

# The changing faces of African Independent Churches as development actors across borders

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Project Number: 2334682**Description:**

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Received: 19 July 2017

Accepted: 20 Dec. 2017

Published: 21 Aug. 2018

**How to cite this article:**Adedibu, B.A., 2018, 'The changing faces of African Independent Churches as development actors across borders', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 74(1), 4740. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v74i1.4740>**Copyright:**© 2018. The Authors.  
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The religious transnationalism evident in the 21st century has heralded a new paradigm of religion 'made to travel' as adherents of religions navigate various cultural frontiers within Africa, Europe and North America. The role of Africa in shaping the global religious landscape, particularly the Christian tradition, designates the continent as one of the major actors of the Christian faith in the 21st century. The inability of European Christianity to address most of the existential realities of Africans and the stigmatisation of African Traditional Religion mainly contributed to the emergence of African Independent Churches in the 19th century in Africa. The emergence and proliferation of African Independent Churches in Africa was Africa's response to Europeanised Christianity with its imperialistic doctrines and practices that negated expectation of its new context – Africa. Despite the declining fortunes of Christianity in the West, African Christianity, which includes the African Independent Churches and African Pentecostal traditions, is now a major non-commodity export within Africa and North America. Apart from their rituals and peculiarities, African Independent Churches like other faith organisations are development actors. Although notions about the role of religion in development amongst some social scientists are mainly negative, African Independent Churches over the years are actively involved in various human and community transformation initiatives. This study argues that the transnational status of African Independent Churches has led to the emergence of developmental ideals that defy territorialisation. The collaboration with some Western development agencies by some of the African Independent Churches in Diaspora further blurs the concept of diaspora as the members of this Christian movement are active development actors in the receiving nations and their former home countries. This study argues that the role of religion in development in any context cannot be overemphasised. As a result of the globalisation of African Independent Churches, the United Kingdom and Nigeria will serve as our case study using historical survey and descriptive analyses to highlight African Independent Churches as development actors.

## Introduction

The fluidity of religious movements across various cultural frontiers across the globe has redefined the concept of religious mobility, ethnicity, identity and the redefinition of religious movements and different forms of religious extremism. The forces of globalisation and technological advancement have contributed to the emergence of a religious community of sentiments far away from the original home context of many religious movements which have come under the scrutiny of scholars of late largely referred to as religious transnationalism (Huwelmeir & Krause 2011:1–12). The permeability of borders and the accelerated technological changes from 'Analogue to Google' age and transportation have heralded the transnational age. Nevertheless, the interconnectedness of religion and the transnational networks is not unidirectional but multifaceted as it also positively impacts the religious movements and their ritual practices in transposing their idiosyncrasies across borders. Thus, most religious movements are de-territorialised as a result of the forces of globalisation and are 'to be conceived no more as geopolitical territorial spaces but rather interrelated communicative spaces within a single world' (Cassanova 2012:191–221).

It thus becomes pertinent to note that transnationalism has led to a lot of reconfiguration, hybridity and religious creativity. The transnational religious activities provide a vista of opportunity to engage the:

... the alternative places of belonging that the religious ideas and symbols make possible and about the ways in which these sacred spaces in which these sacred landscapes interact with the boundaries of political and civil life ... (Levitt 2001:5)

Consequently, the creation of sacred spaces by religious actors or movements within Africa and Diaspora has been enhanced by socio-economic and political challenges in Africa as well as

educational aspirations of many Africans who are dissatisfied with Western forms of religious practice and formalism in the new context. Likewise, these migrants travelled with their home-grown religious subscriptions, transposable ritual practices and potable practices. The role of media and mediatisation in the connection of members of these religious movements across various cultural frontiers, which is appropriated by various members of the religious networks, has contributed to the globalisation of religious ideals in the new context (Huwelmeir & Krause 2011:2).

Moreover, one of the factors of religious transnationalism is the transposable messages of the religious actors (Casordas 2007:259–272), but Huwelmeir and Krause opine that ‘it is also the ability to create transnational continuity and belonging between different cultures and social contexts’ (Casordas 2007:259–272). This trend indeed symbolises the contributions of Gornick regarding the Globalisation of African Christianity in New York (Gornick 2011:1–25). The prevalence of various media technologies such as TV, Radio, Satellite TV, Live streaming or Internet streaming across borders depicts the permeability of physical borders to religious subscriptions as religious messages are disseminated across borders neither with visa nor passport. This development has created an opportunity to obliterate time and space for the appropriation of religious sentiments, rituals and practices by religious adherents in a different context from their home context. Consequently, transnational religious networks have emerged across the globe, sustaining their religious fervour through claims of proselytisation and missionising agenda in new cultural frontiers but are largely rooted in their home countries, thereby creating a transnational but a glocal brand of religious ‘belonging and believing’ movements. These transnational religious networks are administered like transnational corporate organisations, characterised with unique ecclesiastical structures with well-honed social and economic agendas for their adherents (Mata 2013:1–37). African Christianity is an example of one of the transnational religious movements in contemporary society because of its presence across the Atlantic (Adedibu 2012:72; Adogame 2013b; 74–76).

