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Editorial

At first glance, the articles collected in this issue of *KS Studies* appear to have little in common. They address questions as diverse as Eucharistic theology, digital religion, Christian apologetics, Islamic theodicy, and ecclesial accountability. Yet a closer reading reveals a common thread: the encounter between religious traditions and the changing conditions in which they are lived, interpreted, and practised. Rather than treating theology as a self-contained intellectual enterprise, the authors explore how inherited beliefs interact with contemporary realities and how religious communities can respond to new social, cultural, intellectual, and technological circumstances.

This issue is also marked by significant methodological diversity, spanning a range of scholarly approaches including systematic and practical theology, comparative theology, religious studies, and interdisciplinary investigations at the intersection of religion, society, culture, and institutional practice. Rather than fragmentation, this plurality reflects the increasingly complex nature of contemporary research on religion. Theological and religious-studies approaches remain distinct in their epistemological commitments and research objectives; nevertheless, both seek to illuminate dimensions of religious life that cannot be fully understood in isolation.

This is perhaps most evident in the opening study by Zoltán Csizmadia. The Eucharist has long stood at the centre of ecumenical discussions, often as both a symbol of Christian unity and a point of ecclesial division. Rather than revisiting familiar doctrinal disagreements, the author approaches the subject through the lens of contemporary human sciences. Drawing upon psychology, anthropology, sociology, and pastoral theology, he argues that ecumenical dialogue may benefit from greater attention to the experiential dimensions of Eucharistic life. The study reminds readers that theological disputes are never merely abstract disagreements about concepts but also concern lived practices, shared identities, and forms of communal belonging.

The relationship between religious life and contemporary culture receives particularly concrete treatment in the contribution by Afolorunso Olalekan Dairo and Tosin Success Abolaji. Their examination of the Deeper Life Bible Church presents a striking example of how religious communities negotiate technological change. The article traces a movement from earlier suspicion of modern technologies to sophisticated forms of digital engagement that include online worship, social media communication, digital evangelism, and even the use of artificial intelligence. Beyond its immediate Nigerian context, the study raises broader questions about authority, authenticity, and religious communication in an increasingly digital environment.

Questions of communication and community occupy an important place elsewhere in this volume. Stuart Nicolson's article revisits apologetics from a perspective that is both historical and practical. By returning to the biblical foundations of Christian witness, Nicolson challenges the widespread assumption that apologetics is primarily the task of professional theologians or intellectual specialists. Based also on several Second Vatican Council documents, he presents how the responsibility to understand

and communicate the faith belongs to all Christians. His proposal for 'Original Apologetics' is therefore not simply a historical reconstruction but also an invitation to reconsider how theological knowledge is cultivated and transmitted.

A different kind of encounter between traditions forms the subject of Radislav Novotný's study of Kenneth Cragg and Islamic theology. The article addresses a question that extends well beyond the problem of evil itself: how can one religious tradition interpret another without imposing its own conceptual categories upon it? Through a careful analysis of Islamic discussions of justice, responsibility, and *zulm*, Novotný argues that Cragg's critique of Islam reflects assumptions rooted in specifically Christian understandings of redemption and divine participation. This is a contribution to Islamic studies that provides an important methodological reflection on the possibilities and limits of interreligious understanding.

The final article, by David Oluwabukunmi Ogunbiyi, directs attention to an aspect of ecclesial life that can be overlooked in theological discussion but remains essential to the credibility of religious institutions. The author's study of auditing and fraud prevention within the Lagos Mainland Diocese of the Anglican Communion explores how principles such as stewardship, accountability, transparency, and trust are embodied within organisational practice. This reminds us that theology is concerned not only with belief and worship but also with the structures through which communities organise their common life. Questions of governance and financial integrity are therefore not peripheral concerns but reflect deeper moral and theological commitments.

Although the articles included in this issue differ significantly in topic and method, they collectively testify to the continuing relevance of theological scholarship. The authors demonstrate that theology remains deeply concerned with the practical and intellectual questions of contemporary life. The result is a collection of studies that is both intellectually diverse and united by a shared commitment to understanding religion as a lived and dynamic reality.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all authors for their contributions to this issue and to the reviewers whose thoughtful assessments have helped strengthen the published articles. Scholarly dialogue depends upon such collaboration, and *KS Studies* continues to benefit from the generosity and expertise of both authors and reviewers.

Rudolf Svoboda

Eucharistic Unity in a New Viewpoint: Perspectives of Human Sciences in the Ecumenical Dialogue

Zoltán Csizmadia

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Abstract

The Eucharist is the central mystery of Christian faith and worship, and therefore one of the cornerstones of ecumenical rapprochement. The documents and theological agreements of the ecumenical dialogue that unfolded in the 20th century clearly show that the rapprochement between the churches took place primarily in a dogmatic – and partly liturgical – approach. Although these efforts are indispensable, they result in slow progress on their own, as the emphasis is often placed on seeking theoretical consensus, while the lived, experiential, and communal dimensions of the Eucharist are pushed into the background.

The basic premise of this study is that Eucharistic ecumenism can become more fruitful if, in addition to dogmatic discourse, it consciously incorporates the findings of contemporary human sciences, especially anthropology, psychology, sociology, and pastoral psychology. These disciplines point out that shared rituals shape identity, have healing and community-building powers, and are capable of conveying an existential experience that goes beyond mere intellectual understanding.

Within this framework, the study examines several ecumenically relevant dimensions of the Eucharist: the Eucharist as a rite and a place of encounter; the symbolic interpretation of the Eucharist; the Eucharist as thanksgiving; the relationship between the Eucharist and spiritual health; and the eco-theological perspectives of the Eucharistic spirit. These themes highlight that the Eucharist is not an isolated teaching or a dogmatic question in itself, but a complex liturgical process in which the event of salvation becomes experiential in the celebration of the community.

The study concludes that the Eucharistic approach cannot be based solely on rational-intellectual considerations, but must address the whole person: emotions, openness to community, physicality, and the dimensions of symbolic experience. An interdisciplinary approach allows the Eucharist to be not merely a subject of debate, but a shared spiritual reality that can promote the path towards Christian unity.

Keywords

Eucharist, ecumenical dialogue, ritual, symbol, pastoral psychology, spiritual health, thanksgiving, eco-theology

Introduction

The Eucharist is the central event of Christian worship: the commemoration of Christ's self-sacrifice, which is a place of encounter with God, a form of community, and individual spirituality at the same time. It began its history as a sign of unity, but theological and liturgical differences over the centuries have led to division, so that the Lord's table remains one of the most sensitive points of ecumenical dialogue today.¹ The 20th century, the 'century of the Eucharist', rediscovered the spiritual and community-building power of the sacrament, but the ecumenical reconciliation is slow because it has been reduced to dogmatic and ecclesiastical disputes.

In the early Church, the Eucharist was a living, communal experience, not a mature theological system: it was a celebration of the history of salvation, a symbol of the unity of the faithful.² The Eastern and Western paths of the Middle Ages developed different emphases, and then the new interpretations of the Reformation further deepened the separation. The emphasis gradually shifted to the words of the rite and theological definitions, while the communal and experiential dimensions were pushed into the background. As a result, the interpretation of the Eucharist increasingly focused on the validity of the words of institution and the independent theological definition of the sacraments, while the entire liturgical process and the celebratory and salvific experience of the community called together by Christ gradually receded into the background.³

My assumption is that ecumenical discourse can become more fruitful if it does not merely strive for dogmatic consensus, but also involves the findings of contemporary human sciences in exploring the experiential and communal dimensions of the Eucharist. Psychology points to the identity-strengthening and healing power of shared rituals; according to the sociology of religion, the Eucharist is capable of building bridges between communities with different backgrounds; and cultural anthropology shows that the sharing of food is a universal human experience that opens up space for transcendence.⁴

The aim of my paper is to explore how these scientific perspectives can contribute to ecumenical reconciliation in Eucharistic teachings. The aspects of ritual, symbolism, spiritual health, thanksgiving, and eco-theology offer new opportunities for renewing dialogue. Thus, the Eucharist remains not only a subject of theological debate, but can also become a shared spiritual experience capable of building bridges between different Christian traditions.⁵

Eucharist and Ritual

In religious studies, ritual (Latin: *ritus*, Greek: τελετή) refers to a recurring, formalised sequence of actions that expresses and maintains a connection with the sacred. Classical theories of ritual approach this reality with different emphases: according to Gerardus van der Leeuw, ritual is the basic form of encounter with the sacred;⁶ Mircea Eliade sees ritual as an opportunity to step out of profane time and return to the primordial time of creation;⁷ Victor Turner interprets ritual as a liminal space where the identity of the individual and the

¹ Walter Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits: Basic Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue* (London and New York: Continuum, 2009), 54–60.

² Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973), 30–38.

³ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 4 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 192–198.

⁴ David M. Wulff, *Psychology of Religion: Classic and Contemporary Views* (New York: Wiley, 1997), 489–495.

⁵ John A. Radano, *Celebrating a Century of Ecumenism: Exploring the Achievements of International Dialogue* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 303–309.

⁶ Gerardus van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation: A Study in Phenomenology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1933), 381–412.

⁷ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1957), 68–95.

community is renewed and a new community (*communitas*) is born.⁸ Modern ritual theory emphasises the dimensions of performativity and identity formation: ritual not only expresses but also shapes.⁹

In the early Church, the ritual of the Eucharist was rooted in the form of a communal thanksgiving meal (*Didakhē*). Patristic theology interpreted this mystagogically: through the *mysterion*, the believer truly participates in divine life.¹⁰ During the Middle Ages, the emphasis shifted to sacramental realism and dogmatic precision, while the Second Vatican Council rediscovered the principle of *actuosa participatio*, or active participation, as the essence of liturgy.¹¹ Catholic theology continues to emphasise the objective efficacy of the rite (*ex opere operato*), while Orthodox theology, following John D. Zizioulas, sees the Eucharist as the ‘ontological basis’ of the Church, which leads the believer on the path to theosis (deification).¹² In the Protestant tradition, Martin Luther accepted rituals as long as they did not obscure the gospel; Ulrich Zwingli, on the other hand, viewed the Lord’s Supper as a symbolic act of remembrance. Jürgen Moltmann places the Eucharist in an eschatological perspective: according to him, the rite is ‘a foretaste of the future community’,¹³ while Walter Brueggemann interprets the liturgy as ‘a space for the re-creation of communal justice’.¹⁴

In ecumenical dialogue, the rite is a particularly promising meeting point. Even if the dogmatic interpretation of the Eucharist differs from denomination to denomination, the liturgy itself, as a communal experience, is capable of building bridges. Robert F. Taft points out that despite the differences between Eastern and Western liturgical approaches, ‘the rite as a place of encounter’ can create dialogue.¹⁵ Alexander Schmemmann describes the Eucharist as ‘the liturgy of the sanctification of the world’: a sacred act in which created reality is offered up to God again and the church joins in cosmic thanksgiving.¹⁶ According to Roch A. Kereszty, the Eucharistic rite is a key space for shaping communal identity.¹⁷

Pastoral psychology also sheds new light on the significance of ritual. According to Gábor Hézser, liturgical repetition helps restore inner order and identity in crisis situations;¹⁸ James E. Dittes attributes a ‘psychological order-creating’ function to ritual;¹⁹ Mary Douglas emphasises the symbolic connection between the body and community structure;²⁰ while Jonathan Z. Smith points to the space-making and sanctifying function of ritual.²¹ Peter Roppelt calls the Eucharist ‘a ritual space for spiritual gratitude and transformation of creation’.²²

Together, these approaches suggest that ritual is not merely a vehicle for theological teaching, but a shared spiritual and psychological experience capable of calling Christians to a

⁸ Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1969), 94–130.

⁹ Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 69–103.

¹⁰ Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967), 188–203.

¹¹ Odo Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1962), 33–51.

¹² John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), 142–165.

¹³ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 243–260.

¹⁴ Walter Brueggemann, *Israel’s Praise: Doxology Against Idolatry and Ideology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 101–118.

¹⁵ Robert F. Taft, *Beyond East and West: Problems in Liturgical Understanding* (Rome: Pontifical Oriental Institute, 1992), 201–226.

¹⁶ Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 27–45.

¹⁷ Roch A. Kereszty, *Wedding Feast of the Lamb: Eucharistic Theology from a Historical, Biblical, and Systematic Perspective* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 155–177.

¹⁸ Gábor Hézser, *A rítusok pszichológiája* (Budapest: Kálvin Kiadó, 2004), 55–84.

¹⁹ James E. Dittes, *Reconciling the Differences: A Theory of Faith and Practice* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 121–137.

²⁰ Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (London: Routledge, 1970), 67–86.

²¹ Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 89–114.

²² Peter Roppelt, *Sakramentale Anthropologie* (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 2016), 77–95.

deeper unity. This is precisely what could offer new opportunities for ecumenical dialogue: liturgy, as a 'space of encounter', can transcend the boundaries of purely dogmatic debates and present unity as an experience rather than merely a theoretical consensus.

The Eucharist as a Symbol

In modern culture, the understanding of symbols is increasingly being pushed into the background. The logic of rationality, functionality, and measurability has become dominant, while the deep-rooted signs that convey religious experience are losing their communicative power.²³ This process also poses a challenge to the Christian tradition, as the essence of faith often becomes accessible through symbolic realities. For this reason, it is particularly timely to rethink the symbolic dimension of the Eucharist: symbols are capable of creating a common language that transcends denominational boundaries and opens up new perspectives in ecumenical dialogue.

The original meaning of *symbolon* – the joining together of the pieces of a broken object – is an expressive metaphor for what symbols do: they unite the visible and the invisible, the finite and the infinite, human experience and divine mystery.²⁴ Christian liturgy has always functioned in this sense: a gateway to the transcendent opened by visible actions and material elements (bread, wine).

According to Paul Tillich's classic definition, 'A symbol participates in the reality which it points to.'²⁵ While a mere sign only refers to something, the symbol – as a dynamic carrier of meaning – makes transcendent reality present. According to Tillich, 'Religious symbols open up levels of reality which otherwise are closed to us. They open up our souls to dimensions of the divine', and are capable of transforming human existential experience.²⁶ In this light, the Eucharist is not merely a teaching ritual or remembrance, but a dynamic symbol of God's presence in the world: an event in which grace is not only a theoretical reality but an experience that can be lived.²⁷

Gerd Theissen examines early Christian Eucharistic practice from a psychological and sociological perspective, which he believes represented a radical 'ritual taboo-breaking': the symbolic consumption of blood was unthinkable in the Jewish religious world, yet it became the bearer of a new identity and created a community that transcended cultural and social boundaries.²⁸

Karl Rahner emphasises that the sacraments – including the Eucharist – are forms of communication that fit with the symbolic nature of human beings: human existence itself is symbolic, and therefore the grace of salvation becomes present through symbols. The sacrament is not merely a memory or a sign, but the presence of divine reality, which touches the deepest layers of human experience.²⁹

Pastoral psychology also supports the transformative power of symbols. Gábor Hézser points out that symbols open up emotional and identity-forming dimensions that cannot be conveyed by verbal language alone. Symbolic action – especially in the form of ritual – can

²³ Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), 68–92.

