

AN INTERPLAY OF CHRISTIAN AND NON CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS SYSTEM OF WORSHIP IN CHRISLAMHERB (*OKE TUDE*) RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT

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Abstract

Conflict is a fact of life, it is found even in the church and will never be completely eradicated. The different religious worldviews clash at the slightest provocation. People respond to it differently, some do not want its occurrence and as such prefer to ignore it and hope it is gone. Others handle it either perfectly or badly especially in religious environments. All these often times lead to some forms of contextual discrimination of members of one ethnic or religious group against another on the basis of differentiated systems of socio-cultural symbols and religion. With the emergence of Chrislamherb (*OkeTude*) religious movement which is a new phenomenon that is partly Islamic, partly Christian, but wholly Nigeria, it was discovered that the founder did not view religion as a dividing factor but a uniting factor. This is why Christians and Muslims are allowed to worship together in this religious movement without rancour. This paper therefore suggests that there is need for the government, religious organisations and other private agencies to join hands in creating an enabling environment that facilitates cross fertilization of ideas among the different faiths.

Keywords: Interplay, Christian, Religious system, Worship, Chrislamherb, Religious movement

Introduction

Human beings are basically social beings, and what that means is that humans can only live in societies of other human beings. But there is this natural tendency in human beings to hold opinions and perspectives that contrast with those of their neighbour's which invariably lead to tensions and conflicts among the human members of a society. It then becomes a matter of priority if, they expect to live together successfully, that they must find ethical ways to resolve conflicts and frictions resulting from their social interactions without resorting to destroying each other because of their divergent opinions. According to Uchendu (2011);

The belief system of the people influences the way they think, feel, and see things in relations to people of other religions. Unfortunately, Nigeria is a country that has been weighed down by religious burdens. The country of 150 million people is divided equally between Christians and Muslims and further divided into about 250 language groupings. Many Nigerians argue that the real reason for the conflict or violence is not ethnic or religious differences but the scramble for land, scarce resources and political clout. Poverty, joblessness and corrupt politics drive extremists from both sides to commit atrocities. (p. 73).

The religious atmosphere in Nigeria necessarily compels one to believe that violence is complementary to Christian–Muslim relations. The mere existence of Christianity and Islam in the same geographical location sometimes automatically result in violence and crises. This is however not the case in Chrislamherb (*OkeTude*) religious movement, where Christians and Muslims are found worshipping together irrespective of their differences.

Brief History of Chrislamherb (*OkeTude*) Religious Movement

The establishment and emergence of this new religious movement was characterized by three different divine calls at different intervals. The first divine call received by Samsudeen was when he went for pilgrimage at Mecca in 1979 when he was performing *Tawaf* (circumambulation round *ka'bah*, the house of God). It was as a result of his background as a Muslim and his belief in Allah that made him embark on several pilgrimages to Mecca to perform *Hajj*. It was during his performance of *Hajj* that he heard a voice call his name three times, but did not answer. However, it was on the third time that the voice asked him to go and unite both Christians and Muslims in Nigeria together. Johnson (2013) wrote that he received a divine call by *Allah*, telling him that he had to unite Christians and Muslims by enlightening them that they are serving the same God, but in different ways. He was asked to remind both Christians and Muslims that the essential pillar of any religion is love. The second divine call received by Samsudeen Saka, was in March, 1995. This time around and in this revelation he was asked to change his herbal method of healing to the spiritual method by means of prayer. Adesina (2004) wrote that “at this stage, the founder and his followers began to adjust, though they were still practicing traditional medicine, but engaging more and more in spiritual exercise than before” (p. 85).