## Changing faces of African Christianity

The 21st century has witnessed a remarkable resurgence of religious movements and spirituality characterised by the globalisation of Pentecostalism. The renewal of religion and religious movements has profited from the fluid transnational networks that have emerged from globalisation which has enabled religious messages to be transported for the global audience. This development raises further queries regarding the claims of secularisation, particularly in the West (Davies 2000:445–464). African Christianity is not immune to the changing religious Kaleidoscope as it is now possible to encounter African Christianity in its diversities and expressions in Diaspora as it pertains to Africa. The creativity and diversities of expression of this versatile Christian movement from Africa have successfully redefined the glocal outlook of African Christianity in the West and Latin America.

Despite the multifaceted migration within and outside Africa, African Christianity is undeniably the fastest growing strand of Christianity in Africa and the West, especially the Pentecostal movement. The ease of travel through technological advancement, migration, new economic order and communication are catalysts for the de-territorialisation of African Christianity. It is quite imperative in view of the heterogeneous nature of African Christianity as reflected in their broad constituent, which includes strands like the African Initiated Churches or Zionist Churches as they are referred to in South Africa, including the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. However, scholars like Ogbu Kalu (Kollman 2010:3–32), Adogame (2013b:xi) and a host of others classify this movement as African Christianities in view of ongoing revival in these movements severally. Therefore, within the purview of this study, the emphasis is on African Initiated Churches as within the remit of those network churches which are founded by Africans in Africa but might have transnational networks in Diaspora but are self-funded, self-propagating and self-governed without recourse to international developmental agencies. However, this broad generalisation might be contemptuous and critiqued by scholars as it certainly includes Charismatic and Pentecostal Churches which are dominant Christian traditions in Nigeria and Diaspora.

## Mapping African Independent Churches’ distinctiveness: Nigeria and the United Kingdom

The emergence and spread of AICs in Nigeria can be traced to the failure of European Missions to take cognisance of the African traditional worldview in relation to their missionary enterprise in Nigeria (Fatokun 2010:2). Various loose terminologies are used to describe these AICs. Such terms include ‘Separatist’ or ‘Ethiopian’ because of political disposition of the pioneering leadership as most of the churches denounced European leadership (Omoyajowo 1982:1–12). These are often used interchangeably by scholars and religious observers in describing the Christian movement across Africa (Peel 1968:67). Moreover, the term ‘Zionist’ is also used to describe this movement because of the charismatic orientation, particularly for churches in Zimbabwe and South Africa such as the Zion Christian Church of Bishop Mutendi. The Zionist movement is seemingly Pentecostal, drawing from traditional sensibilities and with the aspiration to have their own home or Zion, particularly during the apartheid era. A consultative forum under the auspices of the World Council of Churches at Kitwe in 1962 highlighted the hallmark of classification of AICs as (1) emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit, (2) reference to various revelations and healing and (3) a high level of contextualisation reflective of the lived experiences of the host context. Nevertheless, some of these churches preferred the designation *spiritual*, for instance, the Yoruba’s (in Western part of Nigeria) charismatic leaders call their churches *Ijo Emi Mimo* whilst Akans of Ghana call theirs *Sunsom Sore* (Ayeboyin & Ishola 1999:1–20). Interestingly, some of these churches at times are described as Messianic as the emergence

of the group revolves around a dominant personality or leadership with penchant claims of empowerment by Jesus Christ. Above all, AICs are self-propagating, self-supporting and self-financing (Fatokun 2008:376). Indeed, despite the dominance of African Pentecostalism across the Atlantic, African Indigenous Churches are no longer encountered only in Africa but are also part of the Christian landscape in Germany, Sweden, England, Scotland and North America with their religious idiosyncrasies.

Historically, the first Aladura Church established in Nigeria is the Church of the Lord Worldwide, established on 17 May 1923 (fondly referred to as Aladura Church) at Ogere Remo by Prophet Josiah Olunowo Ositelu, whilst the second was the Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S), established on 18 September 1925 (Ositelu 2016:761). Ositelu posits that the ministry of Prophet Josiah Olunowo Ositelu in the late 1920s was quite impressive and attracted other leaders of the emerging AICs, including the likes of Joseph Babalola, I.B. Akinyele, J.B. Sadare and elders of Faith Tabernacle (Ositelu 2016:193–195).

