and, ultimately, experience deliverance from the activities of such spirits.

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