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INCARNATING FRANCIS OGUNMODEDE'S QUEST FOR UNITY AND STABILITY IN THE CHURCH

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Abstract

Disunity and instability are two major problems that have plagued Nigeria since independence. While society generally battles ethnic and religious challenges, the Church faces ethnic and class conflicts. Francis Ogunmodede describes Nigeria as a complex country whose problems revolve around ethnic and religious divisions as a result of the British forcefully amalgamating over 250 erstwhile self-governing nationalities with divergent socio-cultural and religious backgrounds leaving a polity with socio-political/religious conflicts fueled by corruption, selfish and porous leadership. The study adopts a mixed method which comprises the historicocritical method and the advocacy approach of the existential method of biblical exegesis in the analysis of 1 Corinthians 1:10-12, postulating that Pauline teaching on harmonious relationships in 1 Cor. 1:10-12 could serve as a model for resolving conflicts within Church communities. Francis Ogunmodede's proposition on screening electoral candidates to checkmate politicians and corrupt practices, getting a new credible census, good leadership, respect for the Rule of Law, separating Religion from State and Sovereign National Conference/ Referendum stands as a panacea to Nigeria's problems and challenges: The church in her search for oneness and unity can benefit from the advocacy of Ogunmodede, a united Nigeria that takes advantage of her diversity.

Keywords: Ethnic conflict, Class conflict, Pious societies.

Introduction

Francis Ogunmodede's paper, "The Quest for Oneness and Stability and the Challenge of Religion and Ethnicity in Nigeria," addresses the multifaceted and deeply entrenched issues that have plagued Nigeria's pursuit of national unity and stability. With over 250 ethnic groups,

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Nigeria is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world (NPC, 2020). This diversity, while culturally enriching, has historically been a source of division and conflict, particularly when combined with religious differences. The colonial amalgamation of various ethnic groups into a single entity without regard for their distinct identities laid a problematic foundation for post-independence Nigeria.

Factors that Affected Oneness and Stability in Nigeria

British Conquest and Amalgamation

The British colonial administration amalgamated the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914, primarily for administrative convenience and economic exploitation. The British employed a system of indirect rule, particularly in the north, where they governed through existing traditional leaders. This system helped entrench the power of local elites and maintained the socio-political structures of the North, which were predominantly Islamic and hierarchical. In contrast, the south had more direct British administrative control and experienced significant Western influence, particularly in Education and Christianity.

Military Interventions

Military coups in Nigeria significantly disrupted its democratic development. Coups resulted in periods of military rule and were characterized by dictatorship and lack of democratic governance. Ogunmodede outlined how numerous coups and counter-coups, starting with the 1966 coup, led to political distrust, ethnic tension and the civil war. The narrative underscores the preference for civilian and democratic rule over military dictatorships.

Constitutional Development and Islamization Agenda

Nigeria's constitutional development has been fraught with challenges. Nigeria's constitutional evolution from the amalgamation in 1914 to independence in 1960 cuts across four major constitutions: Clifford (1922), Richards (1946), Macpherson (1951), and Lyttleton (1954). The shift from Unitary to Federal systems of government began with the Richards Constitution and was solidified by the Ibadan General Conference of 1950. The controversial incorporation of Sharia law in the 1979 and 1999 constitutional amendments by military governments suggest it was part of a broader plan to Islamize Nigeria initiated by General Murtala and supported by leaders like Obasanjo, Babangida, and Abacha. Resistance to this agenda came from Middle Belt and Southern minority leaders. Ogunmodede critiqued the lack of warning from Southern lawyers about these implications and questions the actions of leaders who supported the Islamization efforts, emphasising the ethno-religious and socio-political instability that resulted from these constitutional changes.