²⁴ Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1958), 311–336.

²⁵ Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 41–67.

²⁶ Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 53–76.

²⁷ Ray S. Anderson, 'Liturgy and Tillich's Theory of Symbols', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 46, no. 3 (1978): 273–288.

²⁸ Gerd Theissen, *The Religion of the Earliest Churches: Creating a Symbolic World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 91–116.

²⁹ Karl Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963), 88–105. Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 416–430.

help build inner order and a new identity in times of crisis. In this sense, the Eucharist is a healing, identity-forming, and community-building experience.³⁰

From an ecumenical perspective, the symbolic approach is particularly promising. Although ontological differences remain between denominations, symbols can offer a shared existential experience.³¹ Bread and wine are thus not merely the subject of doctrinal disputes, but bear deep human and spiritual meaning: they are the concrete scene of acceptance, belonging to God, and the experience of salvation.³²

Eucharist as Thanksgiving

The term 'Eucharist' comes from the Greek verb *eucharistein*, meaning 'to give thanks'. According to the New Testament, Jesus 'gave thanks' at the Last Supper (Mt 26:27; Lk 22:19) when he offered himself to the Father and his disciples in the bread and wine. This gesture is deeply rooted in the Old Testament tradition of sacrificial offerings of thanksgiving. The Passover feast commemorated Israel's deliverance from Egypt and was an expression of gratitude to God the Redeemer, while the todah sacrifice served as a personal or communal thanksgiving when someone experienced God's deliverance or healing.³³ At the Last Supper, Jesus fulfilled these Old Testament prefigurations in a new form: thanksgiving for deliverance, creation, and redemption became a celebration of the new covenant opened by Christ.

From the beginning, Christian tradition has viewed the Eucharist as an act of thanksgiving in which the Church, as the body of Christ, praises and thanks the Father for all his gifts, from creation to the work of redemption.³⁴

Patristic writers particularly emphasised the cosmic dimension of this thanksgiving. Sts John Chrysostom and Irenaeus both interpreted the Eucharist as the ascension of the created world towards God: it is not only man who gives thanks, but the entire cosmos becomes praise. Joseph Ratzinger calls this perspective 'creation-thanksgiving', in which man, by offering back to God the goods of the world – the earthly reality symbolically present in bread and wine – reconnects with the Creator and restores the order of creation.³⁵

The tradition of the Protestant Reformation also preserved the emphasis on thanksgiving, albeit in a different theological framework. For Martin Luther, the Lord's Supper is not merely a remembrance, but a grateful acceptance of God's grace: man responds to God's gift through faith.³⁶ The Orthodox liturgy expresses this dimension in a very unique way: the entire Eucharistic prayer is an anaphora, that is, an offering and thanksgiving. According to Orthodox theology, the liturgy itself is an act of cosmic thanksgiving, in which man and the created world rise together towards God.³⁷

However, gratitude is not only a theological force, but also a deeply psychological and spiritual one. According to psychologist Robert Emmons, gratitude consists of two steps: first, we recognise the goodness in our lives, and then we acknowledge that its source lies outside ourselves.³⁸ This approach reduces anxiety, increases resilience, strengthens community bonds,

³⁰ Gábor Hézser, *A vallási szimbólumok pszichológiája* (Budapest: Kálvin Kiadó, 2004), 47–73.

³¹ Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1957), 179–192. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Source of Life* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 83–98.

³² David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 188–205.

³³ László Boda, *Eucharisztia teológiája* (Budapest: Sapientia Főiskola, 2015), 21–59.

³⁴ Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, 91–110.

³⁵ Benedict XVI [Joseph Ratzinger], *A föld sója – A kereszténység jövője* (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 2007), 145–162.

³⁶ Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 201–212.

³⁷ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 123–140.

³⁸ Robert A. Emmons, *Thanks! How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007), 3–25.

and promotes inner peace. According to Henri Nouwen, liturgy ‘re-centers’ people: it helps them return with a grateful heart to their inner connection with God and their true identity.³⁹ Pastoral psychology points out that the regular ritual practice of gratitude has healing power: it helps us process crises, strengthens our identity, and builds community cohesion.⁴⁰

From an ecumenical perspective, gratitude is a universal language: it is capable of connecting different traditions because it is a deeply human and spiritual experience.⁴¹ Pope Francis also emphasises this connecting power in his encyclical *Laudato si’*, when he points out that a grateful Eucharistic spirit ‘teaches us to accept and care for creation’. Giving thanks for the created world is thus not only a spiritual renewal, but can also be a common spiritual source for ecological responsibility and social dialogue.⁴²

Spiritual Health and the Eucharist

In our time, the modern concept of health has become increasingly holistic: as early as 1948, the WHO defined health as ‘not merely the absence of disease, but a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being’; in 1998, the spiritual dimension was officially added to this definition.⁴³ George L. Engel’s biopsychosocial model also points out that physical, mental, and social processes are closely interrelated, and that healing cannot be understood on a purely biological level.⁴⁴ Numerous studies in religious psychology and pastoral psychology confirm that religious practices offer a structured framework for hope, identity reinforcement, and spiritual healing.⁴⁵

From the beginning, the Christian tradition has interpreted health in terms of wholeness (*holos*): human integrity is realised in God and in community. St Augustine calls the Eucharist ‘medicine for the soul’ (*medicina animae*): ‘The bread you see on the altar, consecrated as the body of Christ... strengthens, heals, and sustains you.’⁴⁶ Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, calls the Eucharist ‘the medicine of immortality’ (*pharmakon athanasias*),⁴⁷ while Ephrem the Syrian calls it ‘living medicine’, which is ‘the bearer of fire and Spirit’.

Particularly noteworthy is the therapeutic thinking of St Gregory of Nyssa, who interprets Eucharistic healing as an antidote to the ‘spiritual poisoning’ caused by sin. Gregory compares the beginning of human history to a process of poisoning: the sin committed in the Garden of Eden – the consumption of the forbidden fruit – brought about a ‘toxic’ change that affected both body and soul. If eating and drinking were the means of man’s downfall, then, according to Gregory, healing must also come through eating and drinking, that is, through the Eucharist.

In chapter 37 of the *Oratio Catechetica Magna*, he writes: ‘Just as those who have taken poison neutralize its effects with another medicine, so too does the body become one with and mingle with its Savior in another way.’⁴⁸ For Gregory, the Eucharist is therefore a therapeutic agent that acts as an antidote: it not only grants forgiveness, but also restores the disturbed inner

³⁹ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World* (New York: Crossroad, 1996), 95–111.

⁴⁰ Michael E. McCullough, Shelley D. Kilpatrick, Robert A. Emmons, and David B. Larson, ‘Is Gratitude a Moral Affect?’, *Psychological Bulletin* 127, no. 2 (2001): 249–266.

⁴¹ Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, 188–205.

⁴² Francis, *Laudato si’ – Áldott légy* (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 2015), 224–230.

⁴³ World Health Organization, *WHO Definition of Health – Revision Including Spiritual Dimension* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 1998), 1–4.

⁴⁴ George L. Engel, ‘The Need for a New Medical Model: A Challenge for Biomedicine’, *Science* 196, no. 4286 (1977): 129–136.

⁴⁵ Harold G. Koenig, ‘Religion, Spirituality, and Health’, *ISRN Psychiatry* (2012): 1–33.

⁴⁶ Augustine, ‘Enarrationes in Psalmos 98.9–10’, in *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina* (Turnhout: Brepols), 398.

⁴⁷ Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistula ad Ephesios*, *Patrologia Graeca* 5, 654–660; Ephraem Syrus, *Hymni de Fide* 10–12.

⁴⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio Catechetica Magna* 37, in *Sources Chrétiennes* 453 (Paris: Cerf), 312–316.

balance (*krasis*), reorders human nature, and integrates the body, soul, and the transcendent. John David Penniman points out that Gregory's thinking is consciously linked to ancient medical and dietary terminology, which is why he saw the effect of the Eucharist as not merely metaphorical, but truly healing.⁴⁹

This patristic approach is still relevant today, especially in contrast to the fragmented approach of modern medicine, which often treats the body and soul separately. If we interpret the Eucharist purely as a 'spiritual practice', we can easily lose sight of its physical and communal dimensions. However, as the Apostle Paul warned the Corinthians, the Eucharistic celebration also has moral and physical consequences: 'Whoever eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself' (1 Cor 11:29). Healing, therefore, is not merely an internal experience, but an event that affects our entire human reality.

Empirical research also confirms this holistic dimension. According to Kathryn Croskery Jones' qualitative studies, regular Eucharistic participation has a profound healing power in times of grief and crisis: it provides a framework for processing loss and offers hope for the future.⁵⁰ According to Mokgoatšana and Mudyiwa's field research in Zimbabwe, the ritual of breaking bread together was able to initiate psychological regeneration and community reconciliation even in the midst of political and social trauma.⁵¹

From an ecumenical perspective, the question of healing can offer a new language. Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant communities alike profess that the Eucharist gives hope, restores broken lives, and creates new community. This approach offers an opportunity for ecumenical dialogue to seek not only dogmatic consensus, but also to discover the holistic healing experience of the Eucharist as a common ground.⁵²

Eucharist and Eco-theology

The ecological crisis of the 21st century – global warming, dramatic loss of biodiversity, exploitation of natural resources, and environmental injustices – is not merely a scientific or political issue, but also a deeply spiritual and theological challenge. For the Christian faith, creation is not merely 'raw material', but a gift from God and a bearer of His presence.⁵³ Eco-theology calls us to recognise this: to view the world in a sacramental way, where every creature is part of the revelation of God's glory.⁵⁴

Liturgy plays a key role in this. The Eucharistic celebration is not only a commemoration of Christ's sacrifice, but also a thanksgiving for the created world in which we live and which we offer to God.⁵⁵ This act inspires a new kind of responsibility: bread and wine, as fruits of the earth and fruits of human labour, symbolically embody the entire created world.⁵⁶

Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato si'* emphasises: 'the world is a liturgical space where every creature proclaims the glory of God'.⁵⁷ The Eucharist is not only an act of redemption, but also the fulfilment of creation, because when the community offers up creation embodied in bread and wine with gratitude, it recognises that the world is God's gift and that we have a

⁴⁹ John David Penniman, 'Blended by the Savior: Gregory of Nyssa and the Therapeutic Power of the Eucharist', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 25, no. 2 (2017): 211–236.

⁵⁰ Kathryn Croskery Jones, *Eucharist and Healing: A Qualitative Study on Religious Experience and Well-Being* (St Andrews: University of St Andrews, 2016), 112–140.

⁵¹ S. Mokgoatšana and M. Mudyiwa, 'Healing Through the Eucharist in the Context of Postcolonial Trauma in Zimbabwe', *Theologia Viatorum* 46, no. 1 (2022): 77–91.

⁵² John D. Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 213–226.

⁵³ István Bán, *Ökoteológia és liturgia* (Budapest: Sapientia Főiskola, 2020), 35–62.

⁵⁴ Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 113–143.

⁵⁵ Boda, *Eucharisztia teológiája*, 145–171.

⁵⁶ Denis Edwards, *Ecology at the Heart of Faith: The Change of Heart that Leads to a New Way of Living on Earth* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 45–67.

⁵⁷ Francis, *Laudato si'* – *Áldott légy.*, §§96–236.

responsibility for it.⁵⁸ This dynamic of thanksgiving re-teaches humanity to accept and care for creation, and communal celebration can be a concrete spiritual response to the ecological crisis.⁵⁹

The concept of eco-spirituality suggests that our relationship with nature is not only an ethical responsibility, but also a deeply transcendent experience.⁶⁰ Elizabeth A. Johnson speaks of a 'community of creation' in which humans are not rulers but stand alongside other living beings as brothers and sisters, and the Eucharist 'expands into the liturgy of the created world'.⁶¹ According to Kevin W. Irwin, liturgy involves the entire cosmos in the event of salvation, transcending the anthropocentric view.⁶² Leonardo Boff sees the Eucharist as an 'act of cosmic reconciliation', where both the poor and nature are recipients of divine love.⁶³

From the beginning, the Orthodox tradition has emphasised the sanctity of the material world and the cosmic dimension of liturgy.⁶⁴ Here, the Eucharist is not merely a church celebration, but the offering and deification of the world.⁶⁵ In Western Christianity, St Francis of Assisi, by addressing the created world as 'brother', and Hildegard von Bingen, with her mystical cosmology, set an example of Eucharistic gratitude towards nature.⁶⁶ These traditions can serve as a source of inspiration for ecumenical thinking today.⁶⁷

From the perspective of pastoral psychology, the Eucharistic celebration can help to process what is known as 'ecological grief' – the emotional burden caused by the climate crisis, the destruction of nature, or anxiety about the future. According to Panu Pihkala, communal rituals can provide hope and emotional support in the midst of the ecological crisis: shared thanksgiving and prayer can open up new resources in the struggle for sustainability.⁶⁸ A practical example of this is the Green Sisters movement, in which women's monastic communities develop sustainable lifestyles, agricultural ecology, and liturgical eco-spirituality based on a Eucharistic spirit.⁶⁹

This eco-theological approach is therefore not merely a theoretical framework, but also a spiritual and ecumenical opportunity. The Eucharist can provide a new language for experiencing responsibility for creation and offer a common space for different Christian traditions through thanksgiving, care, and transformation.⁷⁰ While denominations may disagree on the ontological details of the Eucharist, they can agree that Eucharistic celebration can heal the wounds of creation, shape humanity's ecological consciousness, and inspire hope for a more just and sustainable world.⁷¹

Conclusion – Renewal of the Ecumenical Approach to the Eucharist

One of the most painful points of division in Christian unity today is the Eucharist: what the early Church experienced as a visible sign of community and unity has, over the centuries,

⁵⁸ Kevin W. Irwin, *A Commentary on Laudato Si'* (New York: Paulist Press, 2018), 101–132.

⁵⁹ Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 253–275.

⁶⁰ Panu Pihkala, *A Hopeful Theology of Ecology* (Helsinki: University of Helsinki Press, 2020), 64–82.