The emergence of AICs in Britain and Germany was linked to students who travelled for further studies because of the prevailing social, economic and racial prejudice prevalent in their new context (Adedibu 2013:93–113). However, AICs came into being as a result of the emergence of the first C&S Church, London, which is quite instructive as S.A. Abidoye and 14 other members, without any ecclesiastical commission from C&S, Nigeria, established the Church in London (Ludwig 2005:346). Similarly, commitments to religious affirmations and migration are seen in the paradigm of the Jewish community in Diaspora in which the Torah and synagogue were transported from local identity to transnational identity. There exist divergent perspectives amongst scholars as well as religious practitioners about the appropriate nomenclature to describe African Initiated Churches: synonyms such as Enculturation, Indigenisation, Contextualisation, Africanisation or African theology are utilised to describe the search for an 'authentic African expression of Christianity'. The diversities of various cultural orientations of Africans culminated in the emergence of distinctive African Indigenous Churches such as the Church of the Lord (Aladura). 'Aladura' in Yoruba means 'owners of prayer', 'Prayer Fellowship' or 'The Praying People'. Aladura, according to Osun is generic: he identified three broad classes of Aladura as: (1) Typical Aladura, (2) Aladura Apostolic and (3) Aladura Atypical (Osun 1981:20). Aladura's emphasis is on power in praying and belief in faith healing and various elements associated with Pentecostalism. On the German scene, Benjamin Simon's historiography noted that the first AIC in Germany was the *Celestial Church of Christ* in Munich in 1974 (Simmon 2010:20–21). Further congregations were established in Achen in 1991, in Franckfurt in 1993 and at the end of 1990s in Bremen and Wippertal. The church was founded by the late Prophet Samuel Bilewu Oshoffa, a Nigerian in Port Novo, Benin Republic in 1947 (Simmon 2010:21). Majority of the members of the Celestial Church of

Christ (CCC) were mostly students and very few members had permanent rights to live in Germany; hence, membership of the church was fluctuating. Like other AICs that have boisterous participatory services and charismatic and with external characteristics that marked this strand of the Christian faith different from the AICs which includes the wearing of white garments or *sutanna* (*asoemi*) to church and barefooted. Another distinctive feature is the import of the spiritual in their cosmology, be it the Holy Spirit, spiritual forces or healing. This is one of the reasons for their attraction to many Africans because of the emphasis on their spiritual abilities to ameliorate existential challenges of Africans, including issues relating to witchcraft, malevolent forces and curses, etc. Moreover, the differentiation is not always clear. Some churches could be qualified as belonging to one category as well as belonging to the other. The wearing of white garments symbolises the purity and holiness of the membership. The Aladura worldview is characterised by vibrant worship sessions and the appropriation of elements of the African Traditional Religion worldview such as belief in spiritual powers, angels, mystical forces and spiritual healing. Some scholars have described some of these churches as blending cultic materials with Christianity, synthesising the Yoruba worldview with Christianity (Ray 1993:3) or as a form of 'syncretism' (Enang 2000:31) or 'pagan features' or tendencies and 'occultism' (Turner 1979:159–172). The membership of the Aladura movement is almost homogenous and mainly of the Yoruba extraction rather than those who do not share this cosmological underpinning from Nigeria, and as such the initial success of the movement depended on its adaptability as the movement 'adapted Christianity to the primal [Yoruba] religious worldview' (Mitchell 1979:188). The importance of the primal worldview in relation to healing and wholeness is central to the holistic notion of these churches in development. This view is corroborated by Bompani (2008) as he posits that:

[AICs] take the negative forces within African cosmology seriously by responding to real problems as perceived [...], namely witchcraft, sorcery, and evil spirits, understanding that it is acceptable to interpret socio-economic hardships and deprivation in contemporary society within the context of adverse cosmic forces. The idea that AICs are considered experts in granting people protection and fortification against the powers of evil accounts to a large degree for their popularity and growth. (pp. 665–677)

The AICs provide not only religious spaces in Britain but also spaces for sociocultural enactment of home away from home in their former country of origin in Diaspora. The creation of sacred space with various cultural trappings with little or minimal Missional focus has been critiqued by scholars as this might be antithetical to the missionary mandate of the church as most of their services are devoid of contextualisation. However, practices that appear charitable or contribute to human, social and community development are noted to be part of the AIC; hence, the next section of this study examines the role of religious movement like AICs in development as an example out of several religious transnational networks from Africa.