Divergent Socio-Politico-cum-Religious Conflicts

Ogunmodede discussed several case studies of ethno-religious conflicts to illustrate the severity and frequency of these clashes. Ethno-religious conflicts have been a recurring feature of Nigeria's socio-political landscape. These conflicts are often violent, resulting in significant loss of life and property. Traditional religions in Nigeria existed in the North before the arrival of Islam in the 9th century and Christianity in the South in the 15th century. The British colonial amalgamation of the Islamic North and Christian South in 1914 created tensions and conflicts due to differing religious and cultural backgrounds. Notable conflicts include the 1981

Maitatsine uprising in Kano the subsequent advocacy for Sharia Law, the ongoing efforts by groups like the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and IPOB, the Boko Haram militant insurgent with its violent campaign, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) operating in the Niger Delta creeks with resource control agenda.

Corruption and Leadership Deficits

Corruption in Nigeria is systemic, affecting all levels of government and society. Resources meant for public services and infrastructure are diverted. This worsens ethnic and regional inequalities, as resources are often allocated based on patronage rather than need. Nigeria has been plagued by leaders who lack vision, integrity, and the ability to unify the diverse population. Many leaders have been more concerned with maintaining power and enriching themselves than with promoting national development and unity. This lack of effective leadership has hindered the development of a cohesive national identity and the implementation of policies aimed at addressing Nigeria's socio-economic challenges.

Like Nigeria, the Church is also faced with problems of ethnic and class divisions. This has adversely affected social relationships among members of Pious societies, in addition to impairing the spiritual lives of members. Ethnic and class divisions, rivalry, quarrels, superiority/inferiority complexes, formation of cliques, money politics, dissent to Church authorities, and sometimes, threats to life and property exist in various degrees and according to regions, among members of Pious societies. Particularly, ethnic and class conflicts is a major impediment to unity and development of the Church. As such, a proper understanding of Pauline teaching in 1 Cor. 1:10-12 will serve as a model for ensuring unity among Pious Societies in the Catholic Church.

This paper argues the thesis that ethnic and class conflicts are major impediments to unity and development in the Church and the Church can benefit from the advocacy of Ogunmodede in the search for oneness and stability. As such, a proper understanding of Pauline teaching in 1 Cor. 1:10-12 will serve as a model for ensuring unity among Pious societies.

This study employed a mixed method which comprises the historico-critical method and the advocacy character of the existential approach of biblical hermeneutics in the exegetical analysis of 1 Corinthians 1:10-12. advocating for oneness, unity and fellowship among members of the Pious Societies.

The immediate context of 1 Corinthians 1:10-12

The immediate context of 1 Corinthians 1:10-17 was an exhortation to unity in a divided community. The Church, apparently "was affected by the secular world, by the paganism and worldliness that was endemic in Corinth" (Schreiner, 2018:14). Furthermore, O'Connor (2005) says for Paul, the use of the term brothers points to the fact that for the Corinthians, the use of the term was "just in name. They do not share a common vision. (They were) hostile to one another" Schreiner (2018) observes. As was the case among the Corinthians where there were issues of internal division and conflicts, members of Pious Societies in the Roman Catholic Church are embroiled in conflicts and division in the struggle for relevance and control of the groups.

Exegetical Analysis of 1 Cor.1: 10-12

¹⁰Παρακαλῶ δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, διὰ τοῦ ὄνόματος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ¹¹ λέγητε πάντες καὶ μὴ ἡ ἐν ὑμῖν σχίσματα, ἵτε δὲ κατηρτισμένοι ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ νοῦ καὶ ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ γνώμῃ. ¹²έδηλώθη γάρ μοι περὶ ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοί μου, ὑπὸ τῶν Χλόης ὅτι ἔριδες ἐν ὑμῖν εἰσιν. ¹²λέγω δὲ τοῦτο ὅτι ἔκαστος ὑμῶν λέγει, Ἐγὼ μὲν εἰμι Παύλου, Ἐγὼ δὲ Ἀπολλῶ, Ἐγὼ δὲ Κηφᾶ, Ἐγὼ δὲ Χριστοῦ.

Translation

¹⁰ Now I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. ¹¹ For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers. ¹² What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ."