⁶¹ Johnson, *Ask the Beasts*, 253–275.

⁶² Irwin, *A Commentary on Laudato Si'*, 101–132.

⁶³ Boff, *Cry of the Earth*, 113–143.

⁶⁴ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 93–118.

⁶⁵ Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 342–369.

⁶⁶ Francis of Assisi, *Canticle of the Sun*, in *Franciscus Assisiensis Opera Omnia* (Florence: Quaracchi Editiones, 1225), 234–236.

⁶⁷ Dénes Farkasfalvy, *Teremtés és megváltás* (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 2017), 87–106.

⁶⁸ Pihkala, *A Hopeful Theology of Ecology*, 64–82.

⁶⁹ Anne Marie Schneider, *Green Sisters: A Spiritual Ecology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 221–242.

⁷⁰ Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999), 99–127.

⁷¹ Thomas Messias, *Liturgy and the Earth: Toward a Sacramental Ecology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 115–148.

become a source of division due to dogmatic disputes, liturgical differences, and ecclesiastical discipline. I am convinced that the search for theological and dogmatic consensus alone is not sufficient to make real progress in Eucharistic ecumenism; it is necessary to involve the achievements of contemporary human sciences, which are capable of opening up new areas of dialogue for the search for unity.

Religious psychology and pastoral psychology point out that shared rituals shape identity, help people cope with crises, and offer spiritual healing. In Christian tradition, the Eucharist has been known since ancient times as ‘medicine for the soul’ (Augustine) and ‘the medicine of immortality’ (Ignatius), and these healing experiences can still provide new language for ecumenical discourse today. The sociology of religion and cultural anthropology can also contribute to understanding: Gerd Theissen pointed out that the early Christian Eucharist brought about a radical social breakthrough, creating a new community that was able to connect people from different cultural backgrounds. This insight can also offer a bridge between denominations in today’s pluralistic society, when the Eucharist appears not only as a teaching but also as an identity-forming, inclusive community event.

Symbol theory and hermeneutics open up further possibilities. According to Paul Tillich, religious symbols do not merely refer to reality, but participate in it, opening human consciousness to the infinite. The Eucharist, as a dynamic symbol, can thus offer a shared existential experience even when dogmatic formulations differ. The rediscovery of symbolic language can liberate dialogue from the narrow confines of purely definitional debates and help us to experience the deeper reality of the sacrament. Eco-theology and liturgy, as well as Alexander Schmemmann’s liturgical thinking, point out that the Eucharist is not only redemption, but also a thanksgiving offering for creation. Shared responsibility for the created world can provide a spiritual and ethical basis for ecumenical cooperation, going beyond a purely theoretical approach.⁷²

It is becoming increasingly clear that ecumenical thinking needs to move beyond exclusively dogmatic debates. George Hunsinger’s works also show that, although classical theological-dogmatic questions remain crucial, the inclusion of shared spiritual and cultural experiences can create new convergences.⁷³ An interdisciplinary approach allows the Eucharist to be not only the subject of theoretical debate, but also to appear as a shared spiritual reality: as a rite, a symbol, a healing communal experience, and a responsible thanksgiving for the created world. If ecumenical dialogue is open to these dimensions, the Eucharist can once again become a living and renewing source of our unity in Christ.

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⁷² Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 28–45.

⁷³ George Hunsinger, *The Eucharist and Ecumenism: Let Us Keep the Feast* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 15–37.

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Reimagining the Use of Technology among Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria: the Case of Deeper Life Bible Church

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Abstract

The integration of technology among Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria received a warm reception in the 21st century compared to the early 1900s when Church doctrine restricted the integration of some technologies in worship services. At its origin, the church frowned at the use of technology due to the belief that technology is a 'devil's tool' for distracting believers. However, the transformation of the world has generally affected the church's adoption of technology such as the internet, mobile apps, visual and audiovisual equipment, social media pages, and digital platforms to improve their ministry, engage with congregants, and reach new audiences. Therefore, this paper reimagines the impetuses behind harnessing faith and technology among the 21st century Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria, particularly the Deeper Life Bible Church (DLBC). The study employs historical and participatory observation methods to further inform the value of technology in the face of religious practices. It has been discovered that the DLBC has transformed profoundly in its services and has received new colouration due to its use of technology to reach the reached and unreached individuals. Hence, the study recommends that DLBC should provide church leaders and members with training on how to use technology effectively for ministry-related tasks. Also, instead of banning the use of drum sets, Deeper Life Bible Church should consider their adoption.

Keywords

Deeper Life Bible Church, Nigeria, Pentecostal churches, reimagining, technology

1. Introduction

It is important to first state that the term 'technology' as used in this study refers to Information and Communication Technology. Generally, technology is an essential aspect of life that forms the nucleus of daily human interaction within the family and society. It has influenced how persons relate to others and their environment. It has also contributed to the paradigm shift in human day-to-day activities with fellow humans and the changing relationship between man and God. The church is not independent of the use of technology; instead, traces have been found that technology has now become the culture in church programmes and activities. Technology is the act of getting things done, whether through scientific or applied methods. It is expedient to state that technology should not be limited to scientific materials or equipment; information and communication processes are also part of technology. Harrison corroborates

that technology is not only limited to the scientific or material components but can also include its providence in Information and Communication Technology.¹

Pentecostalism is the fastest-growing brand of Christianity in the world, and particularly in Nigerian society. Gemade opined, 'Pentecostalism is a global phenomenon with a large following in North America, Latin America, Asia, Africa, and other parts of the world'.² She stated further that Pentecostalism has experienced tremendous growth, rise, and impact throughout Africa. Without fear of conflict, it has taken centre stage as one of the region's most prevalent forms of Christianity.³ Pentecostal experience can be traced to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit's account in Acts 2:1ff. Christian existence imitates Jesus of Nazareth's life in the Spirit's power.

Pentecostalism is a brand of Christianity that emphasises the work of the Holy Spirit and the believer's direct experience of God's presence.⁴ The experience of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, according to the Acts 2 account, showcases the emergence of *glossolalia* (speaking in tongues) as evidence of the Holy Spirit upon the congregation of 120 people and the creation of boldness upon the frightened apostles, thus, becoming a landmark to every believer who professed the baptism of the Holy Spirit.⁵ Oshitelu traces the origin of Nigerian Pentecostalism to the activities of Prophet Sokari Braide, a Kalabari man from the Niger Delta area of the country. He was converted to the Anglican brand of the Christian faith in 1906 and four years later was baptised. Braide claimed that the Lord had commissioned him to preach, and in 1912, he made his first public proclamation as someone with prophetic ability and the gift of visions.⁶

The explosion of Pentecostalism introduced a spirituality not fostered by the initial Western missionaries into Nigeria. Pentecostal spirituality was highly welcomed among the masses in the society, which is the majority, due to the aftermath of the war, and because Nigerians were poor economically.⁷ Ola-Akinniyi further affirmed that Pentecostal waves became apparent with the activities of some African Christian leaders in the western part of Nigeria who assembled to seek divine intervention through prayer against the 1918 worldwide influenza epidemic that claimed about 250,000 lives in Nigeria alone. He further affirmed that the praying society was led by a founding member of 'Our Saviour' Anglican Church, Ijebu-Ode, Joseph Shadare.⁸

The origin of the Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria depicted a period of low technological advancement and its application in human daily affairs. As technology began to gain more acceptance from society, it became inevitable for the church to adopt it into its services and programmes. Despite its emergence, some churches, such as Deeper Life Bible Church in the early 1980s, frowned at using technology-related components such as television. Elsewhere,

¹ Gerald Harrison, *Managing Technological Change: Strategies for University and College Leaders* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2006), 10.

² Comfort Gemade, 'Pentecostalism and Information Communication Technology in the Face of the Covid-19 Pandemic in Nigeria', *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 26, Vol. 6. No.10. 2020.

³ Ibid., 26.

⁴ BBC, 'Pentecostalism', 2009, accessed 5th November 2023, https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/subdivisions/pentecostal_1.shtml.

⁵ Abosede L. Akande and Tosin S. Abolaji, 'African Pentecostalism: Features and Impacts on the 21st Century Nigerian Churches', in *African Pentecostalism: Its History, Theology and Music*, A Festschrift in Honour of Professor C.O. Oshun, 2024, 80–81.

⁶ Gideon Oshitelu, *History of the Aladura Independent Churches 1918-1940: An Interpretation* (Ibadan: Hope Publications, Nigeria, 2007), 22.

⁷ Ola-Akinniyi Adelodun, 'Pentecostalism and Its Challenges to Mission', in Peter P.O. Oyedapo, *Essays in Honour of Dr. Samson Olusoji Bamgbose* (Ibadan: Penthouse Publication, 2019), 104.

⁸ Oludele Adeboye, 'Pentecostalism and the Growth of Christianity in Nigeria', in Olalekan Afolorunso Dario, Margaret Ojo and Tokunbo Bankole, *African Pentecostalism Series 2*, (Abeokuta: Crowther Theological Publishers, 2019), 45.

other Pentecostal Churches, such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God, were already adopting technology during their early years of establishment. Some churches in the African Independent movements, such as Christ Apostolic Church and Cherubim and Seraphim Church in Nigeria, were trying to have technology used in the church. All of these attitudes on the use of technology have been ameliorated among the 21st century Pentecostal Churches.

Therefore, to keep in mind the thrust of this study, it is expedient to state that the study aims to reimagine the use of technology among Pentecostal churches in Nigeria with a focus on Deeper Life Bible Church. By reimagining, it implies that the study examines new approaches and attitudes to adopting Information and Communication Technologies into church cultures, such as evangelism, worship service, and sermonising, among several others, thus forming a digital church experience in Nigerian Pentecostals. Similarly, while reimagining the use of technology (ICT) in the Nigerian Pentecostal church experience, it is profound to reimagine other technologies, such as the drum set, which has been discarded since the emergence of Deeper Life Bible Church. This reimagination aims to provide ‘what changes, why does it change, parallel with what does not change, and why does it remain’ in adopting technology in DLBC, a gap the study intends to cover.

The impetus behind the selection of Deeper Life Bible Church owes mainly to the fact that DLBC is one of the leading Pentecostal churches in Nigeria. The DLBC has planted 500 churches in Lagos and has 120,000 members every Sunday.⁹ Apart from the stated reason, DLBC is also a leading Pentecostal church in the use of ICT. However, despite being in the leading category in population and technologies, the church still strongly opposes using other technological tools such as drum sets. It can be recalled that this same attitude was displayed regarding television in the 1900s and has now been fully integrated into the church system. Considering all views, Pentecostal churches such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Christ Apostolic Church, and Living Faith Church, among others, do not have such a unique attitude towards using technology.

Therefore, the study poses what changed technology adoption in the Deeper Life Bible Church. Are technological components a ‘devil’s tool’ to bring down the church? How has the church made effective use of technology in its services? All of these questions have become necessary to establish the rationale and impact of using technology in the Church. The paper is divided into four sections, namely an overview of the use of technology among Nigerian Pentecostal Churches during the 1900s: the case of DLBC, the factors that necessitated church adoption of technology in DLBC, technological tools among the Deeper Life Bible Church, reimagining the use of technology among Pentecostals: Deeper Life Bible Church.

1.1 Research methods

The paper adopts the historical and participatory observation research methods. The historical data were derived from books, journals, and online materials, which were adequately engaged within the scope of the paper. The paper adequately references the areas obtained from the historical method mentioned earlier. To further engage the discussion, the authors were participatory observers in different services, such as Sunday, weekly, and marriage services at the Deeper Life Bible Church (DLBC) in Nigeria. They discovered that there is a significant transformation in the use of technology in the DLBC.

⁹ See Deeper Christian Life Ministry, ‘Pastor W.F. Kumuyi’, accessed 22nd January 2025, <https://dclm.org/about/w-f-kumuyi/>.

2. An Overview of the Use of Technology among Nigerian Pentecostal Churches during the 1900s: the Case of DLBC

The church did not entirely welcome the integration of Information and Communication Technologies in the 1900s.¹⁰ This was not solely because of its unavailability but also due to the church's stance against its incorporation into the church's strict culture. The church and technology have been two inseparable entities interacting since the 1900s, especially during the emergence of the Pentecostal churches in Nigeria. Pentecostal churches in Nigeria have their roots in the Diamond Society, a praying society founded in 1918 at St Savior's Anglican Church that subsequently changed its name to the Christ Apostolic Church. According to Ayegboyin and Ishola, the raising of the dead child in Ilesha caused a power outburst and a resurgence of faith among those who had previously lost faith in God's ability to work miracles and had agreed to use orthodox medicine and demonic tools to strengthen their faith.¹¹

The development of technology has made human endeavours easier and allowed civilisation to grow through the appropriate use of various technological tools. However, when Pentecostal churches first started, church planters and Christians, in general, somewhat accepted the use of technology. Kanayo Nwadiolor and Peace Olomu confirmed that in the early days of Deeper Life Bible Church, the gadget 'Television' was tagged 'the devil box'. It was seen as taboo, and members of the church were strictly warned against it.¹² Furthermore, Nwadiolor and Olomu confirmed that the DLBC disciplined some members who refused to put theirs away since they were viewed as disobedient. Video cameras and other technological devices were not allowed. Several years ago, one of the leaders of a camp programme in the Delta State town of Sapele passed away, and his children desired a dignified funeral. The children were told not to use the video camera for any coverage during the funeral.¹³

The African Indigenous Churches (AICs) also show little or no concern about adopting technology from the beginning. The Christ Apostolic Church in the early 1900s propagated the gospel using the available traditional methods, such as physical meetings, which involved gathering the people together and teaching and sermonising the gospel to them. Other methods used are conventional gongs, bands, and bells. Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola preached the gospel in Odo-Owa. David Olayiwola cited Abraham Owoyemi, saying that Babalola also organised regular prayer meetings at the Church Missionary Society Odo-Owa, which many people attended because of the miracles God performed through him.¹⁴

David Olayiwola further cited *The Biography of Moses Orimolade Tunolase* by the Cherubim and Seraphim Special Committee, Ikare, which states that the Cherubim and Seraphim is another Pentecostal church under AICs. Orimolade launched evangelistic campaigns in towns such as Ilorin, Irun, Akoko-Edo, and Ikiran. He was known as a wandering preacher because he visited these places to propagate the gospel.¹⁵ This confirms that physical gathering was typical among Pentecostals in the 1900s. However, this does not imply that ingathering is still not in use. However, it can be stated that Pentecostal churches in 21st-century Nigerian society have made tremendous efforts to create a digital space/gathering like that of the physical gathering.