## Religion and development nexus: The case of African Independent Churches across borders

Religious movements in the last two decades have received global attention in the media because of various acts of human and infrastructural destruction from religious extremists, which have led to redefining the concept of religious freedom and politicisation of migration. Religious extremism seems to be a transnational phenomenon since the 9/11 destruction of the World Trade Centre, Manhattan, New York and the Pentagon building, the Headquarters of the United States Department of Defence. Similar events occurred in the United States during the 2013 Boston Marathon when second-generation US residents and Chechen brothers Dzhokhar Tsarnaev and Tamerlan Tsarnaev detonated home-made bombs during the event. Likewise was the Bastille Day attack in Nice, France, on 15 June 2016. In view of the wave of religious extremism by Muslim extremists desiring to exterminate Coptic Christians in Egypt, El Shabab's preoccupation of establishing Sharia law in North Africa as well as the marauding activities of Islamic Sect Boko Haram in northern Nigeria, the recent ban imposed on 10 Muslim countries by President Donald Trump is one of several measures taken by the United States to protect the lives of its citizens. However, Donald Trump's decision has generated huge public and international interest because of the perceived aggression towards the Islamic faith. The Ariana Grande Manchester concert bombing by Salman Abedi on 23 May 2017 which killed 22 people and left over 50 severely injured added to the growing extremism. Such religious extremism has accentuated the apprehension of anti-migration groups and public agitation in the West for the review of their immigration policies. Nevertheless, these incidents have raised various concerns across the globe about religious extremism and the role of religion in public life and development.

Whilst acknowledging that social scientists until recently have not considered religion as one of the subsets in traditional development theories (Adogame 2013b:32–42; Alkire 2006:502–510), some scholars in South Africa have explored the concept of development from a theological perspective partly because of its role in the civil society and church life since the 1990s (Klassen 2013:182–194). A similar paradigm shift has taken place regarding the role of religion in development amongst some international agencies. Some of the international organisations include the Department for International Development and Financial institutions, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This is reflected in the prominence given to development in ecumenical circles, particularly in the World Council of Churches. This is quite instructive as the Church of the Lord Aladura and C&S are very active members of the World Council of Churches. Various publications in different parts of the globe attest to the role of faith communities like the historic mission and denominations in social and community developments as strategic partners in the South African context (Hendriks, Erasmus & Mans 2004:380–402;

Swart 2005:323–326). However, the AICs might lack global recognition as development actors as it were but, ironically, since the collapse of the apartheid regime this strand of the Christian faith seems to be prevalent in South Africa and are actors in human and community development. Consequently, researchers have noted that the Southern African AICs are potential development actors that are largely ignored by international agencies (Öhlmann, Frost & Gräb 2016:10–12). Interestingly, the empirical study by Philip Öhlmann et al. about the South African AICs resonates across the AIC strand in Nigeria as a result of similar *modus operandi*. However, the transatlantic currents from the AICs in the United Kingdom and Nigeria have certain peculiarities with those in Diaspora serving as conduit for development activities of denominations in their homelands. This implies that these religious actors are intricately committed not only to the local context of their immediate residence but likewise their country of departure (Nigeria). Historically, the resonance across borders might inherently be a function of their deep sense of community and holistic gospel, which reflects the African sense of community referred to as *Ubuntu* [South Africa], *Obontu* [Tanzania] or humanity towards one. In the Western part of Nigeria, particularly amongst the Yoruba, showing humanness and consideration for one another is depicted by a Yoruba proverb which states that *enikani ni bi omo, gbo aiye loni to omo* [it takes an individual to give birth to a child but the whole community trains a child]. Therefore, I wish to posit that the exemplary Christian ethos of historical mission churches in the area of socio-economic and educational approaches serves as a model for most AICs to be actors of human and community development in their communities. To critically appreciate the multifaceted roles of AICs in development, this article notes that some of these churches are progressively involved in various social, economic and community development in various cultural frontiers within the home context and in Diaspora.

### Educational initiatives

Education is another manifestation of AICs' civic engagement in Nigeria. In light of the declining investment in the educational sector by the federal government, decline of moral rectitude, disruption of academic calendar, a by-product of inadequate infrastructural facilities or non-payment of salaries of lecturers there is increasing demand for education, dwindling government resources and a strong moral discourse. Modelling after the historical mission churches that pioneered various educational institutions in Nigeria, it is apt to note that AICs over time are actively involved in the establishment of educational institutions. The various primary and secondary schools established by Catholic and Methodist missionaries in Nigeria were a conduit pipe for instilling both moral and religious consciousness in pupils as well as providing educational opportunities to many Nigerians who are not even Christians. The withdrawal of the right for the establishment of schools by historical missions and churches created a huge gap in the Nigerian educational sector coupled with the financial