The third call which was, however, a clearer message to the second call was received on February, 1997. The founder was asked this time to do away with traditional medicine so that he would submit to the will of God. This was a major decision he was to take because it involves him abandoning his healing home which was his only means of livelihood. In as much as he does not want to abandon his healing means of living, he also did not want to go contrary to God's directive in the form of disobedience. Based on this, he had to meet severally with his father and his fellow trained traditional doctors to discuss on what decision to take and how to go on with the decision. After several meetings with his father and his fellow trained traditional doctors who never supported the idea, he countered them by saying that if they could submit to the will of God, He is ready to take control of their problems and concluded that the will of God should be done. This decision was followed by an official announcement which he made on the preceding Sunday to his congregation, that God commanded him to make do with traditional medicine. Not necessarily that traditional medicine is bad, but that God wants him to work in another way for him. Sandra (2015) noted that Saka was formerly a successful and respected practitioner of alternative medicine. That it was while in Mecca in 1989 for his obligatory pilgrimage, he was called by the creator to initiate this mission of reconciliation.

This announcement was followed by mixed reactions from the members, as the trustees were in support of the great command while over eighty per cent of the members were against the change. This did not come as a surprise to Saka as he expected that there will be divergent views to his announcement. What actually surprised Samsudeen Saka and shocked him was the action of his eighteen coordinators and six deputy coordinators that conspired against him so that they

can ruin the mission. According to Saka (2015), these were people who underwent through series of management training under his leadership, but now want to ruin his mission. The founder of Chrislamherb (*OkeTude*) movement was born into Muslim family of Alhaji Zakariyah in Ijebu-ode area of Ogun state. His educational background was not known, except the general opinion that he finished primary school and the uncertainty of whether he attended secondary school. According to Janson (2014) Samsudeen's father is a Muslim, but was a renowned herbalist. Who practiced traditional medicine and was well known among the people of the same cult. They went further to state that since Saka did not perform well at school; he decided to join his father. Samsudeen Saka who is the founder of Chrislamherb (*OkeTude*) was very popular too like his father in the practice of traditional medicine which he started at an early age and which he practiced for complete fifteen years, and gained the name "young wizard". This name "young wizard" as funny it was, made Samsudeen Saka very popular and widely known.

Worship in Chrislamherb (*OkeTude*) Religious Movement

In Chrislamherb (*OkeTude*) religious movement, worship is taken seriously and is seen as the outward manifestation of their belief. Janson (2011) wrote that the Chrislamherb (*OkeTude*) worship center has features of both Church and a Mosque. Both the Bible, and the Quran are seen as holy in Chrislamherb, and they are both used during worship. Adesina (2004) wrote that "worship serves as complimentary to the very core of any religious belief in what real, ultimately valuable and sacred for the participants" (p.149). Worship service in Chrislamherb includes singing of Christian and Islamic hymns to praise God and attract his presence. Thus they believe that Muhammad, Moses and Jesus were all great prophets and the need to love them. Christmas, Easter, Ramadan and other Christian and Islamic religious festivals are accepted and celebrated without judgment or hostility. There is an altar inside their place of worship which is similar to those built by Abraham where the worshippers pray and seek the face of God. Prayers go on here most of the day.

The Chrislamherb Lord's prayer is, however, said collectively at the beginning of every service. This Chrislamherb Lord's prayer is compulsory for every member to know by heart. There are three different sessions or services that take place on Sunday at Chrislamherb. The first is a Muslim session, then a Christian session, and finally there is a joint session that is being led by Samsudeen Saka himself. Sunday service in Chrislamherb is usually as follows; members assemble around 8am-9am to attend a Muslim prayer session (*wuridi*) led by an Imam and this is followed by a Christian session led by a rotating group ministers. After the Muslim and Christian session, a joint service led by Saka himself takes place. It must be noted that at the beginning of every service, Chrislamherb Lord's prayer is usually said collectively at the beginning of every service, and which shows no form of favouritism. The Lord's Prayer is recited in this way;

Almighty God
You are the one
Who created me
As you created Jesus
As you created Muhammad
You created water
Which we cannot do without

You made it possible for us to speak
But we do not know the sources of the words
Hear and accept our prayer
Remember the power you used over Hanna
To give her a good child
Lord, remember the power you used on Zakariah that
Gave him a good son
Lord, remember the power you used to enrich
Solomon which he prayed not to give
Anybody again
You created Samsudeen to this world and gave
Him power over all evil-doers
I believe in your power and that you are only God
Bless me, deliver me from evils, solve all my
Problems and put an end to all my sorrow.