¹⁰ Olumuyiwa A. Ajetomobi, Timothy O. Yayi, and Tosin S. Abolaji, 'Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Promotion of Regional Peace and Security in Nigeria: The Role of the Church', *Caritas et Veritas*, vol. 14, Issue 1, 2024, 24, <https://doi.org/10.32725/cetv.2024.004>.

¹¹ Deji Ayegboyin and Ishola Ademola, *African Indigenous Churches*, (Plateau: African Christian Textbooks, 2013), 66.

¹² Kanayo Nwadiolor and Peace Olomu, 'Globalization and the Dynamism of Religious Practices in the Deeper Life Bible Church, Nigeria', *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2023, 4.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ David O. Olayiwola, 'Babalola Joseph Ayodele (1904-1959)', in *Makers of the Church in Nigeria*, ed. J.A., Omoyajowo, (Lagos, Nigeria: CSS Bookshops Ltd., 1995), 10.

¹⁵ Ibid., 11.

In the use of the ingathering approach by the church, it is pertinent to say that water was used daily by both the Christ Apostolic Church and the Cherubim and Seraphim. Ayegboyin and Ishola opined that ‘after the heavy throng of people to the revival ground at Ilesa, the River Oye, a few metres from the revival ground, was consecrated and used to cure the infirm and the sick.’¹⁶ Omoyajowo affirmed that Orimolade purified a pool at Ogidi village, which the natives have worshipped from time immemorial, to ensure that they remained harmonious with the evil power it was supposed to possess.¹⁷ Doing this reinforces the need to understand why ingathering was the appropriate evangelisation method. It gives agency to the preacher who demonstrated God’s power through healing and the attendees who come to receive healing to be active participants in their healing journeys. Hence, questions about the efficacy, agency, and experience of God’s power in the digital spaces become pertinent to the churches and the members who thought such divine experience could not be encountered in the virtual world.

Every generation has a certain degree of technology. Throughout the 1900s, gongs, drums, fire, printed materials, in-person meetings, and sending a representative or messenger were often used. It is important to note that the bell, drum, and gong, among other instruments, were technologically produced and demonstrate the extent of technological understanding and application in society, especially in the church. Nonetheless, the status of technology has improved over time, giving rise to the phrase ‘technological advancement’. Technological advancement finds expression in the emergence of television, telephone, sound systems, and musical instruments. Technology in the 20th and 21st centuries has received a new shape, which has helped to reposition society, particularly the DLBC.

2.1 Brief History of the Deeper Life Bible Church in Nigeria

The Pentecostal church Deeper Life Bible Church, also called Deeper Life Christian Ministry, was founded in Lagos State in 1973. The doctrines of England’s most outstanding preachers of the 18th century, John Wesley, Charles Finney, and Charles Spurgeon, served as the foundation for the Church. As a mathematics lecturer at the University of Lagos, the founder, W. F. Kumuyi, is called the defender of faith. His study of the Bible with the Students Christian Movement, Scripture Union, and The Christian Union served as the impetus for his movement. The Bible study group set up its initial retreat in 1975 at Akoka, Lagos metropolis, and ‘expectedly, the news of the outcome of the meeting went viral and people from Lagos and outside started trooping into the Bible study.’¹⁸

The life of Pastor Kumuyi is intertwined with the history of the Church. Thus, it is relevant to consider the history of the church as the history of the Pastor Kumuyi and vice versa. The ministry experienced rapid growth at an Easter retreat in 1976, with 2,500 attendees. Kumuyi, however, continued his independent ministry after departing the Apostolic Faith Church in 1977 over doctrinal disagreements. With a rapid growth in membership and church branches across Nigeria and beyond, the church officially changed its name to the Deeper Life Bible Church in 1982.¹⁹

According to Alan Isaacson, Kumuyi ‘preached Deeper Life into existence’.²⁰ He further describes Kumuyi’s riveting sermons in this expression, ‘I would classify him as one of the greatest living preachers, giving a straightforward Bible-based message, his sermons thorough,

¹⁶ Ayegboyin and Ishola, *African Indigenous Churches*, 67.

¹⁷ Joseph, A. Omoyajowo, ‘Moses Orimolade Tunolase (1879-1933)’, in *Makers of the Church in Nigeria*, ed. J.A., Omoyajowo (Lagos, Nigeria: CSS Bookshops Ltd., 1995), 117–135.

¹⁸ Nwadiolor and Olomu, ‘Globalization and the Dynamism’, 11–12.

¹⁹ Israel Olofinjana, ‘A Brief History of Deeper Life Bible Church’, 30th January 2019, <https://israelolofinjana.wordpress.com/2019/01/30/a-brief-history-of-deeper-life-bible-church/>.

²⁰ Deeper Life Bible Church, ‘About the Church’, accessed 22nd January 2025, <https://dlbcoakpark.org/our-church/>.

and always personally challenging'.²¹ To bolster, elucidate, and broaden his primary ideas, he consistently provided a variety of cross-references that were read in their context. He addressed the Nigerian situation with authority and clarity.²² Tiwatola Abidemi remarked on the miraculous act of Kumuyi and re-echoed Gaiya that:

Kumuyi, like other Pentecostal leaders in Nigeria, plays the role of the traditional medicine man, whom the Yoruba call Babalawo. He discerns the ailment in a person even before the person tells him. Kumuyi makes such revelations in his preaching; for example, he would say: 'There is a man here, thirty years old, who is still wetting the bed. Raise your hand, and I'll pray for you'. Sometimes, members who could not come to Kumuyi in person would send him their handkerchiefs to be prayed for, similar to the New Testament event in Acts 19:11, 12. Kumuyi, however, does not emphasise healing miracles in his ministry, making Deeper Life Bible Church less popular than the newer churches.²³

Due to the holiness and sanctification emphasis of Kumuyi's message, Deeper Life Bible Church is distinguished by this uniqueness in its message among the other several Pentecostal movements in Nigeria. This message resonated widely, leading to the establishment of over 5,000 branch churches across Nigeria and international reach, including about 65 church plants in the UK and additional branches in several European countries, as well as the United States and New Zealand.²⁴ Kumuyi is not just a local leader but a global icon. In the recent (January 2025) inauguration of President Donald Trump of the United States, Kumuyi was invited as one of the worldwide leaders who participated in ushering in the Trump administration with prayer.²⁵ This is to strengthen further the justification for the scope of the study of 'Deeper Life Bible Church' among other Pentecostal churches in Nigeria. However, the local-global influence of Pastor Kumuyi is an undeniable growth and development of the DLBC, thus putting it at the forefront of discussion in this study.

3. Factors that Necessitated Church Adoption of Technology

Technology has been the order of the day in a man's activities. It has gradually taken over many traditional ways that have permeated man's culture, and hence has been seen as a replacement for man's methodologies in society. However, as the world grew, the church was not isolated. Therefore, the growth of society is the possible growth of the church. Society grows in number, technology, science, and ideology, and these changes crept into the church, and it continues to wrestle with the adverse effects these innovations have brought upon believers. The following are the factors that prompted a change in attitudes and adoption of technology in the Deeper Life Bible Church in Nigeria.

3.1 Education and Evangelism

One of the pivotal moments in a person's life is education. It includes studying and gaining new knowledge that changes a person's perspective and behaviour. Early in the 20th century, the church knew very little about the advantages of technological utilisation. This mistaken belief caused the gap between the church and technology. Thus, technology was called different

²¹ Ibid.

²² Deeper Christian Life Ministry, 'Pastor W.F. Kumuyi', accessed 22nd January 2025, <https://dclm.org/about/w-f-kumuyi/>.

²³ Tiwatola Abidemi, The History, Founder, Beliefs and Practices of Deeper Life Bible Church, Nigeria, *Historical Research Letter* (Paper) ISSN 2225-0964 (Online) Vol. 26, (2015), 25.

²⁴ Olofinjana, 'A Brief History'.

²⁵ See Vanguard, 'Video: Pastor Kumuyi prays at Trump's inauguration event', accessed 22nd January 2025, https://www.vanguardngr.com/2025/01/video-pastor-kumuyi-prays-at-trumps-inauguration-event/#google_vignette.

names, such as ‘devil’s box’, ‘devil’s instrument’, and ‘worldly possession’. A sharp argument may be that Kumuyi was an educationist and, by profession, a Mathematics Lecturer at the University of Lagos. Yet, he has a different attitude towards the use of technology. However, due to increased knowledge, a receptive wave of acceptance was felt as the church began to adopt it. The church now believes that technology (ICT) could be regained for evangelistic purposes. Simon Mungai writes:

Contemporary Pentecostals, in particular, are guided by a dominion religious orientation in which the media are expected to be reclaimed for religion. Viewers and listeners are invited to visit websites where they can listen to or follow live services, download motivational messages, read church newsletters, request special prayers, or fulfil tithing obligations.²⁶

Deeper Life Bible Church now utilises technology to suit the purpose of the church in transforming and liberating the world from spiritual coverings. Nwadiolor and Olomu opined that ‘in recent times, the Church now has various printed materials such as Daily Manner, Sincere Milk, Devotional podcast, and youth higher every day, all in hard and soft copies to be used as daily devotionals for children, youth, and adults.’²⁷ Furthermore, the church’s recent adoption of an artificial intelligence chatbot, ‘askkumuyi.ai’, is a testament to the growth of technology within the church. The essence of technology makes it possible for the church to reach a wider audience outside of its immediate geographic boundaries. This change has increased the church’s influence by allowing it to disseminate its faith and community programs via various digital channels.²⁸

3.2 Accessibility through Social Media

As society expands, spreading the gospel becomes difficult for preachers, churches, and missionaries. During the early 1900s, preachers such as Orimolade, Babalola, and Oshitelu, amongst others, were wandering preachers. Moving from one place to another becomes problematic when society’s population increases rapidly. However, in 21st century Nigerian society, the population is over 230 million.²⁹ This makes it difficult for the church to operate as it did in the 1900s. The advancement of technology in communication, such as social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp), has paved the way for easy access for the Deeper Life Bible Church to reach the unreached society.

The essence of social media as a tool that accommodates and provides easy access to members and non-members is undeniable. Nwadiolor and Olomu affirmed that social media is user-generated content created in a cooperative setting where individuals exchange ideas, information, and knowledge. Blogs, social networking sites (like Facebook and Twitter), photo-sharing websites (like YouTube and Instagram), and podcasts are tools used to create social media content. Users of YouTube can upload, share, and watch videos on the social media platform. Facebook enables users to create groups with related interests, publish videos, interact with others, and share hobbies.³⁰ Today, Deeper Life Bible Church exists on different

²⁶ Simon Mungai, ‘Information and Communication Technology Uptake and Use in Religious Institutions in Kenya: A Study of Christ is the Answer Ministries’, a thesis submitted for the award of Master’s Degree in Communication Studies, University of Nairobi, 2018, 23.

²⁷ Nwadiolor and Olomu, ‘Globalization and the Dynamism’, 15.

²⁸ Deeper Christian Life Ministry, ‘Church Technology Support’, accessed 12th December 2021, <https://delm.org/asp-products/church-technology-support/>.

²⁹ See The World Factbook, accessed 8th November 2023, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/nigeria/>.

³⁰ Nwadiolor and Olomu, ‘Globalization and the Dynamism’, 16.

social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp, among others, to reach and be reached by its more extensive audience.

3.3 *Pandemic Experience*

The use of technology in Information and Communication Technology received a low reception from the church before the Covid-19 pandemic. Akiti Alamu noted that during the pandemic, Christians were indoors throughout the period, as Law enforcement agencies were monitoring churches and other Christian gatherings.³¹ This period was characterised by social distancing from people due to the fear of the spread of the virus. It is rightly observed that the church setting would encourage this spread due to the population of worshippers and to uphold the precautionary social distancing policy. Felix Akintude opined that during the lockdown, the Redeemed Christian Church of God used social media platforms and Television stations (Dove & RTM) to transmit church services to sustain the fellowship of brethren.³² Deeper Life Bible Church, like other Pentecostal churches, intensified the use of technology during the pandemic and became the dominant culture of the church even after the pandemic.

3.4 *The Modernisation of Church Services*

One of the fantastic things about technology is how church services are redesigned to attract believers and inspire them to sing and dance. Deeper Life Bible Church services are given new colouration by sound systems and other musical instruments, encouraging the congregation to stay in touch with the church. For instance, contrary to the popular culture among Pentecostal Churches such as Christ Apostolic Church and Redeemed Christian Church of God, the Deeper Life Bible Church does not allow drum sets in its service. However, during a wedding programme in the Deeper Life Bible Church, it was observed that when the pastor led the congregation in singing, the pianists were playing and, with their styles, were making some beats. It was also noticed that the pastor was tapping the podium right in front of him. Generally, as the congregation was singing, there was a beat(ing) that members were making as they were dancing.³³

It cannot be denied that members of Deeper Life Bible Church listen to other Gospel music, such as Shola Allyson, Nathaniel Bassey, and Dunsin Oyekan, among several others who use drum sets in their songs, and members of this church dance to the songs. It is safe to say that drawing allusions from these references may indicate the possibility of adopting drum sets by the Deeper Life Bible Church during its services in the near future. However, Deeper Life Bible Church is one of the leading church movements that has successfully integrated more significant components of technological tools into its services.

4. **Technological tools in the Deeper Life Bible Church**

Pentecostal churches in Nigeria, particularly the Deeper Life Bible Church (DLBC), have embraced various technological innovations. These technologies are frequently employed to improve church services, further enhancing the Pentecostal experience in Nigerian church communities in the twenty-first century. The table below shows the various technological tools used in the DLBC:

³¹ Akiti G. Alamu, *Religion and Public Affairs in Nigeria* (Ilorin: K-Success Prints Media, 2021), 311.

³² Felix B. Akintunde, 'Ecclesiastical Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic in Selected Churches in Oyo State, Nigeria', *Nigerian Journal of Christian Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2022, 8.

³³ This was the wedding of a brother, which took place in July 2024 at DLBC, Ibadan. I was fascinated by the way the service was conducted without drum sets yet producing a kind of beat to every song so that people could dance to it. However, not only drum sets produce a beat. I would say that the church may reconsider the use of drum sets as technology continues to reshape the church activities and as members are drawn to dancing to the beat.