1 Cor. 10-12 describes a situation in the Corinthian church. Verse 10 reads Παρακαλῶ δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, διὰ τοῦ ὄνόματος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ¹¹ λέγητε πάντες καὶ μὴ ἡ ἐν ὑμῖν σχίσματα, ἵτε δὲ κατηρτισμένοι ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ νοῦ καὶ ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ γνώμῃ (Now I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose). The first statement Παρακαλῶ δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, is an important indication of the character of the pericope, and perhaps, the entire epistle, as a letter of "admonition" as (Keener, 1993) observes. Παρακαλῶ - denotes gentle appeal by speech and occurs over a hundred times in the New Testament and Paul used it frequently. It carries the notion of calling one's attention to what is truly important as distinct from what the world considers important. This opening also is in line with ancient rhetoric tools or forms, which are used in passing messages to multitudes as (Keener, 1993) recognizes. In effect, Paul wrote to the Corinthians in a very "engaging way" and not a hash manner as indicative of a "stern command" (Henry's, 2006). These identifiable characteristics with which Paul passed his message in 1 Corinthians are very important as it also influences how far the message is seen and interpreted.

δὲ (now) according to Alford is an introduction of the contrast that Paul is set to introduce and contrasts the thankful assurance expressed in verse 1 to 9. ἀδελφοί - brothers or brethren is indicative of the 'siblings metaphor'. The use of ἀδελφοί indicates who Paul addressed the letter – either the community as a whole or certain members or leaders in the community, firstly exhorting and reminding them of their being members of the family of Christ. At the same time, it is an expression of Paul's love for the Corinthian community of believers as he considers himself their father, having brought them to faith in Jesus Christ. διὰ τοῦ ὄνόματος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (By the name of our Lord Jesus Christ). Paul's passionate appeal to the Corinthian community is not hinged on his person as an apostle. Rather, he appeals to parties within the community in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, knowing fully well, their respect and regard for that name.

This is the tenth time Paul mentions the name Jesus Christ in the ten verses of this letter, indicative of the authority on which he speaks to the Community. It would be expected therefore that the Corinthians would listen to Paul, even if they had any reservations, having appealed to them by the Lord Jesus Christ. This appeal would also be centered on the person of

Christ as a yardstick of what he would later express as his desire for them. Referring to Jesus as κυρίου (Lord) also places him above all other persons and considerations. Since Jesus is Lord, all who hear Paul are obliged to listen and obey. ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ λέγητε πάντες - that you all speak the same thing. Speaking the same thing can well be understood in the light of Acts 4:32-37 – “being of one mind and heart” as well as “that ye may all with one mind and one mouth glorify God” (Rom 15:6). It evokes a spirit of understanding and togetherness and if you like, unity of purpose particularly.

Barnes (2006) notes that speaking the same thing is like asking them to hold the same doctrine or same religious sentiments. This does not however mean “perfect uniformity of opinion.” καὶ μὴ ἦ ἐν ὑμῖν σχίσματα (and that there be no divisions among you) is an appeal that there be no schisms among you. Paul’s exhortation or appeal was to the Corinthians to eschew schisms or divisions which unfortunately had already engulfed the community. The divisions should not have occurred. σχίσματα in Classical Greek was used only for actual rents or tears in material; evoking the idea of a complete break or split. It is a worse description than στασία which translates as controversy. This difference is better appreciated when viewed at the backdrop of schisms describing a point of no return. Controversies can be resolved, schisms linger and more often than not, are largely unresolved. Bruce argues that the notion of schism implied here is what is seen in Jn 7:40-43; 9:16; 10:19-21 where different people have differing opinion of Jesus.

Thus, divided opinion was Paul’s focus which had resulted to jealousy and quarrels (vs 11; 3:3) and he thus advocates or appeals that they “mend” what is torn (Bruce, 1998). The bigger picture is that of a church divided internally and against Paul. Readers assume chapter one to four assume all Paul has to say to the Corinthians is about division into parties and quarreling. Bruce (1998) adds that teachers to the Corinthians were part of the divisions and quarreling. The quarreling was carried out in the name of wisdom and boasting in mere men. The community quarreled against their leaders and together against Paul. This accounts for the opening of Paul’s letter to the Corinthians. all Greco-Roman period letters begin with a three-fold salutation: the name of the writer, the addressee and greetings. In 1 Corinthians, Paul’s name is mentioned and then Sosthenes, a co-worker. Paul however adds that he was called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God. By this statement, Paul effectively excludes Sosthenes as an apostle and affirms he founded the church of Corinth and re-states his apostleship which has divine origins (Acts 9:1-9) (Bruce, 1998).