The opening prayer which is always said standing is then followed by another asking for God's help, which is said in Arabic as follows;

Allahuma Sali' ala 'isa Wasalim'

Allahuma Sali' ala Muhammad Wasalim

This is interpreted to mean in English

May the peace and blessing of God be upon Jesus Christ

May the peace and blessing of God be upon Muhammed

The prayer and supplication is followed by preaching by the founder of Chrislamherb (*OkeTude*). Though the prerogative of preaching is exclusively the preserve of the founder himself, there are other few pastors who can preach in his absence. During his preaching in the service; which has a semblance with that of the Pentecostal pastors, he quotes verses from the Quran and Bible that stress the similarities between the two beliefs. Thus during the worship service, verses are read from both the Bible and the Quran. During the service and in worship, the people of the congregation are all free to shout out the name of Allah or God in worship. Janson (2014) states that like a number of other proselytizing religious, they believe in evangelism and try to convert new members every day. What follows immediately after the preaching is the spiritual song which is done either in Christian or Islamic forms. These spiritual songs which are done either in Christian or Islamic form are sometimes even drawn from some of the songs of the popular musicians in Nigeria such as king Sunny Ade, Ebenezer Obe and Sunny Okosun.

When these songs are been sung, members engage in dancing as if they are at party. This was also observed in the course of the field research work at Chrislamherb and thus corroborating with Adesina (2004) who also observed during one of the services that king Sunny Ade's song was sung. He therefore wrote down the song as;

Aiye n retieleyamio

Won n tikorawonjolatipegan mi

Won ni e mi komoju ile adura lojojumo

Bi won ri mi lona ile Adura won amapegan mi

*Won a lotun tin lo
Won tun ma bu mi pe
Baba adura rora ma gbese
Emi ni won nbawi yen o, olorun mi
So ma wo mi niran
Ma je kiogun aye bo mi mole
Je kienu mi gborolajuota mi
Je kin le so fun wopeiwo ni kan ni oba nla
Loju won, dakun da mi lolalopolopo
Eyi ni mo fe o, olorun mi
Dakunwagbe mi ni ja
Nitoripeiwo ni kidoju to ni....*

This is interpreted in English to mean;
The whole world is expecting my fall
They do expect my fall everyday
They have gathered themselves to disgrace me
My offence is that I do go to prayer house everyday
Whenever they see me on the way to the prayer house
They rebuke me and alter such shameful words
By calling me 'father of prayer'. Just move Slowly
O God, see how they rebuke me do not forsake Me
Do not allow my enemies to overcome me
Raise me above them so that I shall have mouth
To Glorify your Holy Name
Honour me in the presence of covetous people
Bless me in their presence
This is what I want
This is because you are the problem solver.

A cursory look, however, at the service of Chrislamherb (*OkeTude*) will make one ask whether it is a social get together party or a mission. Another distinctive feature and most interesting aspect of Chrislamherb (*OkeTude*) practice is its free use of slang among the members of the religious group. This is because the founder and the followers are fond of using slang. Often times while preaching, the founder uses certain slangs on the members who also responds using slang. Some of the commonly used slang, which the researcher observed and corroborated with Adesina (2004) by Samsudeen Saka during services are; he often ask his members "how are you?" and they will collectively answer using slang "fine *bobo*". With the use of these slangs, members are made to feel at home with deep sense of belonging.