S/N	TECHNOLOGY	APPLICATIONS
1.	Sound systems and microphones	These are employed to produce audible speech. DLBC works hard to acquire high-quality microphones and sound systems to complement their sermons and worship songs.
2.	Social media	This is often used to connect to large people. DLBC uses Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and other social media platforms to propagate the gospel.
3.	Websites	Many web pages contain church information such as sermons, church names and addresses, and contact information for guidance.
4.	Musical instruments	Pentecostals use instruments like keyboards, guitars, and trumpets, amongst others, to make services livelier.
5.	Live streaming and recording	Pentecostals live stream and record services for recording purposes and accessibility by members who are not physically present at the service.

Table 1: Some common technological tools used in DLBC and their uses

The above table has identified only a few technological tools, such as sound systems and microphones, social media, websites, musical instruments, and live streaming and recording, along with a few areas of their applications. While it is essential to note that these technological tools are commonly used within the DLBC, this does not imply a monopoly on their usage. However, other Pentecostal churches, such as RCCG, CAC, and Living Faith Church, are making progress in their adoptions and usage to make the church more accessible to congregations and the community.

5. Reimagining the Use of Technology among Pentecostals: Deeper Life Bible Church

It is undeniable that society has become increasingly technologically advanced, and the church has integrated technology into all its events and programmes by enabling its members to view and listen to sermons remotely. Ajetomobi et al corroborate this view by stating that the adoption of ICT in the church is an ‘innovative approach’ that has led to holistic intervention in the church’s growth and development.³⁴ According to Lisa Allen-McLaurin, digital technology is commonly used during worship sessions. Churches have been playing CDs and MP3 recordings during worship for decades. They do this to supplement their music, dance, and drama ministries and to cover for absent artists.³⁵ Video clips and PowerPoint presentations are used to help ministers drive home the sermonic focus, especially for those who may be visual learners.³⁶

Therefore, this study argues for reimagining the use of technology in DLBC from two perspectives. The first is the church’s adoption of an artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot named after the founder, Pastor Kumuyi, and the second is the common practice of the church services, which finds expression in online worship services and internet banking, among several others. From the first perspective, the church’s current technological integration trend into its practice is adopting an AI chatbot named ‘askkumuyi.ai’. It is expedient to state that this innovation marks the beginning of a new ‘Pentecosto-technological transformation era’ in the Nigerian Pentecostal church landscape. The ‘Pentecosto-technological transformation era’ shows an

³⁴ Ajetomobi et al. ‘Information and Communication Technology’, 24.

³⁵ Lisa, M. Allen-McLaurin, ‘Let Me Post This Praise on Facebook: Questioning the Use of Digital and Social Media in Worship,’ *Liturgy*, vol. 30, no. 2 (April 2015): 45.

³⁶ Ibid.

interesting connection between the church and the emerging technological realities and how these technological realities are reshaping the Pentecostal church experience in 21st century Nigerian society. The recent development of the askkumuyi.ai chatbot offers users valuable resources about DLBC doctrines, teachings, sermons, and information about programmes such as Easter and December retreats, and spiritual guidance.³⁷

Secondly, there are several other common ways in which the Pentecostal churches have adopted technological tools in their service and culture. These common ways can be expressed in what is generally known as digital platforms, websites, and other online spaces where church services are held. The following are ways of using technology in the Deeper Life Bible Church.

i. Online worship services

Since most Pentecostals provide their members with both in-person and virtual services, online worship services are no longer foreign. The in-gathering philosophy, which was primarily practised in the 1900s, has changed with the development of technology. Although it has taken on a new dimension regarding operation and nature, physical gathering is still used today. For example, the Redeemed Christian Church of God typically holds a general service on the first Sunday of each month, at which all the Redeemed Churches are connected to the Headquarters both directly and virtually. Pastor E.A. Adeboye preaches and prays for all the members and viewers as the new month begins. In the Deeper Life Bible Church, online worship sessions are embraced during weekly programmes such as Monday (Bible Study) and Thursday (Revival Hour). In the experience of one author of this paper: ‘In one of our engagements, I visited a family friend who is a Deeper Life Bible Church member on a Monday evening at his residence in Sabo-Oke, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, around 6:00 pm. Unbeknownst to me, it was Monday, and it was a Bible study. I was told to sit as I joined in sharing the word. At first, I thought that my friend would be the one to walk us through the session. But he began to set his phone down so we could all watch the session with the founder, Pastor Kumuyi.’³⁸

It is no longer strange that the DLBC uses online mechanics in its services. This is also seen as a prominent mode during the Easter and December retreats of the DLBC. During the Easter and the December retreats, members converge in campsites where they stay for fellowship during the Easter and December periods, respectively. They have different camping sites across Nigeria, such as DLBC campsite site Eyekorin, Ilorin, Kwara State,³⁹ and beyond, where members gather and listen to Pastor Kumuyi’s message on the projected screen connected to the Headquarters in Gbagada, Lagos State, Nigeria.⁴⁰

ii. Internet banking system

This is a trend among the Pentecostals in Nigeria. Churches now operate the collection of tithes, offerings, and other donations through the online banking mode. During services, church bank accounts are displayed on projectors. In some churches, like the Christ Apostolic Church, church account details are printed on banners and/or papers and pasted for easy access by the members. Eric Anozie writes:

³⁷ See Ask Dr. Kumuyi, ‘What do you want to Ask Dr. Kumuyi?’, accessed 22nd January 2025, <https://askkumuyi.ai>.

³⁸ This is the usual practice, as I have engaged with this family and many others who are members of the Deeper Life Bible Church.

³⁹ See Cybo, ‘Deeper Life Campground Eyekorin Ilorin’, accessed 22nd January 2025, https://www.cybo.com/NG-biz/deeper-life-campground-eyekorin-ilorin#google_vignette.

⁴⁰ See Adequate Travel, ‘Deeper Life Bible Church Headquarters In Nigeria: History, Facts, & Services’, accessed on 22nd January 2025, <https://www.adequatetravel.com/placeguide/Nigeria/deeper-life-bible-church-headquarters-in-nigeria-history-facts-services>.

Many churches today establish a Community Bank. For example, the Diocese of the Niger Anglican Communion established Aku Chukwu Micro Finance Bank at All Saints Cathedral, Onitsha, and other churches within their locality to encourage the saving of funds which would be invested in business ventures, to provide the needed capital for development, to promote trading activities, and to provide short-and long-term loans to individuals and firms.⁴¹

DLBC encourages members to use Internet banking to contribute, hence implementing open financial processes. This approach fosters accountability among church members while bolstering the self-sustaining nature of the organisation. Essential church functions, including maintenance, evangelism, and hall rentals, are directly funded by donations. Additionally, the church offers a safe atmosphere for financial transactions by enabling online donations, guaranteeing the security of contributors' data.⁴²

iii. The use of modern musical instruments in DLBC

It is common for Pentecostal churches to include a full musical orchestra or band that musically motivates the congregation to worship God with an emotional act.⁴³ The Pentecostal churches, such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God and Christ Apostolic Church, use drum sets in their services. Drum sets as a musical instrument are intertwined into church services. These churches continue to expand, and by this, most of the new branches, which were partly or wholly completed, are empowered with at least a drum set and keyboard to enhance worship in the church further. Contrary to this popular culture of using drum sets and keyboards, DLBC only uses keyboards and places strict warnings on the use of drum sets. DLBC does not make use of drum sets. This is, however, one of the standing legacies of the church founder, Pastor Kumuyi. Thus, even though DLBC does not use drum sets, it remains an essential lens through which one can successfully reimagine the use of technology in Pentecostal churches in Nigeria.

iv. Virtually all activities in the church among the Pentecostals have been restructured to suit the online mode

These activities include sermons, prayer meetings, bible study, and online evangelism. Most Pentecostal churches now go on air (Radio broadcasts and TV stations) on particular days to pray, teach the gospel, and make announcements about church programmes. Danfulani asserted that churches possess active websites: they use text messages, podcasts, Wi-fi, Bluetooth, WhatsApp, Google, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, iCloud, FaceTime, and Safari.⁴⁴ Alamu opined that church leaders and their organisations still utilised these to reach out to their members and others.⁴⁵ The table below shows the churches' websites and TV channels.

⁴¹ Eric E. Anozie, 'Christian Church: A Catalyst for Economic Development in Nigeria', *An Interjoined in sharing the world interdisciplinary Journal*, Ethiopia Vol. 7 (4), Serial No. 31, September 2013, 283.

⁴² See Deeper Christian Life Ministry, 'Online Tithe and Offering', accessed 22nd January 2025, <https://dclm.org/asp-products/online-tithe-and-offering/>. There is also a tab titled 'Church Technology Support' that allows church members and a larger audience to donate online. Thus, the online platform serves a dual purpose, first for 'Tithe and Offering' and second for 'Technology Support'. This also indicates the church's commitment to fostering the use of technology in the church, placing it as a leading figure in the adoption of technology among Pentecostal churches.

⁴³ Ekaette Udok and Adeola Odunuga, 'Music and Pentecostalism: The Nigerian Experience', *Review of Arts and Humanities*, vol. 5, no. 1. June (2016), 53.

⁴⁴ Usman Danfulani, 'Religion as Commodity in a Congested Nigerian Market: Where Does the Holy Spirit fit within the Economy of Religion', in *African Pentecostalism: Probity and Accountability*, ed. J. K. Ayantayo, B. A. Adedibu, and B. O. Igboin (Akungba-Akoko: AAU Press, 2019), 38.

⁴⁵ Alamu, *Religion and Public Affairs in Nigeria*, 312.

S/N	Churches	Website	TV channel
1.	Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG)	https://www.rccg.org/	Dove Television
2.	Christ Apostolic Church (CAC)	https://christapostolicchurch.org.ng/	CAC Tv
3.	Deeper Life Bible Church	https://dclm.org/	DLBC Tv
4.	Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S)	https://www.csmcayonio.org/	Seraphim Tv

Table 2: Pentecostal churches in Nigeria, their websites and TV channels⁴⁶

The above table, by Michael Olorunnimbe and Tosin Abolaji, portrays four churches with their websites and TV channels, including the Deeper Life Bible Church. The interesting point here is to show how the church has moved from a traditional approach, which is characterised by a technophobic attitude, to a transformational approach that embraces technological development, such as building church websites, TV channels, and the use of artificial intelligence for evangelism, educational, and inspirational purposes.

6. Conclusion

In the current and rapidly expanding technological era, the church and technology are inseparable, like conjoined twins. Compared to the early 1900s, when technical innovation was welcomed with mixed reactions from the church, technology in modern Pentecostal churches has gained a new level of great acceptability. The church was cautious about letting the world control it by using things from the outside wrapped in technological clothing. This worldview, however, changed to a new viewpoint in which technology is viewed as both a gift from God to humanity and a way for people to connect with God. Psalms mention musical instruments such as timbres, strings, pipes, and cymbals (Psalms 150:4-5) that are used to praise God. Similarly, the Pentecostal churches in Nigeria use instruments such as keyboard, drum set, guitar, and trumpet to glorify God.

It is fascinating that churches like Deeper Life Bible Church have a strict stance on using drum sets among the Pentecostal movements. The ban on using drum sets is strongly related to church doctrine, which emphasises a solemn and respectful environment during worship. It is believed that the usage of drums, which are frequently connected to upbeat and modern musical genres, is incompatible with the church's objectives of encouraging a contemplative and orderly worship experience. A general position within some denominations against rhythmic counterparts in worship landscape is further demonstrated by the use of a cappella or orchestral techniques during services in other churches with comparable prohibitions.⁴⁷

Several reasons have led to the inclusion of technological tools into the church structure, such as evangelistic purpose, accessibility through social media, pandemic experience, and the modernisation of church services. Some standard technological tools used in DLBC today include, but are not limited to, sound systems, microphones, musical instruments, social media, and websites, amongst others, which have reshaped the church to fit into the present society. It must be emphasised that the church innovation of askkumuyi.ai is a profound achievement in

⁴⁶ Michael Olorunnimbe, and Tosin Abolaji, 'Digitalisation and Evangelism: The Impact of Digital Evangelisms in the 21st Century Nigerian Church', *Religions Journal of Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions*, Vol. 33. No. 1st July 2023, 30.

⁴⁷ 'Deeper Life Bible Church And 3 Other Churches That Doesn't Use Drum Sets During - Religion -Nigeria', nairaland.com, 15th November 2024, <https://www.nairaland.com/6747969/deeper-life-bible-church-3>.

integrating technology into the church, hence ushering it into the ‘Pentecosto-technological transformation era’ where the world of technology is now the new world for the church to exist and engage with its audience.

6.1 Recommendations

The recommendations below are for the church leadership, congregants, and policy directions.

1. The members should not misplace the importance of using technology, such as being active on social media, chatting with friends, or watching videos during church services, in sharing the gospel.
2. Train church leaders and members to use technology effectively for ministry-related tasks. Workshops may concentrate on online discipleship strategies, digital content production, and social media interaction.
3. The church should not be too narrow in the use of technology. Still, it should also embrace and integrate ingathering, especially in areas where poor facilities, such as bad Internet services, lack of technological advancement, and lack of technological literacy among the people of such communities, are on the rise.
4. Deeper Life Bible Church should consider the adoption of drum sets in its worship services, accompanied by clearly defined guidelines on the types of beats permissible during worship. While this suggestion may pose theological and practical challenges, especially given the broader concern within Pentecostal churches in Nigeria about maintaining a boundary between godly worship and secular musical expressions, it remains a necessary conversation. The challenge of regulating drumbeats is not unique to DLBC but is part of a larger tension within Pentecostalism that grapples with preserving sanctity in the face of cultural relevance. Nonetheless, considering the growing appeal of music and rhythmic expression, especially among youth and Generation Z, integrating drum sets can enhance engagement without compromising doctrinal integrity. This recommendation does not signify a departure from the church’s holiness theology, but rather an inclusive approach that recognises the evolving worship needs of younger generations while still upholding the core values of reverence and sanctification.

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Presenting Original Apologetics

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Abstract

Based on the approach of 'Original Apologetics', returning to the Petrine call to all faithful that they learn the faith and respond to others in a Christian manner (1 Pt 3:15), this paper sets out how these ideas have been presented ordinarily in the parish setting to clergy and laity, consistent with the call of *Gaudium et Spes* 62.

By describing the general content and progression in an initial format of four presentations, the course's main points can be seen to develop in each of these. The presentations introduce the original Petrine call, then identify similar scriptural calls by Paul and Jude. Alongside these, several calls from Second Vatican Council documents based upon these sources are given. Supporting content includes the Two Ways theme and a brief history of apologetical development. These lead to the final presentation which presents the Council's many calls in *Apostolicam Actuositatem* and *Presbyterorum Ordinis* for clergy and laity to work together to develop the capability to respond to others' questions or challenges about the faith, which should ideally be developed within the parish setting. The final part describes the rationale of the content and intentions to give a concise outline and further explanation of these.