profligacy of the Nigerian leaders over time led to impoverishment of the educational system. However, many AICs' attempts to bridge the gap by establishing various educational institutions from primary to tertiary institutions in Nigeria as a means of emancipation from poverty as well as ignorance and opportunity for self-reliance in a changing economic climate has drawn a lot of appreciation. A typical example is the Zion brand C&S in the establishment of Primary Schools in the Ekeremor Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. This particular faith community in its bid to develop the human capacity in the community where it is situated has been responsible for the establishment of over 21 primary schools constituting about 29.6% of the total number of primary schools in Ekeremor Local Government Area, Bayelsa state (Amasuomo 2014:53–61). The pupils in these schools are about 15 002 out of a total student population of 70 307 representing 21.20% (Amasuomo 2014:53–61). The school project is funded by the Zion Churches by levying members of the churches, offerings and vows made by members of the church as well as freewill donations from non-members of the denomination who attend any of the healing or evangelistic outreaches. Indeed this type of model fits into Donald Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori Taxonomy and might be referred to as 'Progressive AICs'. The educational institutions are open to non-members of the Zion brand of C&S whilst these schools complement the State Government-established primary schools. Likewise, Pentecostal denominations like the Redeemed Christian of God and Living Faith Church are actively involved in the establishment of primary and secondary schools in various parts of Nigeria (Adedibu 2017:10). Nevertheless, in the United Kingdom, the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) is actively contributing to human development through the establishment of nursery schools in the communities where some of these churches are situated (Adedibu 2012:160–175).

The dwindling economic fortunes of Nigeria in the last six decades coupled with moral economy of corruption by former and serving leaders of the country has impacted various sectors of the nation including the educational sector. The pull factors of enabling the academic environment, training opportunities and maximisation of potentials have led to massive brain drain from the Nigerian University system. Thus, in the last three decades, colossal numbers of intellectuals have left many tertiary institutions in Nigeria in search of greener pastures in the West and North America. The introduction of private universities in Nigeria heralded a new phase in university education with the opportunities for the production of more graduates for the manpower requirements of the country.

Table 1 is the mapping of the names, year of establishment and ownership of Christian universities in Nigeria whilst Table 2 gives an immediate overview of the distribution of the proprietor of Christian universities in Nigeria. The Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria have the highest number of Christian universities which is 13 constituting 54.167% as indicated in Table 2. Likewise in Table 2, the Catholic Church owns five

**TABLE 1:** Christian universities in Nigeria.

S.N.	Names of universities	Proprietors	Year of establishment
1	Ajayi Crowther University, Ibadan	Anglican Church	2005
2	Augustine University	Catholic Church	2015
3	Babcock University, Ilisan – Remo	Seventh Day Adventist Church	1999
4	Benson Idahosa University, Benin	God of Church Mission	2002
5	Bingham University, New Karu	ECWA Church	2005
6	Bowen University, Iwo	The Baptist Church	2001
7	Caritas University, Enugu	The Catholic Church	2005
8	Covenant University Ota	Living Faith Church	2002
9	Crawford University, Igbesa	Apostolic Faith Mission	2005
10	Evangel University, Akaeze	Assemblies of God	2012
11	Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji – Arakeji	Christ Apostolic Church, Nigeria	2006
12	Kings University	Kingsway International Christian Centre	2015
13	Landmark University, Omu – Aran	Living Faith Church	2011
14	Madona University, Okija	Catholic Church	1999
15	McPherson University, Seriki Sotayo, Ajebo	Four Square Church	2012
16	Mountain Top University	Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries	2015
17	Redeemer's University, Ede	The Redeemed Christian Church of God	2005
18	Salem University, Lokoja	Foundation Faith Church Worldwide	2007
19	Hezekiel University	Living Christ Mission Inc	2015
20	Veritas University, Abuja	Catholic Church of Nigeria	2007
21	Anchor University, Ayobo – Lagos	Deeper Life Church, Nigeria	2016
22	Dominican University, Ibadan	Dominican Order of the Catholic Church	2016
23	Wesley University of Science and Technology, Ondo	Methodist Church	2007
24	University of Mkar	Church of Christ Sudan	2005

**TABLE 2:** Distribution of proprietors of Christian universities in Nigeria as at June 2017.

Denominations	Numbers of universities	Percentages
Pentecostal	13	54.157
Catholic	05	20.83
Methodist	1	4.167
Anglican	1	4.167
Baptist	1	4.167
Church of Christ, Sudan	1	4.167
ECWA	1	4.167
Sabbath	1	4.167
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100</b>

universities in various parts of Nigeria, which is 20.83% of the total Christian universities. The Baptist Church, Evangelical Church of West Africa, Seventh Day Adventist Church, Church of Sudan and Anglican Church have one university each which constitute 4.167% of the total number of Christian universities in Nigeria. The line graph representation of Table 2 is presented in Figure 1 above. Interestingly, the Living Faith Church (aka Winners Chapel), a Pentecostal Church with transnational status led by Bishop David Oyedepo, owns three universities which constitute 20.0% of the highest number of universities owned by a Pentecostal denomination in Nigeria. From Table 3, the total number of faith-based universities in Nigeria is 28 which constitutes 40.57%, of