He also asks his members again if they are with their cell phones, upon which they will answer positively. The essence of this according to the founder is that he wants to receive a call from God and that all other members should be attentive and offer their prayer to God so that He can answer them immediately. The founder also ask his members in slang "*Abi ejeraneledeni?*" which means "Have you all eaten pork?", whenever he thinks and feels that the members are

tired. When this question is asked, his members respond by saying “No”. With the use of this slang, members are geared up and made to be alert in raising their voices in dancing. It is their belief according to Saka the founder, that pork meat makes one get tired when eaten. Thus, this question usually arises when the founder feels and thinks during service that his members are tired or getting tired. In Chrislamherb, it is hard to tell who is a Muslim or Christian.

Another important aspect of worship in Chrislamherb is the Christians healing school. Whereas most Christian services are led by Samsudeen Saka, the healing was led by two middle-aged female ministers, who were trained by the “general overseer” Saka. Worship in Chrislamherb (*OkeTude*) involves running around a fenced praying ground that contains well with ‘holy water’ (*Tude* water). *Oke* in Yoruba means mount and *Tude* in Yoruba also means losing bound. It literally means mount of losing bound. This is done by worshippers with the hope of getting healed from their various kinds of ailment. According to Janson (2014), to put an end to barrenness, impotency, human immune virus and acquired immune deficient syndrome (HIV/AIDS), family conflicts, bankruptcy, poor performance at school, despair and the like, Saka advises his followers to participate in *Tude.Tude* as mentioned above refers to spiritual running around the replica of the *ka’aba*. This spiritual running around depends on the seriousness of the problem, as one runs three, seven or twenty-one times, followed by prayer sessions in front of the fenced well containing *Tudewater*. One can either run, crawl or walk round the *Tude*, but that the essence of doing that is to physically punish the body as a measure or form of punishment in atonement for sins committed.

This spiritual running is, however, followed by fasting which can last for about three, seven or twenty one days depending on the period given by the prophet. In order to get maximum satisfaction through total healing, members also indulge in every Thursday what is called vegetarian fasting. This vegetarian fasting is done by avoiding eating fish or meat, or animal products like milk, eggs, and maggi cubes with chicken flavour on Thursday. This, the members believe will draw them very close to God and give them total healing. No member on that day eats food with meat or fish or take dairy foods or snacks prepared with meat. Thus members on that day eat food without meat, fish or crayfish. Saka (1997) states that his healing school is aimed at delivering from both physical and metaphysical ailments by engaging in prayer sessions. Even though Saka does not use herbs again frequently and openly, he still uses them to cure people, but not in all cases. Some of the activities in Chrislamherb (*OkeTude*) which forms part of the worship include:

- i. **Women Affairs Programme:** This takes place every Thursday morning for those who are searching for the fruit of the womb.
- ii. **The King’s Night:** This takes place every last Thursday of the month from 9pm-5am. This is a night programme during which the followers’ heads are washed with *Tudewater*.
- iii. **The Anointing Service:** This takes place every first Friday of every month. It is also a night service that is been conducted from 9am to 5am.
- iv. **Children’s Programme:** This takes place every weekend. It was introduced by the wife of the founder, with the aim of using games to inculcate and introduce Christian’s ideology to the children of the Chrislamherb (*OkeTude*) worshippers.

- v. **The Ministry Anniversary:** This takes place once every year. During this celebration the ministry distributed gifts in cash and kind to the poor and needy in the society.
- vi. **Counselling:** This takes place every day.

In Chrislamherb (*OkeTude*) religious movement, two things caught the researcher's attention during worship and healing period. These are the concept of drinking and washing with *Tude* water, and the importance of positive thinking been emphasized. The second one is the drinking of what is called and referred to as the blood of Jesus.

Conclusion

This paper discovered that the best element in any religious practice is love. Thus this love enables the movement to practice the best elements in Christianity and Islam together under one canopy for the purposes of religious solidarity without bitterness or rancour. This is therefore, a wakeup call for adherents of Christianity and Islam to rise above religious bigotry and contribute to the reduction of crisis in the Nigerian society.

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