ἵτε δὲ κατηρτισμένοι ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ νοῒ καὶ ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ γνώμῃ - But that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment. From the foregoing, the schism presupposes the existence of contending parties within the Corinthian community, which before was one united community, in keeping with Jesus’ priestly prayer - that they be one (John 17:21). The word κατηρτισμένοι is derived katarti/zw is rendered “as perfectly joined together” denotes “to restore, mend or correct” that which is disordered, as if the split was never there. In another sense, Paul’s exhortation was to correct that which was morally evil or erroneous, so it becomes ordered. A variant of this meaning denotes a situation where the νοῒ (mind) of the members of the community were to be disposed to each other with mutual goodwill, and that they live in harmony. Furthermore, γνώμῃ is also translated as knowledge, opinion, sentiment, and sometimes mind or will. Thus, Paul referred to the totality of the

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persons in the community. Each person is admonished to be of one mind and heart, of one will and purpose, and eschew schisms and divisions in the community as it were. This uniformity of mind does not imply Paul envisaged the Christian faith unity would be necessarily uniform.

ἐδηλώθη γάρ μοι περὶ ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοί μου, ὑπὸ τῶν Χλόης ὅτι ἔριδες ἐν ὑμῖν εἰσιν. (it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers). The situation in Corinth had been brought to Paul's knowledge by them of Chloe, meaning those in Chloe's house. Keener (1993) cites Chloe to be a "wealthy businesswoman in Corinth or Ephesus, who traveled between the two cities on business". Those who are said to have been of her household could either have been high-status slaves or freed persons belonging to her households, who were also members of the Corinthian Church. They were not Chloe's children else, they would have been named by their father's household, even if he were deceased as Keener (1993) insists. Paul also introduces ἀδελφοί a second time, probably to emphasise or remind feuding parties of what they are and what he expects of them. ὅτι ἔριδες ἐν ὑμῖν εἰσιν - That there are contentions among you.

Those of Chloe's household had given Paul the report that there were contentions within the community. The contentions appeared ongoing after the schism had occurred. ἔριδες translates to contentions or altercations which are the results of the σχίσματα. Clarkes, (2006) suggests that when they had divided into parties, the opposing parties must necessarily have contended, to support their respective parties. Hellerman (2009) notes that family members in the Ancient Mediterranean world ideally deferred in honour to persons within their kinship groups and competed for honour with representatives of other families. Stern, (1992) argues the point that the Corinthian leaders wrote Paul, asking certain questions as evidenced in (7:1) but said nothing of this much more important matter. It took some of Chloe's people to make this known to Paul (Sha'ul). The implication is that the leaders should have reported it themselves, if not for the infighting going on among them. Thus, there were divisions and quarrels between the various parties, albeit, for supremacy.