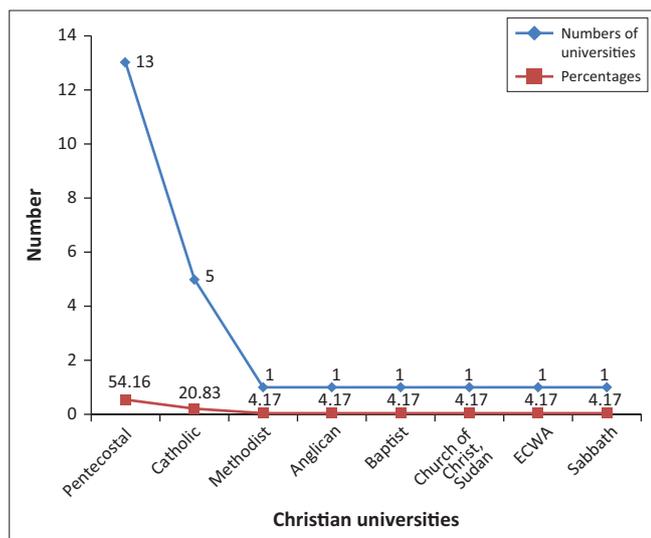


FIGURE 1: Distribution of proprietorship of Christian universities in Nigeria.

TABLE 3: Distribution of faith and non-faith-based universities in Nigeria.

Faith and non-faith-based universities in Nigeria	Numbers of universities	Percentages
Christian	24	34.78
Islamic	4	5.79
Non-faith-based	41	59.42
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100</b>

which Christian based universities is 34.7826% and Islamic-based universities constitute 5.797%. The line graph for Table 3 is presented in Figure 2.

Nevertheless, it was observed that no AIC in the mould of C&S or CCC has established a university yet, although it is pertinent to assert that because of the fluidity of characterisation of AICs, the Christ Apostolic Church is considered in this study as an indigenous Pentecostal denomination. However, the proliferation of Christian universities in Nigeria by faith communities is not a transnational phenomenon yet. Nevertheless, New Covenant C&S Church, London, is actively involved in vocational training in Social Work and Health Care, Assessor Award and Early years workforce training, which are reflective of creating vocational career opportunities for their members who are eager to acquire vocational qualifications in the health sector (<http://www.thenewcovenant.co.uk/vocational-training-centre/>).

The uniqueness of the transnational network of AICs, especially the Pentecostal denominations like Living Faith Church and RCCG, is the sourcing of freewill offering and donations for capital-intensive projects such as the establishment of universities from their adherents at home and in Diaspora. Despite the proliferation of Christian universities in Nigeria, members of the public have criticised the high-cost tuition of these institutions that is far beyond the reach of an average Nigerian, and particularly church members. This critique seems plausible in light of the fact that most of the members of these churches contributed significantly to the establishment of these universities but are financially incapable of sending their

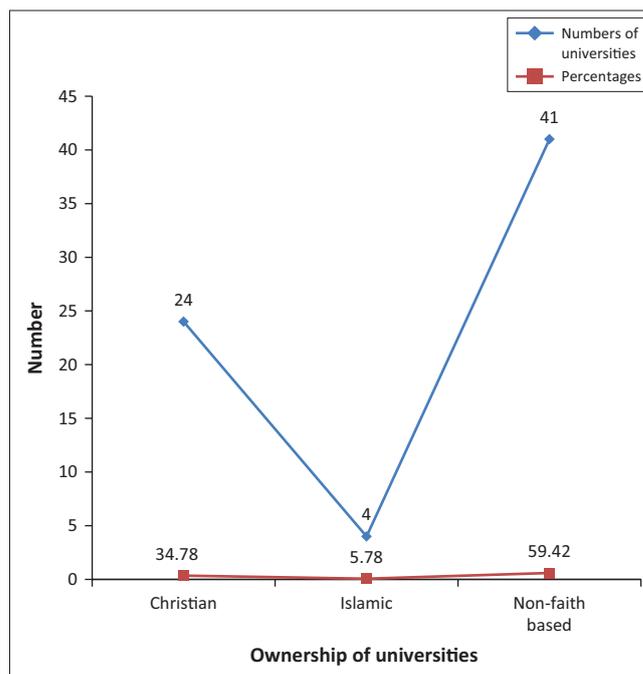


FIGURE 2: Distribution of ownership of universities in Nigeria.

wards to these institutions despite possessing the prerequisite admission requirements.