The paper seeks to establish the feasibility of presenting Original Apologetics, an academically-formed approach, to ordinary faithful, to outline possible developments of the original study in presentations, and thus to provide an example of how the Original Apologetics ideas can be developed for use in parishes and beyond. This can enable others to view the content in general and is a starting point for developing similar courses, including adaptations for other denominations and creating academic courses. Overall, the aim is to aid transformation of the theological-apologetical ideas of Original Apologetics into their practical application in the parish or a similar setting.

Keywords

apologetics, Peter's call, Second Vatican Council, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, parish, Original Apologetics, apologetics preparation, laity, clergy

Introduction

In his letter to the faithful, Peter calls Christians to be prepared and respond in a Christian manner to those who ask them about their faith as Christians (1 Pt 3:15). This straightforward call from a fisherman developed into apologetics, which has for the most part been recognised

as an intellectual then academic field.¹ However, the recent development of a different approach, named ‘Original Apologetics’,² in some ways a *ressourcement*, brings together several Scriptural calls and several similar calls in the Second Vatican Council documents. The apologetical call is for all the faithful to learn, that is, to be prepared, to answer others about their faith and to do so in a Christian manner that befits Peter’s call in vv 15-16, when questioned or challenged. That all Christians are called to this is understood from the Epistle being addressed to all the faithful in Asia Minor (1 Pt 1:1), not only leaders, intellectuals, or other particular persons.

For Original Apologetics reasonably to be for all Christians as called for by both Scripture and the Council, it follows then that it should be able to be presented to Christians of all backgrounds, capabilities, and interests. Therefore, to explore the feasibility of this, the key components of the original research have been initially formed into four presentations of around one-hour including discussion. This form is for use in, ordinarily but not exclusively, Catholic parish settings,³ keeping in mind the call of the Council: ‘theologians, within the requirements and methods proper to theology, are invited to seek continually for more suitable ways of communicating doctrine to the men of their times’.⁴ While the content has so far been developed for the Catholic sphere, the fundamental scriptural calls indicate it can be revised for use by non-Catholics also. The content and delivery can be and have since been adapted to a single condensed presentation, two one-hour lectures, and expanded into a draft course adaptable to BA and MA levels (12-30 hours or more).

In the initial four-presentation form, each presentation has begun with a prayer, followed by a Powerpoint presentation and then questions, discussion, and a closing prayer. The content is based on the key idea of ‘Original Apologetics’, based on the recognition of St Peter as the first recorded Christian to use the term *apologia*, in 1 Pt 3:15, from which a simple yet profound definition of apologetics can be extracted. Each presentation explores passages from Scripture and the Council documents, from the lens of Original Apologetics as the three elements of Preparation, Response, and Christian Manner as well as the universal aspect of the call. The second and third presentations also offer additional themes that support understanding of the idea, taken from the original article. The fourth proceeds from the Council’s calls to both laity and clergy to a proposal for developing the idea practically in the parish. Delivery is adapted in terms of speed, depth, key content and additional content, and time allotted in recognition of the audience and the universal call of the Council.⁵

This article first seeks to establish the feasibility of presenting Original Apologetics, an academically-formed approach, to ordinary faithful; it would be in some ways paradoxical and ironic if this was not possible as the approach centres on being a straightforward interpretation of Peter’s and other consistent calls to all faithful. Second, the aim here is to outline how some of the themes mentioned briefly in the ‘Original Apologetics’ article might be developed for presentation in this case to ordinary faithful. Further, an outcome of both of these is to provide an example of how the Original Apologetics ideas can be developed for use in parishes and beyond, which can support others who might wish to develop similar, or to generate feedback to help develop the quality and effectiveness of presentations of Original Apologetics to a wide range. To achieve the above, the paper first describes the four presentations’ general outline,

¹ Avery Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1999), 27. Dulles does not mention 1 Peter, Jude, or Paul’s 2 Timothy in the whole of his highly regarded *History*.

² Stuart Nicolson, ‘Original Apologetics’, *Theology and Philosophy of Education* 2, no. 2 (December 2023): 4–12, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10413418>.

³ *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (AA) 10. All Vatican II documents can be found from the contents page at https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index.htm.

⁴ *Gaudium et Spes* (GS) 62.

⁵ AA 29.

then describes each in turn, thus showing how the academic content can be adapted for ordinary faithful and how certain themes might be developed, which results in providing a template for others interested in presenting such content. The following section on content and intentions considers core and contributing ideas, which explain the purposes of the content and show that it is consistent with the original study. In places, reasoning for chosen features in the course are also sometimes given to illustrate how the course's feasibility was developed.

General Outline of the Presentations

The four presentations have a similar overall structure, which develops over the course of the four. As a general familiarity develops, the content is increasingly challenging and focused on how the recipients can develop their own participation in apologetical activities called for in Scripture and the Second Vatican Council.

First is the opening prayer. Before the presentation, if a member of the clergy is present, it is requested that he offers an introductory prayer. In one parish, the priest joined this with the well-known course prayer, which is apt for apologetical development of the person and their community:⁶

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful
and enkindle in them the fire of your Divine love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created
and You shall renew the face of the earth. Amen.

The format should be given as structured, with some fluidity possible: Presentation, Questions/discussion, Examples in our own experience. Recipients are encouraged to take part more actively at the end by considering possible contributions during the presentation. While interruptions for clarification are welcomed throughout, discussion should wait until the end.

Every presentation begins with 'Historical Context', to enhance understanding and appreciation in the listener. This supplies the listeners with useful background information regarding the early decades of Church history, including from the Book of Acts, and the wider contemporary environment, which is described further below. While hearing ideas and calls in homilies is normal, listeners find it more effective if able to place the content in the historical context. Understanding context is important, for example, the Holy Land is called the 'Fifth Gospel',⁷ and learning about the land, customs, architecture, life, and ways, or especially visiting there, colours the understanding significantly. Then, 'Engaging with Others' outlines the different people/situations that early Christians of the first century encountered and were called to engage with: Jews, Greeks, Persecutions, and the final possibility of taking the Easy Path (or Gate, Way, etc.), against which Jesus warned (Mt 7:13-14). Key, foundational content, which is described in more detail in the following subsection, is established in Presentation 1 and repeated in subsequent presentations, thus creating a standard pattern of information: the origin and meaning of *apologia* and the three elements of Peter's call as well as the universal aspect.

Then the main scriptural content is presented as the original, ancient calls. In switching to the modern Council's related texts, a pivot screen depicts a timeline image that has the Bible

⁶ As described in *Gravissimum Educationis* (GE) 2 and unpacked in Janet Schaeffler, 'Advice from a Master Catechist: The Prayer to the Holy Spirit Explained', Catechist, 15th May 2024, <https://www.catechist.com/advice-master-catechist-prayer-holy-spirit-explained/>.

⁷ A well-established description used by the previous two popes: Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, 30th September 2010, 89, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini.html; regarding Francis, see Courtney Mares, 'Pope Francis: The story of the Holy Land is the "Fifth Gospel"', Catholic News Agency, 17th January 2022, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/250121/pope-francis-the-story-of-the-holy-land-is-the-fifth-gospel>.

and Early Church at the left end and at the right is Vatican II and Today's Church. This linking invites and supports a short explanation of the Council's *ressourcement* theme. Then the content is from one or more Council documents. The scriptural and conciliar quotes are compared to the original call of Peter by examining them together, highlighting the three elements and universal aspect. A colour-highlight system established in Presentation 1 is effective for indicating different parts of the text being closely connected with the scriptural call. This then is followed by more specialist content to an appropriate depth in Presentations 2-4, as outlined below. The Conclusion slide then summarises the main points, and leads into time for discussion and sharing thoughts and experiences.

Presentation 1 – Introduction to Peter's Call

The first presentation is the least heavily laden in terms of depth of content, to avoid overburdening those present with a new approach and also to assess the potential future level of interest and understanding for pitching the complexity and depth of later content. Taken from the 'Original Apologetics' article, it covers Peter's original apologetical call and a sentence from *Lumen Gentium* (LG) 10.

First, the universal aspect of Peter's call is established – apologetical response was not originally intended for elite interests, academic debates, or intellectual discussions, albeit these play an important part in apologetics as a whole. The Epistle is addressed in 1 Peter 1:1 to 'the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappado'cia, Asia, and Bithyn'ia', that is, today's Turkey. The Historical Context slide already established the fact of the Christian Diaspora of the 60s and how the Christians, many being Jewish converts, were generally used to mixing within their own cultures but were then suddenly in the Diaspora being called upon to engage with others, meaning many may have been taking the easy path of non-engagement. Peter's call was, of course, to engage when asked or challenged about the faith ('the hope that is in you', 1Pt 3:15). As Peter was calling all Christians to such communication activity, and not just leaders or educated faithful, it can be extrapolated that the call applies to all Christians in all situations,⁸ which is reinforced by the Church's canonisation of the text, meaning that it applies (to at least some extent) to all the faithful – it would surely be outlandish to argue against this.

The term *apologia* is then examined and defined in the next slide. The original usage (to our knowledge) is in the Greek legal milieu as the response to or defence against a *kategoria*, accusation. In the NT Greek of the Epistle, the key word is *απολογία* (accusative form). Then the word is split into its component parts: apo-logia. Logos is the main root of the word, being a term that evades complete and satisfactory defining in English. Often regarded as word, idea, concept, it is connected with the prefix apo- here, which means out, away from. Together, they make the more awkward sounding 'speaking out', which should not be confused with the English phrasal verb possible meaning to speak from within a group, to attract attention by speaking out. It is simply an idea or concept being collected or gathered together and expressed, thus the English 'response', 'answer', 'explanation', or 'defence'.

Then the key text of 1Pt 3:15-16 is presented:

¹⁵ ... Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence;

¹⁶ and keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are abused, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. (RSVCE)

⁸ Nicolson, 'Original Apologetics', 6–7.

This is the only time the whole of v. 16 is presented in the programme, here only to show that it fits with the final part of v. 15 (as shown in meaning 3 below), which should be noted as being part of v. 16 in some translations.⁹

Then v. 15 is parsed into three partially overlapping meanings:

1. Always be prepared to make a defense’,
2. ‘make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you’,
3. ‘do it with gentleness and reverence’.

These are then abbreviated into the three Petrine elements: Be Prepared, Respond, in a Christian Manner, which are henceforth referred to as Preparation, Response, Christian Manner;¹⁰ allocation of specific colours here aids identification of these elements in scriptural and conciliar texts later when comparing them to Peter’s call. The choice of ‘gentleness and reverence’ being deemed ‘Christian Manner’ is in order to denote the delivery style of the communication according to vv 15-16 in a simple and memorable way to ordinary faithful. The Council uses the term ‘bear witness’ for this sometimes but this can be a little abstract. On the other hand, at an academic level, others might disagree with this generalisation but a robust discussion of this term is beyond the scope and purpose of this paper. At the parish level of presentation, ‘gentleness and reverence’ may be likened in some ways to love and truth, and are integral here to having a Christian manner. For the purpose of non-specialist recipients, this is more than adequate.

The pivot screen brings the presentation to the modern expression of Peter’s call in LG 10, which is the most straightforward and simple version of this in the Vatican II documents:

Everywhere on earth [all the disciples of Christ] must bear witness to Christ and give an answer to those who seek an account of that hope of eternal life which is in them.(105)

The parenthesised words are from LG’s previous sentence and clearly are the reference denoted by ‘they’ in this sentence. The endnote number (105) is a reference to ‘1 Pt. 3:15’, which removes any doubt, but the sentence is unambiguous in its inspiration. Then, the three Petrine elements are recalled, highlighting specific wording from the LG quote to link it to the scriptural original source: Preparation for ‘disciples of Christ’, Response for ‘give an answer to those who seek an account of that hope of eternal life which is in them’, and Christian Manner for ‘bear witness to Christ’, the last reasonably including gentleness and reverence. The term ‘disciples’ should be explained: it is often connected by Christians with the 12 Disciples of Christ in the Gospels. Instead, a definition of ‘disciple’ (Lat. *Discipulus*) is given as a pupil, student, follower, in other words, ‘One who follows Jesus’, that is, a Christian. As LG 10 refers to ‘all the disciples of Christ’, this is clearly the universal aspect and the Council is thus calling all Christians to be apologetically active. Finally, the Council’s quoted sentence is shown with the Petrine colour coding evident, showing all four (elements and aspect) as distinctly present in a clear and understandable way.

The Conclusion of Presentation 1 recaps the main points, and adds also that questions or challenges from others might be friendly (or even within oneself), or uncertain, or even hostile. The presentation ends by questioning whether the Christian should make an apologia – answer a question or challenge – or take the easy path, that is, remain silent or change the subject. This is an opportunity to bring listeners to the conclusion that they are being called by both Scripture and Council to learn their faith more, to be able to pass it on to others when questioned or challenged, rather than avoid engaging with such communication, as Peter originally did in his three-fold denial of Christ.

⁹ While the Standard Version family (here, RSVCE) and others have the words ‘do it with gentleness and reverence’ (or similar) in v. 15, others such as the New Jerusalem Bible include it in v. 16.

¹⁰ Nicolson, ‘Original Apologetics’, 5.

A point to note clearly with those present, though, is that Peter calls us first to be prepared before speaking out. Apologetics requires learning the faith sufficiently to be able to present it calmly to others, and praying about it is certainly part of apologetics as a Christian form of communication of the faith. Introduction of the idea that we are not seeking to win arguments but to help God win souls is expedient and that this is important for having a Christian Manner in apologetics. A brief preview of Presentation 2, which has further Scripture and Council calls encourages listeners to recognise that the apologetical call is wider than the two presented sources.

Presentation 2 – A Wider Call

The purpose of Presentation 2 is to confirm and strengthen the call to apologetics for all the faithful by identifying it in Paul's writings and another Council document: *Dignitatis Humanae* (DH). This helps verify that the calls in the previous presentation were neither isolated nor misinterpreted but are part of a consistent and early call recalled by Vatican II.

After reminders about the term *apologia*, Peter's call, and the colour system for identifying the Petrine elements and aspect, the historical context in this presentation includes Paul and the ecclesial expansion through his travels in Asia Minor, aided with a map displaying the journeys and places featuring in Acts. Ephesus is the focus of the next section, particularly the new Ephesian bishop, Timothy, and Paul's letters to him, as per the original study.¹¹ The second of the letters includes several pertinent statements, which, in typical Pauline style, lack Peter's conciseness. Preparation is identified in 2 Tim 3:14-17 along with some Response. The latter is stated clearly in 2 Tim 4:2-4, especially v. 2, with a mention of Christian Manner. Verses 3-4 are of particular interest for explaining one reason for apologetics (loss of rational beliefs). And Christian Manner is discernible also in 2 Tim 2:14-15. The purpose as well as lengthier nature of Paul's writing style offers opportunities to explore the elements more deeply and contextually.