λέγω δὲ τοῦτο ὅτι ἔκαστος ὑμῶν λέγει, Ἐγὼ μέν εἰμι Παύλου, Ἐγὼ δὲ Ἀπολλῶ, Ἐγὼ δὲ Κηφᾶ, Ἐγὼ δὲ Χριστοῦ. This first phrase of verse 12 λέγω δὲ τοῦτο ὅτι ἔκαστος ὑμῶν which translates as "I say, now every one of you says". Paul now begins to reveal the issue at hand, *everyone one of you is saying...* This is indicative of the issue being one that engulfed the entire community, and everyone, without exception had an opinion. Ἐγὼ μέν εἰμι Παύλου, Ἐγὼ δὲ Ἀπολλῶ, Ἐγὼ δὲ Κηφᾶ, Ἐγὼ δὲ Χριστοῦ - I am of Paul, I of Apollo, I of Peter, I of Christ. The major issue Paul set to address is this: there were divisions in the Corinthian church. The believers had fractionalized themselves into sects or parties, according to the minister or preacher of their fancy or choosing. From Paul's statement, some were for Paul, some others for Apollo, Peter and Christ. Κηφᾶ - Cephas is Aramaic for Petros (Peter) and is Paul's usual name for Peter as seen in Gal. 2:7-8. Stern, (1992) highlights the fact that Apollos was Sha'ul's (Paul's) successor in Corinth and an effective teacher (Ac 18:24-28). Having lived in Hellenized Alexandria, he may have offered a Greek approach similar to that of the Alexandrian non-Messianic Jew, Philo and this may have attracted a large followership to him. Kefa (Cephas), on the other hand, would have emphasized Jewish elements as seen in Acts 10-11 and Galatians 2:11-16, which would also have made him loveable to the Jews in the community. He was the

Apostle of circumcision. However, doctrinal differences and preferences for one person over another should not have degenerated into infighting.

Garland, (2008) interprets the expressions Ἐγώ μέν εἰμι Παύλου, Ἐγώ δὲ Ἀπολλῶ, Ἐγώ δὲ Κηφᾶ, Ἐγώ δὲ Χριστοῦ as slogans or maxims which were in use in Corinth. Paul was not in support of these sayings because he digressed to other matters. This manner of digression from a topic for a brief period and then returning to the main issue is characteristic of Greco-Roman rhetoric. The digression serves the larger purpose of the total argument of the orator and in this case, is disunity in the church in Corinth. This is a classic example of deliberative, forensic or epideitic rhetoric (Garland, 2008).

Apostle Paul had received a report from Chloe's people about happenings in the Corinthian Christian community, which Paul founded and he felt obliged to respond to the report. While the report appeared actual, there are certain ambiguities in the pericope. Paul had made allusion to the community divided under four leaders – himself, Apollos, Peter, and Christ. Paul founded the church in Corinth and by his testimony; Apollos watered it (3:6). However, the roles of Peter and Christ in the divisions are largely unclear though there is no ambiguity in the person called Peter in this narrative. It is Peter who has a “believing wife” (1 Cor. 9:5) and to whom Christ appeared after his resurrection (1 Cor. 15:4-5). Those who are of Peter as mentioned here are most likely those he converted and baptised (Bruce, 1998).

Some commentaries see Paul's addition of Peter and Christ as “hypothetical” or an “adaption” as in 1 Cor. 4:6. The addition of Peter and Christ as may have been illustrative, and a literary gimmick to avoid worsening an already deplorable situation.” According to Henry's, (2006), “many of the ancient interpreters supposed that Paul was unwilling to specify the real names of the false teachers and leaders of the parties, and that he used these names simply by way of illustration”. An instance of this appears in 4:6 where the word metesxhma/tisa is translated as “I have in a figure transferred to myself ...”. Some other position had thought that Peter may not have been physically present in Corinth but those claiming allegiance to him might have been Jews who found his teachings more representative of the Jewish culture. This will include the circumcision party and those who would have loved all Christians to keep kosher.

Witetschek, (2018) debunks the claim of Dionysius of Corinth that both Peter and Paul had founded the Christian community in Corinth, citing 1 Cor. 3:6. However, the fact that Paul mentioned “Cephas” several times in the letter (1:12, 3:22, 9:5, 15:5) indicates some probable belief Peter may have come to Corinth at some time during the “unknown” period of his life. Else; he would not have made a deep impression on the people as to have a following in the divisions. The mention of Christ's party in contradistinction to the apostles is baffling. Christ is the head of the Church, how then can Paul say a party is obedient to Christ against Paul, Peter, and Apollos, who were mere leaders, by the grace of Christ in God? Henry's, (2006) proposes two possibilities for having a Christ party namely: firstly, Believers who may have been in Judea and have seen the Lord Jesus and thus saw themselves as particularly favoured and distinguished from secondary recipients of the Christ message. Secondly, those who refused to be drawn into condescending parties under the headship of an apostle. Thus, they prided themselves on the belief that they were more conformed to Christ than the other sects.