The impact of religious transnationalism is limited not only to the religious space but also to the generation of financial resources in the form of remittances from Diaspora for the execution of various developmental projects by these churches. Remittances to sub-Saharan Africa have declined for the second consecutive year since 2016 according to the World Bank, at the IMF-World Bank's Spring Meetings in Washington DC, in April 2017. The report notes that:

remittance flows to Sub-Saharan Africa declined by an estimated 6.1 per cent to 33 billion dollars 2016, due to slow economic growth in remittance-sending countries; decline in commodity prices, especially oil, which impacted remittance receiving countries. (<http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2017/04/21/remittances-to-developing-countries-decline-for-second-consecutive-year>)

Part of the reason for the decline according to the report is the 'diversion of remittances to informal channels due to controlled exchange rate regimes in countries such as Nigeria contributed to decline in the region'. (<http://www.premiumtimesng.com/business/business-news/229259-diaspora-remittances-nigeria-developing-countries-decline-2-years-world-bank.html>). Intricately connected to remittance from Diaspora to Nigeria which includes faith-based organisations with transnational networks status is also the initiation and sustenance of academic linkages within some Christian-owned universities by alumni of these institutions. Akinrinade and Olukoya 2011 argue that Nigerians in Diaspora are increasingly demonstrating a deep sense of nationalism and remain connected to their home countries through joint collaborative initiatives. For instance:

in the area of academic linkages, a number of Nigerian [*Christian based*] universities have started linking up with their alumni

resident abroad in order to facilitate academic exchanges, manpower training, library development, and so on. (p. 80)

Interestingly, the active involvements of many Nigerians in the socio-economic and human development of their home country is redefining their diasporic identity as many of such people live and are actively involved in their new context and their home country.

## Socio-economic investments

As a result of the moral and economic corruption and leadership ineptitude over the years, the Nigerian economy is best described as being in a state of comatose. There is no doubt that Nigeria's religio-space has been redefined by the proliferation of different religious traditions including the indigenous religious groups. However, Pentecostal tradition of the Christian faith seems to be a major player in the changing Nigerian religio-space. As a result of the failings of statutory agencies of the Federal and State governments in Nigeria to provide basic social, economic and infrastructural facilities to its citizens some churches, particularly the Pentecostal traditions, are filling the void in their communities. The social manifestation of the Christian faith in Nigeria is non-monolithic (Oguntoyinbo-Atere 2005:32). Indeed, religious movements, particularly Pentecostalism, within the Christian tradition provide an uncanny paradox to the Nigerian economic meltdown as this aspect of the nation's life still seems to be blossoming. This inevitably is an impetus to the emergence of entrepreneurial initiatives by most of the Nigerian Churches into social-economic, educational and health sectors. The impact of the intervention of these Churches has to a large extent alleviated the socio-economic and infrastructural development of various communities where they are situated. Because of poor data management in the country, the various investments of these churches cannot be readily compiled, but it is clear that they have hugely created employment opportunities for Nigerians. For instance, Winners Chapel's Corporate Affairs department says the church employed more than 18 000 people in Nigeria alone (<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-megachurches-insight-idUSKCN0I104F20141012>). This is a complete departure from the United Kingdom where statutory regulating agencies of charities like the Charity Commission of England and Wales or the Companies House requires the submission of annual audited accounts of charities under which most churches register in England and Wales. This places a huge burden of fiscal discipline on transnational networks of churches from the Global South particularly Nigerian-led ones unlike in the Nigerian church scene where there is no regulation at all. Whilst acknowledging that some of the social interventions of these churches are part of basic necessities of life in the developed world, many of the Nigerian Pentecostal churches investments include private ownership of media stations such as Dove Media owned by the RCCG led by Pastor E.A. Adeboye. Dove media broadcast has global coverage through the following platforms: DSTV, Africa (Channel 349), MyTV, Viewsat (Europe), StarTimes Nigeria (Channel 464), Start Times

Africa, Continental Satellite – CONSAT (Channel 940), Metro Digital Cable TV Port Harcourt, ACTV, Roku (worldwide), Unity TV (Europe), Ohty Box (Europe) and TV Afrique (worldwide). Chris Oyakhilome established Love World Cyber Ministry, Love World Television, Love World Christian Network, Love World Multimedia Ministry and Love World publishing ministry. The investment in the media sector by some of these churches does not only provide the opportunity for the globalisation of their religious rituals and practices to sustain but also recruit new clientele across the borders. The continued sustenance of the community of sentiments further pave the way for economic and religious fluidity as the time and space is compressed as church rituals are beamed across the Atlantic.

In Diaspora, it seems the RCCG is the only transnational church from Nigeria which has succeeded in the replication of its media initiative in South Africa and London. The Redemption Television Ministry of RCCG having its headquarters in Johannesburg, South Africa, was established in February 2011 whilst the third television station of the RCCG is Open Heavens Studio based in London, the United Kingdom, led by Pastor Akin Salami. It is quite interesting to note that the TV station in the United Kingdom is not explicitly known as a Christian channel as some of the programmes are structured to reflect the needs of urban and multicultural society but with a distinctive Christian ethos. It is imperative to note that most of the television investments of these churches are on the cable and satellite channels because of the non-deregulation of the media sector in the West.