The second presentation's pivot from Scripture is to the Council's DH 14, which allows a more detailed exploration of the themes in the modern sphere in a particularly powerful apologetical call:

The disciple has a grave obligation to Christ, his Master, to grow daily in his knowledge of the truth he has received from him, to be faithful in announcing it, and vigorous in defending it without having recourse to methods which are contrary to the spirit of the Gospel.

The universal call is the word 'disciple', as defined in Presentation 1, which also fits with Preparation, while Response includes 'vigorous in defending it' – words that clearly refute the wide conception that Vatican II excluded apologetics¹² – and at the non-specialist parish level having a Christian manner is recognisably consistent with 'the spirit of the Gospel', which surely includes Truth and Love.¹³ By displaying the DH extract with the colour coding, Peter's call is clearly consistent. The wording can be seen as being powerful and without ambiguity here, indicating that a return to the original meaning of apologetics was a call of the Council to all faithful.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² For example: Dulles, *History*, 325–9; Gardner Jacobs, 'Retrieving Apologetics', *Crisis Magazine*, 29th January 2015, <https://crisismagazine.com/opinion/retrieving-apologetics>; Glenn B. Siniscalchi, 'Catholic Apologetics and the New Evangelization', *Church Life Journal*, 26th September 2016, https://churchlifejournal.nd.edu/articles/catholic-apologetics-and-the-new-evangelization/#_edn1.

¹³ See Eph 4:15, as shown in *Presentation 4* below.

The presentation then turns to the supporting theme of the Two Ways concept in Judaeo-Christianity to help identify following God within apologetics¹⁴ and an understanding of there being right answers that direct the listener to the right path: to and with God. These then can enable speaking out effectively to others. While this is not the only interpretive framework, it offers a clear distinction including good or evil, good or sinful, etc., and also Gospel themes: sheep and goats, two paths that are narrow and wide, etc. A brief Two Ways history is given, from Adam and Eve and then their elder sons, Deuteronomy (especially 30:15-20) as a key presentation of Two Ways, then the Psalms (especially 1), Proverbs, and Wisdom books, followed by early Christian literature, the later Early Church focus on Heaven and hell, then on to Mediaeval examples, and finally Sunday Mass readings today. This shows that still the Church is teaching that we are called to follow the right path. It is for apologists today to develop a clear foundation through Preparation, then to help others do the same, against alternative offerings from worldly narratives, such as many prevalent relativist or materialist ideas that are against the Gospel. Ultimately, it is to become and develop as a 'Friend of God' (cf. Jas 2:23, regarding Abraham), being one who walks his path or way, speaking Truth as an 'Act of Love'.

At this stage, a preview of the third presentation points to there having been two types of apologetics in history, hence the *ressourcement* call of Vatican II, because apologetics has often been used in ways less than faithful to Peter's original call.

Presentation 3 – Two Types of Apologetics

A question that can arise from course participants before the third presentation is answered here: Why was this [Original Apologetics] not being done already?¹⁵ It is a valid point recognised by those with previous awareness of apologetics and the mix of positive, negative, and otherwise neutral viewpoints regarding it; it can also be formed by those discerning its simplicity while never having encountered it, or that it is being presented as something of a novel approach.

The answer to the question is historical and the historical context given here helps to introduce the Christian experience of persecutions in the Roman Empire, for example, during the 90s under Domitian,¹⁶ and the heresies that were developing in and around the fledgling Church. These were namely Docetism and early Gnosticism, and also Judaisers, who sought to reintroduce specific Jewish practices that had been superseded, such as food laws and circumcision. Thus, the faithful were living often in challenging situations.

The next Scripture passage presented as showing canonical consistency with Peter's call is the single-chaptered Book of Jude, as per the 'Original Apologetics' article.¹⁷ Specifically, this is v 1 (universal aspect), v 20 (Preparation), and vv 3, 22-23 (Response). Notably, Christian Manner is not included in the somewhat more concise and to-the-point text. This omission also occurs in the subsequently presented conciliar passage from *Dei Verbum* (DV) 8, which cites Jude 3, but otherwise is clearly another call consistent with Peter's call:¹⁸

Therefore the Apostles, handing on what they themselves had received, warn the faithful to hold fast to the traditions which they have learned either by word of mouth or by letter

¹⁴ Nicolson, 'Original Apologetics', 7–8.

¹⁵ This question has arisen during and after this presentation in parishes and refers to a wider development of this approach, that is, all Christians learning their faith and being encouraged to respond to others appropriately. While this approach may well have been used somewhere at sometime, it has never been significantly developed as either an integral or alternative approach to apologetics hence its omission in Dulles, *History*.

¹⁶ W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014), 181–4, 210–17, esp. 212–3.

¹⁷ Nicolson, 'Original Apologetics', 6–7.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

(see 2 Thess. 2:15), and to fight in defense of the faith handed on once and for all (see Jude 1:3)

Another commonality between the two texts presented here is the use of Tradition for Preparation of the faithful, that is, learning the faith and passing it on (*tradere*).

Then, the theme of ‘learn the faith, pass it on’ becomes thematic in Presentation 3 as the figures of Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp, and Irenaeus¹⁹ and their linking of learning and passing on the faith can be likened to the cycle of the apologist: Preparation leads to communication, which is Preparation for the listener who is a potential new apologist. In some ways like the oral tradition of the earliest Christians, information about the faith is passed on to others. This leads to the question of why this did not continue to our present day? If this was the norm in the Early Church, why was there a discontinuity and since when?

Tracing back to Justin Martyr in the mid-2nd century, there were developments that led to such change.²⁰ Justin was an intellectual who developed elite-level apologetical content and theology and this approach became a trend, for example, in the Alexandrian School. Apologetics has almost entirely continued at this level until modern times while ordinary-level content seemingly became rare, then non-existent, if the lack of extant sources is accurate. Somewhere between the easily readable *Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus* (c. 140) to Origen’s report (c. 250) of ordinary Christians being discouraged from dialoguing with non-Christians except those without education,²¹ responding about the faith seems to have become more or less the preserve of the well-educated, and often the clergy, at least in terms of there being no known texts or practices showing otherwise.²² In general terms, ordinary faithful clearly ceased to be apologetically prepared at some time in the Early Church period, albeit evidence of this development is likely to be minimal. It is very challenging to gain insight into any extent of Preparation or even catechesis under increasing persecution by the third century. The distinct lack of source evidence available today as well as Origen’s narrative pointing towards apologetics being intellectual indicates the high likelihood of a significant end to an established form of the Preparation element of the ordinary faithful that was an important feature for the Apostolic Fathers,²³ albeit ‘absence of evidence is indeed not evidence of absence’.²⁴ Later, with the influx of converts after the fourth-century legalisation of Christianity it can be surmised that basic catechesis – learning the foundational facts of the faith – replaced any learning that had enabled one to respond to others about one’s faith because it is far more manageable, especially in the short-term. At this point, asking a priest present about the prospect of hundreds of converts seeking instruction each year illustrates the point.

Regarding evidence and therefore likely also historical narrative, Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, an Arian at least until the Council of Nicaea,²⁵ was pivotal because he placed value

¹⁹ Irenaeus’s *Adverses Haereses* (c. 180) is the latest known source of the Early Church to present apologetical content intended to be used at least to some extent by ordinary faithful in responding to others.

²⁰ Stuart Nicolson, ‘The Justinian Apologetical Turn, away from Original Petrine Apologetics’, *AUC Theologica* 14, no. 1 (2024): 97–115, <https://doi.org/10.14712/23363398.2024.8>.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 110.

²² The apologists named by Dulles in his *History*, 27–89, are mostly clerical and all intellectual, thus requiring an education in order to access their content.

²³ Dulles, *History*, 27.

²⁴ Nicolson, ‘Original Apologetics’, 7.

²⁵ While some question this, his writings led to his excommunication; his case was one of several heard at the Council of Nicaea. His own creed lacked key elements of what became the Nicene Creed. Although prompted by Constantine to the expediency of agreeing to the Council’s Creed, he later was central to Athanasius and other Nicene orthodox figures being exiled. See The Catholic University of America, ‘Eusebius of Caesarea’, *New Catholic Encyclopedia* 2nd ed. Vol. 5 (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, 2003), 451–3.

only on intellectual content,²⁶ thus collecting only such texts,²⁷ and the fact that his library was unusually able to survive Diocletian's widespread book-burning in the early fourth century. This led to the development of the perception that only intellectual Christian literature existed in the Early Church²⁸ – the extent of ordinary-level texts is almost unknown except the recent identification of part of the aforementioned *Jason and Papiscus* and the comparative ease of reading some canonical texts and the relatively recently rediscovered *Didache*. Therefore, the perception grew that theological content, including apologetical texts, was intellectual and accessible only by and through clergy, which was reinforced by the scholarly styles of Athanasius, Augustine, and John Chrysostom, etc. Being relatively high-brow in the presentation, this content can be lightened by illustrating Petrine Apologetics as a whole pizza and 'Justinian Apologetics' as a sliver of pizza, being for the narrow minority at the higher intellectual level. The point is that Peter's original version is for all while Justin's level is for the few. It must be clearly stated, though, that Justinian apologetics is included in the Petrine, for the latter includes all levels and range, and Justin's and other elite contributions are very important.

Examples of occasional later developments with elements relating to Original Apologetics include the a response to the Mediaeval Revival around the Millennium that led in places to the highly problematic Albigenianism.²⁹ The approach that proved successful was not civil martial power or similar but that spoken by those steeped in the faith and willing to respond to those who had gone astray. Led by Dominic Guzman, this could have formed an Ordinary Apologetics movement but the Dominican Order became significantly involved with specialist thinking in the early universities instead of developing ongoing pastoral engagement. It might be said that fusing the preparation of the Dominicans and the pastoral engagement of the Franciscans might have developed something close to Original Apologetics, and this and other Mediaeval themes could be developed further in lengthier academic courses. Regarding the universal aspect and the potential for Preparation, the Fourth Lateran Council called for 'appointing preachers' and 'schoolmasters for the poor'³⁰ but these did not develop significantly. Later, it can be suggested that the Reformation would not have been the same had there been Ordinary Apologetics developed in the faithful and the Council of Trent could have turned out differently. After all, Charles Borromeo, when considered in light of the universal aspect and the three elements, was promoting Original Apologetics in some ways (reaching out to ordinary people, founding Sunday Schools, encouraging a Christian manner).³¹ But it must be recognised that the general history of apologetics, as depicted by Avery Dulles,³² has been and has continued to be Justinian, not Petrine.

In more recent times, the original article mentions a clear example of activity in the direction of Original Apologetics.³³ Developing this idea, which includes figures known across cultures, it can be said that there was an English-language apologetical spring from the turn of the 20th century, with new approaches and personalities: G. K. Chesterton, the convert and journalist;

²⁶ As seen in Eusebius' own statements collected in Rebecca Denova, 'Eusebius on Christianity', *World History Encyclopedia*, 15th October 2021, <https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1854/eusebius-on-christianity/>. See also Andrew Louth in Eusebius, *History*, Introduction, xiii, xxiv-xxv.

²⁷ See Andrew James Carriker, *The Library of Eusebius of Caesarea* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 2, 22-23, 299-311.

²⁸ NJ 1-24-17 [sic], 'Early Church Historians', *Fourth Century Christianity*, 18th February 2017, <https://www.fourthcentury.com/early-church-historians/>.

²⁹ John Vidmar, *The Catholic Church Through the Ages* (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), 143-5.

³⁰ Norman P. Tanner, ed., 'Fourth Lateran Council: 1215', *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 20th February 2020, canons 10 and 11 respectively, <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/ecum12-2.htm>.

³¹ William Keogh, 'St. Charles Borromeo', *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 3 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908), <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03619a.htm>.

³² Dulles, *History*.

³³ Nicolson, 'Original Apologetics', 9.

Ronald Knox, Catholic convert, priest and chaplain-apologist at Oxford and to convent schoolgirls during the War; C. S. Lewis, the Protestant apologist who reached out to all, from children to intellectuals; Frank Sheed, the Australian who dialogically took on allcomers in London's Hyde Park before starting an apologetics movement in America; and many others, in a sense culminating in Archbishop Fulton Sheen, the radio and television personality whose teachings presented apologetics to great numbers. Each of these exhibit in different ways the universal aspect as well as the three Petrine apologetics elements.

However, in Europe, which lacked the English-language sphere's tumult of Catholics and Protestants intermingling due to population shifts, apologetics tended towards being reduced to a tool of authority and was particularly defensive, sometimes only in people's memories but without the challenge of distinct new approaches. This led to the narrative around the Second Vatican Council and its reforms disrupting many previous norms. This is summed up in Professor Claude Geffré's words:

[T]he term 'fundamental theology' is now preferred to describe Christian apologetics. It is not simply that in an age of dialogue the word 'apologetics' is discredited. It is rather, and more profoundly, that we have become conscious of the weakness of apologetics when it pretends to prove the fact of revelation on historical grounds. We can only be sure of divine revelation within the experience of faith.³⁴

Depth of analysis here depends on those present, but the 'discrediting' of apologetics, its 'weakness', and how it 'pretends to prove the fact' should be noted; a brief description of fundamental theology and its significant differences from apologetics – purposes, methods, and form especially – can also be given.

Returning to the English language sphere, the 1980s saw an American revival, particularly regarding responses of Catholics to Fundamentalist claims that were erroneous in different ways. This developed far wider in scope and content, leading, for example, to the Catholic Answers apostolate,³⁵ which had the foresight to claim the important 'catholic.com' website address. Continuing today, it is a powerful resource for apologists regarding a wide range of themes. Others, too, regard their apologetics work as an apostolate.³⁶

Thus, by the end of the third presentation, listeners should have an idea of the two different approaches and how the Petrine approach has been developed in some ways in recent times in the English language sphere. However, there is much room for further growth. Encouragement to explore how to participate in this development and become apologetically-capable should be shared at this point as the topic of the fourth presentation.

Presentation 4 – Apologetics in the Parish

This programme is ordinarily presented in the parish setting, to enable effective sharing and also because this is the meeting point of faith-learning for most Christians, but it can be adapted for other settings. The development of the apostolate, with clergy and laity coming together as called for by Hans Urs von Balthasar a decade before the Council, is the focus of the Second Vatican Council in *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (AA).