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Clarke's, (2006) sees δὲ Χριστοῦ (of Christ) as an interpolation and an error, as it is not likely that Christ in any sense of the word could be said to be the head of a sect or party in his church; as all parties held that Gospel, of which himself was both the author and the subject. Though it is acknowledged that there is no manuscript evidence for this supposed error, it is very easy to conceive that, in a Church so divided, a party might be found, who, dividing Christ from his ministers, might be led to say, "We will have nothing to do with your parties, nor with your party spirit; we are the disciples of Christ and will have nothing to do with Paulians, Apolloians, or Kephians, as contradistinguished from Christ."

The understanding of the Christ party being an error is based on the supposition that rather than Xristo/\$ (Christ), Kri/spo\$ (of Crispus) may have been intended. This point of view would ascribe copyist error as responsible for this. Plausible causes of the divisions in the Corinthian Community are advanced by different scholars. Some scholars favour class differences as the source of the division. For instance, Keener (1993) asserts that for the first three centuries of its existence, the church met mainly in homes; those belonging to well-to-do members. These house churches could naturally hold the most people as determined by the size of their homes, so divisions could easily arise among them. As the letter proceeds, however, it becomes clearer that the main basis for division derived from differences in social stratification within the congregations. It is imperative to underscore the point that Paul's readers would immediately recognize the nature of his argument without difficulty, considering his use of the rhetoric form known as *homonoia* speech (Keener, 1993). Chariot, V. (1992) adduces two reasons as responsible for the division namely: the Corinthian believers were divided and not living up to their standing in Christ because they were mixing the Gospel with the wisdom of the world, and they were glorying in men and were confused about the meaning of the Gospel ministry Chariot, V. (1992:III).

Gorman, M. (2004) agrees that the church in Corinth was in utter chaos and the problems Paul talked about which derived from differences of social class within the congregations were in fact "in many aspects the presenting symptoms of a more significant disease" a failure to understand the real-life consequences of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and him crucified (2:2)."

From the foregoing, the gospel had become an object of discord, and contention. This is no reproach to the Christian faith but a description of the depravation that arose in the Corinthian church and indeed any church, society, or group that allows this type of division. Similarly, pride in the Corinthians church carried Christians in opposition to one another even so far as to set Christ and his apostles at variance and make them rivals and competitors. These divisions make nonsense of the faith of the Corinthians because the prime and leading thing which Christ had enjoined upon his Church was unity and mutual love (John 13:34; 15:17), and for this, he had most earnestly prayed in his memorable prayer; John 17:21-23.

As Gorman (2004) identified, one very central impact of the divisions Paul talked about is the breaking of fellowship or *koinonia*. There was a need for the Charismatic Corinthian community to live to be true to its identity as God's countercultural community, rather than broken into ethnic threads. If this class and ethnic demons were not culled in, it may result in the destruction of the church, in which case God would destroy the perpetrators of the

divisions themselves. Again, Gorman (2004) drives home the point that though it was typical for disciples of competing teachers in antiquity to be at each other's throats, this contradicts the Gospel. The case that "I belong to" literally means "I am of" and these two phrases identified both slaves and devotees of a god. So, preachers must be put in their place – Paul, Apollos, and even Cephas are servants of the Lord (3:5-9; 4:1). Besides Christ, not one of the preachers was crucified for the Corinthians' redemption.

These notions notwithstanding, this study can conjecture that Paul probably added Christ's party into the mix to make the number of feuding parties four which in Hebrew numeracy depicts earthly concerns. The community was no longer striving for that which was above but was busy with earthly concerns that would do the community no good. This study notes that the problem cannot be traced to Peter or Paul or even Apollos as individuals. The fault lies squarely on the feet of the congregation, even as Paul himself observed – we preach the same Gospel (15:11). As Schreiner (2018:14) observed that the church was affected by the secular world, by the paganism and worldliness that was evidenced in Corinth. The Corinthians were inclined to throw in their lot with the values and cultures of secular society. (They) tolerated incest by a wealthy community member. They were attracted by the rich, to the upper class, and to those who exercised power in society (1:26; 4:6-13).

