

COVI D- 19, CAMA, Mega- Church Owner s And Nat i onal Devel opment

As reported in the newspapers, the Presiding Bishop of the Living Faith Church Worldwide, Bishop David Oyedepo, described his revulsion after watching news coverage of Covid-19 during the lockdown in Nigeria thus:

The atmosphere was so charged with all kinds of information. Just try to browse and then your entire body system chemistry begins to change by an information that is not relevant to you; you are the one that went for it. It s not relevant to you.

My story may look primitive, but I won t stop sharing it: I bought the last Newspaper in 1993. I am not a Media Specialist. During this COVI D-19 propaganda by a lot of international media, I tried to followthrough, I told my son, never, again will I watch this stupid thing.

I said: my spirit man was choking by the volume of their lies. I shut it down. I am hearing purely from God at all time. If I say something sir, I am saying it by the Spirit of God.

During the lockdown, as many would recall, Mr. Oyedepo similarly disagreed with government over its closure of churches and other religious centers to prevent the spread of

Covid-19, comparing them (churches) to hospitals, deeming them, in effect, to be on essential duties.

Oyedepo also challenged government's decision to allow markets operate intermittently during the period and questioned why churches remained under lock while people went to market to purchase essentials for their upkeep.

Ironically, a number of other men of God notably Pastors Tunde Bakare of the Citadel Global Community Church (formerly known as Latter Day Assembly) and Pastor Sam Adeyemi of Daystar Christian Center, both with large congregations, spoke out against re-opening of worship centers during a pandemic.

Mr. Tunde Bakare warned specifically that reopening churches would be like rushing Christians like sheep to the slaughterhouses, premising his argument on government's prediction of the month of August as the peak period of the infection in Nigeria.

Please keep safe and do your best to keep alive by keeping all the necessary rules. We know that by God's grace, this pandemic, like the others before it, has an expiry date, Mr. Bakare warned his congregants in an online worship session.

Similarly, Pastor Sam Adeyemi of the Daystar Christian Centre said, in a statement, that his church would not re-open for congregational worship just yet, citing the virulence of the virus as excuse and the fact that the times were not yet safe.

Daystar Christian Center will continue to hold her services online exclusively pending further review. We look forward to the resumption of physical services in a safe environment. We urge our members and friends to join us on all our online platforms for life-transforming services, Mr. Adeyemi urged.

Although Bishop Oyedepo claimed he had healed many Covid-19 patients, using prayers, concrete evidence is yet to back up that claim. But, if indeed he actually healed many as claimed, that, it must be said, is a noble and commendable act.

However, it would have been more commendable, worthwhile and of great benefit to the nation, if the Bishop had laid the example of obeying government safety protocols, even if to

them stands.

Also, on Companies and Allied Matters Act 2020 (CAMA), Bishop Oyedepo got in the news and was reported to have said:

You know the bomb I threw last Sunday: He (God) gave it to me. They were gyrating, vibrating. You know that s as my custom is: God tells me something, how you look is irrelevant; I will throw it GBAM! YOU DON T COVER YOUR HEAD, WHATEVER HAPPENS TO YOU; THAT S ALL .

I am 51 years old in this thing (Christianity), don t try it. I have been with Jesus for some time and I am sent as a prophet to nations. That a minister can remove the trustees and close the accounts of the church?

You don t know the strength of any man until you molest his wife. The cheapest way for a leader to lose respect is to insult the wife of his worker. He will tell you to take your job and insult you thoroughly

Please know that the church is the bride of Christ. We are returning home someday for the big marriage supper of the Lamb. It is wisdom to quickly expunge that part that affects the religious body from that document. It is only safe to do that.

In fact, they said they would appoint managers. So, they can appoint occultists to be managers of church affairs when we

are alive. Don't try it when this crude prophet is alive, when all the sons of the prophets are alive, don't try it, this is a timely advice.

The Companies and Allied Matters Act 2020 (CAMA), recently signed into law by the Nigerian president, aims at regulating activities of non-governmental organizations in Nigeria, to ensure transparency, probity, and accountability.

Under CAMA, government, acting through its Supervising Minister, can remove members of the Board of Trustees of any erring not-for-profit organization and appoint a new one. It is believed that the implementation of CAMA will prevent unwholesome activities, which have become prevalent in recent times, in many of these organizations. This is what Mr. Oyedepo opposes. One then wonders where his interest really lies.

Recall that in the United Kingdom, under a similar law, Mr. Oyedepo's church in 2014 was sanctioned for unwholesome activities and financial improprieties. As a result, his church was placed under watch, with non-church members and non-Christians supervising the church's finances and activities.

Ever since CAMA was signed into law in Nigeria, a number of Christian leaders, the most vocal being Mr. Oyedepo, and some Muslim leaders have raised objections. Mr. Oyedepo told his Church members that CAMA was unacceptable and godless and that he would protest CAMA with everything he had. The question is: if there were no other motive other than saintly behind it,

why should religious leaders fight a law that proposes to institute financial propriety and rectitude in their organizations?

Opinions on CAMA are divided among Nigerians on social media. For some, CAMA is a welcome development as it would ensure sanity, transparency, and probity. Others condemn it as anti-religious and ungodly.

Whichever way one looks at it, some religious leaders in Africa and especially Nigeria have put themselves in awkward and undignifying positions, which is why government is now moving to regulate their excesses.

One cannot but wonder why Mr. Oyedepo and other Christians are against CAMA, after all St. Paul noted in Romans 13, verse 1 to 5: ***Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore, whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For***

and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work. So also Romans 2:13 says: For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. The Bible also state in 1 Peter 2:13-17: Be subject for the Lord s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

There are many more verses in the Bible that enjoin all Christians to obey earthly leaders, laws and institutions. And if the Bible is this clear on Christians' obedience to earthly leaders, laws and institutions, why then is Mr. Oyedepo and other Christians making a fuss over CAMA?

As far as the quoted verses go, how far also would Mr. Oyedepo and other Nigerian Christians who are against CAMA be breaking the laws of God as posited by these injunctions? The big questions are: were they ignorant of these biblical injunctions or are they just being hypocritical?