The RCCG seems to be one of the frontline AIC's with transnational networks and developmental initiatives that defy territorialisation. The developmental initiative includes the establishment of Haggai Bank and several Community Banks in Nigeria. Haggai Bank is one of the foremost National Primary Mortgage Bank in the country, with a shareholders' fund in excess of N5 billion. It commenced operations in 1994 as Haggai Investment and Trust Company Limited (<http://haggaibank.com/website/inner.php?pid=1>). In over two decades of existence, Haggai Bank has successfully transmuted from a Community Bank to Microfinance Bank and further changed its status to a Mortgage Bank in April 2008 having obtained the approval of the Central Bank of Nigeria (<http://haggaibank.com/website/inner.php?pid=1>). In light of its developmental ideals, the RCCG is yet to establish a bank in the United Kingdom. But it recently established a credit union known as the Redeemer Federal Credit Union, the fourth federally chartered credit union in the United States in 2015, which was inaugurated at the RCCG North America headquarters in Greenville, Texas (Aduay 2017).

## Human development and health matters

Most AICs, particularly the Pentecostal tradition in Nigeria, focus on empowerment of their members, thereby increasing their human capacity and employability. This is a major trend

amongst the neo-Pentecostal churches like Daystar Christian Centre founded by Samuel Adeyemi, popularly known as Sam Adeyemi to mention one of several churches in Nigeria. The church was inaugurated on Saturday, 18 November 1995. The leadership of Daystar Christian Centre advocates transformational leadership in its ranks to impact the society at large. Regarding business and enterprise, these churches promote an ideology of hard work. Most of the members of Daystar Christian Centre are the young and upward mobile ladies and men as the founder focuses on various teachings that entail practical matters on self-help, discipline, work, relationship, faith, financial matters and vision. In actualising the mission of the church, various themed programmes are organised for the members of the church such as the 'Success Power International Ministry of the church'. Some of the programmes include: Success Power seminars, Success Power Television and Radio broadcasts, Success Power products in digital formats and other publications. Incidentally, as a result of the success of Pastor Sam Adeyemi in the area of empowerment, he is sought after by transnational networks of Nigerian churches in Diaspora to impact their congregations. This further illustrates the fluidity of the impact of these churches in human development as the teachings, preaching and books are sought after by their adherents across denominational divide.

## Religious capital: Ritual practices, teachings and counselling

The concept of religious capital is centred on the people's religious beliefs and behaviours such as adherence to marriage values and upholding their religious convictions, which are by-products of social capital based on sacred religious convictions being part of a community of sentiments (Iannaccone & Klick 2003:5). Religious Capital can only blossom in the midst of social capital within a community of sentiments in a religious movement. However, capital in perspective is not economic but the degree of adherence to religious subscriptions, rituals, beliefs and knowledge required to participate in religious activities which is exemplified in the community life of the members of the religious movement that also rubs off on the social capital of the faith community.

The various church meetings, programmes of these churches, counselling services to the young about marriage are avenues for the upholding of the biblical worldview on family life as well as the institution of marriage. Interestingly, the issue of sexuality and sex education caused by the HIV and AIDS challenges to a large extent is on the radar of many AICs in Nigeria. For instance, the RCCG has responded to the scourge of HIV and AIDS not only with prayer and compassion but also with medical assistance to many Nigerians with the infection. One of the cardinal initiatives of RCCG in the tackling of HIV and AIDS pandemic in Nigeria is the Redeemed AIDS Programme Action Committee (RAPAC). Because of the transnational network of RCCG, RAPAC was able to collaborate through the AIDS pandemic, the African

Mission's North America chapter through a partnership with CitiHope International (CitiHope) which blazed the trail to donate \$1.5 million worth of HIV drugs to RCCG for onward distribution to those who might be in need of the drugs (Adogame 2007:478). Although the aforementioned example is not in the United Kingdom but in the United States, it however depicts the synergy that takes place within the transnational networks of AICs in their effort to develop their communities.

## Conclusion

From the above discussion, it is clear that the AICs are actors in the development of various communities not only within the national borders of Nigeria but also in Diaspora as many are replicating the developmental ethos of their denominations in their home country and also in Diaspora. Nevertheless, it is important to note that most of the developmental initiatives in Africa are motivated by the inability of the state to provide basic social, economic and educational infrastructures for their citizens. However, the involvement of AICs in development in Diaspora is a complimentary role to the commitments of statutory agencies. Moreover, the replication of the development initiatives of AICs in Africa in comparison to Diaspora is quite distinct. In this study, we have noted the multifaceted approaches of the AICs as development actors and there exist huge potentials that can be utilised by developmental agencies if faith-based organisations are involved in development because of their credibility and *in situ* knowledge of the members of their faith community. This study further corroborates previous scholars who have identified religious organisations as a major factor of development.

## Acknowledgements

### Competing interests

The author declares that he or she has no financial or personal relationships which may have inappropriately influenced him or her in writing this article.

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