Implications of 1 Cor. 1:10-12 for conflicts in pious societies

The church in Corinth was rich in human and spiritual gifts. However, they forgot the Christian message and began imbibing worldly concerns and ways of life upon Paul's departure to Ephesus. As it was in the Corinthian community, the existence of ethnic and class conflicts has far-reaching negative effects in the life of members of Pious societies. Like the Corinthians, members of Pious societies appear to forget the spiritual purpose for which they are gathered and have allowed worldly concerns and divisions to get the better of them. Rather than make impact in both church and society, they have busied themselves with party spirits and consequent divisions. The world is influencing Pious societies instead of the reverse. This shows a lack of understanding of having Jesus living in them. They have not shown they understand the Gospel message and what it means to be Christian.

The divisions in Corinth Paul narrowed to earthly wisdom and pride that goes with eloquence. Primordial hate of ethnic stocks different from one's ethnic group (Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, Ika, Ikwerre, Idoma, Tiv, Jukun etc) and pride that arise from social standing in life should not be allowed to continue to create divisions in Pious societies in particular and in the Church generally. Paul did well to assert his authority over the church in Corinth as their father, so as to extinguish the division. In the same vein, the leaders of the Church as well as leaders of Pious societies like Paul, should assert strong leadership capabilities and resolve to tackle ethnic and class conflicts in their various forms within their sphere of authority. Paul was diplomatic in dealing with the issue of division in the Corinthian community but he was deliberate in bringing out the consequences upon those who were behind the divisions with the play on the word Ἀπολλῶ (name of a preacher Apollos) and α)pollumi (to destroy). Cleverly, Paul insinuated that God will destroy those creating divisions in his Church. The effort to rid Pious societies of ethnic and class conflicts should be subtle but definite. The wrath of God awaits those who

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bring about divisions and tear the community of God's people apart. The gentle approach as defined by Παρακαλῶ (I plead), must not be overlooked.

Proposed Solutions

Ogunmodede proposed solutions to the quest for oneness and unity. These include credible census, transparent and good leadership, respect for the Rule of Law, separation between Religion and State relationships and the Sovereign National Referendum. The recommendations of this study are in tandem with Ogunmodede's propositions for oneness and unity. They include should church leaders should adopt proactive measures in identifying and addressing ethnic and class conflicts by organizing regular seminars and workshops that promote unity, social cooperation and communal values. The teachings of harmonious relationships which include: no division, speaking the same thing, being of same mind, of same judgment, resolution of contentions, no voice of dissent and no preference of ministers as taught in 1 Cor. 1:10-12 should be entrenched. The devotional character of Pious societies should be promoted above cultural, social and political concerns of individuals or offices within the groups. Pious society leaders and members should preach and uphold oneness, unity and harmony as in 1 Cor. 1:10-12.

Conclusion

Francis Ogunmodede's paper offers a profound examination of the challenges to national unity and stability in Nigeria, rooted in its ethnic diversity, colonial history, and religious differences. His analysis underscores the relationship of historical, political, and socio-economic factors that have perpetuated division and conflict in the country. The proposed solutions are practical and necessary steps towards fostering a more unified and stable Nigeria.

Ogunmodede's insights are invaluable for any research focused on Nigeria's path to national cohesion and stability, though it would be stronger with more nuanced perspectives and actionable recommendations. The church is a microcosm of Nigeria. While Nigeria battles Religious challenges, the church faces ethnic and class conflicts. Pauline teaching of harmonious relationships in 1 Cor. 1:10-12 serves as model for resolving identified ethnic and class conflicts within Church communities, by mixed method which comprise the critical method and the advocacy approach of the existential method of Biblical exegesis in the analysis of 1 Cor. 1:10-12. The church can thus benefit from the advocacy of Ogunmodede in the search for oneness and stability.

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