³⁴ Quoted in *ibid.*, 326–7.

³⁵ Described as an apostolate both by themselves – Catholic Answers, 'Why the World Needs Catholic Answers', accessed 25th October 2025, <https://www.catholic.com/about> – and others, for example, EWTN News, 'Catholic Answers apologetics apostolate joins Catholic Word publishing consortium', 21st August 2009, updated 26th September 2025, <https://www.ewtnnews.com/world/us/catholic-answers-apologetics-apostolate-joins-catholic-word-publishing-consortium>.

³⁶ For example, Dave Armstrong, 'The Pleasures and Perils of a Catholic Apologetics Apostolate', *Catholic Answers*, 1st November 2004, <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/the-pleasures-and-perils-of-a-catholic-apologetics-apostolate>.

After the historical context describes the problem of the general narrative, which was strengthening against Christians by the turn of the century, and a reminder of the colour coding system, a section of Ephesians 4 is presented in two parts: vv 11-14; vv 15-16.³⁷ The former includes a universal aspect reference ('we all') and Preparation content in vv 13-14, including the origin of inspiring words from the Council to clergy as seen later. Verse 15 offers the other two elements in Paul's succinct words, which, when combined, can be said to include the original purpose of apologetics: 'speaking the truth in love'.³⁸ To do so leads to growing together towards Christ, the aim of the apostolate in AA.

Before plunging into presenting AA's calls, it is worthwhile to consider Balthasar's alternative to the strong progressive calls before the Council. He calls for clergy and laity to come together, and the former should 'equip them with sufficient knowledge of Christian truth and experience of life',³⁹ which is consistent with what he later describes as the 'third way'.⁴⁰ This is a precursor to AA and parts of *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (PO) in many ways as is then presented.

The original article's interpretation of AA⁴¹ has been developed further and presented by first establishing the AA call to be universal – 'the people of God' (AA 1), 'the laity' (AA 2) – then the method and purpose is given in AA 2, both being consistent with Petrine elements: 'activity directed to the evangelization and sanctification of men' and 'their temporal activity openly bears witness to Christ and promotes the salvation of men'. External and internal apologetics are distinguished: 'a true apostle looks for opportunities to announce Christ by words addressed either to non-believers with a view to leading them to faith, or to the faithful with a view to instructing, strengthening, and encouraging them' in AA 6, pointing to evangelisation and catechesis, albeit catechesis in the form of apologetical Preparation. It confirms apologetics as included in the apostolate: by identifying the problem, that 'in our own times, new problems are arising and very serious errors are circulating which tend to undermine the foundations of religion, the moral order, and human society itself'; and providing the solution, that the Council 'exhorts laymen – each according to his own gifts of intelligence and learning – to be more diligent in doing what they can to explain, defend, and properly apply Christian principles to the problems of our era in accordance with the mind of the Church' (both AA 6). All are called to participate apologetically, and, additionally, those faithful who are able should offer their talents in the public sphere both to serve society and be a Christian presence in such (AA 14).

Regarding the practicality of the universal aspect, AA 29 explains that 'In addition to spiritual formation, a solid doctrinal instruction in theology, ethics, and philosophy adjusted to differences of age, status, and natural talents, is required.' The appropriate adjustment of Preparation content to the capabilities of the faithful person being prepared is called for, which means enabling each individual according to ability. This is contrary to the more traditional style of education which presents a certain agreed level content to be learned and the learner is required to meet this standard or fail to be qualified/certified/enabled. Rather, the challenge is given to the educator here, to ensure learners can learn the content as best they can. Thus, the learner is the focus of the process, not the teacher or the expected standards. In this way, the call maintains its universality.

The Petrine elements are most clearly and succinctly presented in AA 31: 'In regard to the apostolate for evangelizing and sanctifying men, the laity must be specially formed to engage

³⁷ Nicolson, 'Original Apologetics', 5–6.

³⁸ AA 6 cites 2Cor 5:14, 'For the charity of Christ impels us', that we are called to 'announce Christ by words' to both faithful and non-faithful immediately before treating apologetical activity directly.

³⁹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Razing the Bastions* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 91–92.

⁴⁰ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Love Alone Is Credible* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), chapter 3.

⁴¹ Nicolson, 'Original Apologetics', 10–11.

in conversation with others, believers, or non-believers, in order to manifest Christ's message to all men.' The consistency of message, colour-highlighted in presentations, is set out below.

Aspect/ Element	1 Pt 3:15	AA 31
Universal	the exiles of the Dispersion (1Pt 1:1)	the laity
Preparation	be prepared	specially formed
Response	make a defense	engage in conversation with others
Christian manner	do it with gentleness and reverence	to manifest Christ's message

Table 1: Petrine elements and aspect in 1 Pt 3:15 and AA 31

Therefore, it is clear that AA presents a Petrine call, as do LG 10 and DH 14, and similar is given in DV 8.

The question remains, however, how this can be developed beyond the page, screen, or discussion group. AA 10 addresses this clearly: 'The parish offers an obvious example of the apostolate on the community level'. In this spiritual and geographical location, it continues:

The laity should accustom themselves to working in the parish in union with their priests, bringing to the Church community their own and the world's problems as well as questions concerning human salvation, all of which they should examine and resolve by deliberating in common[.]

This vision can be developed through regular group meetings where active and ongoing Preparation can meet opportunities to explore and resolve internal questions as well as equip the laity (and priests) for engaging with others externally.

The role of the priest is considered elsewhere from the other perspective, in PO 9, which in turn is considered in AA 25, 30. This corresponds with AA regarding laity working with clergy. Further, '[Priests] are defenders of the common good, with which they are charged in the name of the bishop. At the same time, they are strenuous assertors of the truth, lest the faithful be carried about by every wind of doctrine [cf. Eph 4:14].' Paul's call, already considered above, is referenced here regarding the problem of failing to 'assert the truth'. PO 9 also highlights the responsibility of priests for engaging with those who have fallen away from the faith, or who do not have faith, which certainly must include apologetical dialogue in some form.

The elements of Preparation and Response appear also in PO 19: 'that they may give apt answers to questions posed by men of this age, it is necessary for priests to know well the doctrines of the magisterium and the councils and documents of the Roman pontiffs and to consult the best of prudent writers of theological science.' Further, 'priests are urged to suitably and without interruption perfect their knowledge of divine things and human affairs and so prepare themselves to enter more opportunely into conversation with their contemporaries.' It continues: 'let priests more readily study and effectively learn the methods of evangelization and the apostolate'.

With appropriate guidance through these conciliar quotes, the listener can appreciate the apologetical calls to both laity and clergy, that they should work together towards a common goal, a purpose or telos:

The apostolate can attain its maximum effectiveness only through a diversified and thorough formation. This is demanded not only by the continuous spiritual and doctrinal progress of the lay person himself but also by the accommodation of his activity to circumstances varying according to the affairs, persons, and duties involved. (AA 28)

This call to form a parish group of clergy and laity requires active participation of at least some of those present and encouragement to others to partake. This means arranging regular meetings where the faithful can learn apologetical content, how to engage with others with a Christian manner of ‘speaking the truth in love’, and to share their faith by responding to the questions and challenges they face.

The approach above shows the feasibility of presenting Original Apologetics among ordinary faithful and the clergy. The developments of the ideas from the original article shown above are illustrative of one possible approach to presenting Original Apologetics.

Content and Intentions

Having surveyed the general content and ideas presented, it is useful to consider the main themes or threads that make up the course, including the purposes of these as based on the ‘Original Apologetics’ article. This section describes the main content threads and the intentions of the course, and also the minor, supporting themes that appear in the second and third presentations.

Core Ideas

The core idea of the presentations is to unpack the call to apologetics as being both simple and universal. This approach is not consistent with the general development and specific purpose of the field of apologetics that grew since the second century, as depicted in Dulles’s *A History of Apologetics*. Instead, in a form of ressourcement, it returns to the scriptural calls and shows that these are recalled and developed in the Vatican II documents.

The first aim is to establish the origin as Peter’s call and identify the three elements as being applicable in the lives of the faithful, which are in one sense a challenge but also very achievable. While the refrain ‘Learn the faith, pass it on’ might be simplistic, it is both memorable and descriptive, and hopefully inspiring. Almost as important is the identification of the call existing in the Vatican II documents and LG 10 is clear and straightforward. By using the three elements and universal aspect, the call can be seen as spanning the history of the Church, from the apostolic age to the modern.

The Petrine call could be regarded as minor in that it is found amongst other instructions to the faithful, it is in a somewhat minor NT book, and it is brief. This makes the identification of similar calls in Paul and Jude a significant step in reinforcing the apologetical call. With three different apostolic voices, including Paul’s two letters coming from the most prolific NT contributor, the call is far more established and significant. This reinforcement is brought into recent times with the DH 14 and DV 8 quotations. It is thus clear to the course attendee that the apologetical call is universal, well-established, transcends time, and is given by multiple voices in ancient and modern times.

The culmination of the presentation of the calls is the fourth presentation, which answers the question likely already formed in the minds of the recipients: ‘So what do we do?’ It presents the practical calls of the Council to both laity and clergy in the AA and PO texts respectively: apologetics is confirmed as part of the apostolate in AA 6 and the Petrine call is apparent in AA 31. Further – less obvious but pertinent – calls are identifiable in both documents, interpretable through the lens of the Petrine call as including, arguably significantly, the more general call for the clergy to support and join with the laity in becoming much more involved in engaging with the wider world, having already become well-formed and prepared to do so, and in doing so to ‘bear witness’. The term ‘bear witness’ is a key, notably used in GE 2, where a clear apologetical meaning is included in the education of the person, as is evident especially here: ‘aware of their calling, they learn not only how to bear witness to the hope that is in them (cf. Peter 3:15) but also how to help in the Christian

formation of the world'.⁴² By following 'bear witness' in other Vatican II documents, it is possible to identify apologetical themes to various extents. The Balthasar quote in his call for reform frames the fourth presentation well while the practical outcome of the presentations should be developing apologetical capability in the parish (AA 10). This means coming together to learn more about the faith and how to explain it to others, which is developing currently as Ordinary Apologetics.

Contributing Ideas

The contributing themes in the second and third presentations are neither central nor necessary to Original Apologetics but they are a way of supporting the recipients who may have questions, which are perhaps even somewhat unformed.

The first is the Two Ways theme, which can be traced back to the very beginning of Scripture and is a strong theme of many OT texts, explicitly or implicitly. This theme, which develops as a lens for listeners seeing purpose in engaging in apologetical dialogue with others, is a means of supporting recipients in understanding the importance of speaking out.

The experience of presenting the course several times has led to the conclusion that this part is more clearly and effectively presented when leading with familiar Two Ways images in the Gospels, such as the sheep and goats, the maidens ready or not for the bridegroom, wheat or tares, etc. This leads to two paths or gates, narrow or wide (Mt 7). Then the theme in Judaeo-Christian history can be briefly presented: in Scripture, especially Deuteronomy, the first Psalm, many examples in Proverbs, wisdom books, then in the Gospels (especially Matthew), and later in the Apostolic Fathers (*Didache*, *Barnabas*...). Then there were later attempts to re-establish clarity to the faithful in choosing good or bad: the Mediaeval introduction of annual Confession and in recent times regular appearances in Sunday Mass readings. Finally, how Two Ways thinking contributes to apologetics can be shown in learning the faith teachings rather than being personally chosen as preferences, as well as the contemporary preference for favouring subjective 'truths' (my truth, your truth), and the rationality of apologetical answers, which is 'speaking the truth in love' (Eph 4:15) – to do so is to be a Friend of God.

The second contributing theme, the historical development of apologetics, can be divided into two parts. The first regards the Early and Mediaeval Church and the second is on modern examples of apologetics recognisable as Petrine apologetics to various extents. With original apologetics defined according to Peter's elements and universal call, by the end of the second presentation, some recipients are beginning to question why this is not well-known and established today, especially those with a previous understanding of apologetics being problematic. It is presented that the earliest generations of Christians seemingly followed Peter's call to at least some extent until the intellectualisation that began with Justin Martyr and led to apologetics being the preserve of at least the well-educated and possibly clergy alone by the time of Origen.⁴³ It seems that while early ordinary faithful were regarded as capable of apologetical activity, the complete lack of extant 'ordinary' apologetical texts – written by or for ordinary faithful – after Justin indicates that apologetics was becoming by the third century an activity for the few. However, this remains impossible to state with certainty as a lack of evidence is not evidence of a lack, and the great historian Eusebius of Caesarea's clear preference for only elite thinkers may have prevented a fuller picture.⁴⁴ Sharing examples of great theological and apologetical writers, who are all intellectual and often challenging to read, shows a consistent picture of elite thinkers, and later individual examples of sparks of Original Apologetics never lighting the fuel of an apologetical movement are found in Benedict's Rule,

⁴² The scripture reference in GE 2 is an error in the official English translation, omitting the '1' of '1 Pt'.

⁴³ See Nicolson, 'Justinian Turn', 110, regarding Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 3.52, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04163.htm>.

⁴⁴ Nicolson, 'Justinian Turn', 105. See also Denova, 'Eusebius on Christianity'.

the Fourth Lateran Council, and St Charles Borromeo. It must be made clear in this section that while the Petrine universal call includes elite apologetics in contrast with the Justinian, elite form of apologetics with no place for ordinary apologetics, the contribution of elite apologetics has been of great importance over the centuries in many ways, and also we cannot presume Justin Martyr had any intention of apologetics becoming elite-alone.

The modern era is more accessible in cultural memory and in some places the time of the English apologetical spring can still be in living memory for a few in some places. There are many examples of great apologists at more ordinary and accessible levels. C. S. Lewis is a great internationally-known storyteller, Archbishop Sheen may be known to some already, and the stories of Frank Sheed on a soap-box in Hyde Park are not yet an image hidden in the mists of time. The journalist G. K. Chesterton and the Oxford chaplain Ronald Knox both wrote detective stories. These are figures with whom we can still connect with today. Placing Balthasar's call and the 1960s Council in this timeline, followed by the seeming death of apologetics, this can be still within living memory. And the 1980s American revival, advanced and magnified by the Internet, is continuing still today. Ending on this note enables the final question of the third presentation and the bridge to the fourth – 'How can we participate?'

The core theme of Peter's original call is supported by the themes of Two Ways and the historical development of apologetics, leading to the Council's perceptible calls for clergy and laity to develop apologetics within the parish as part of the call to develop wider apostolates.

Conclusion

The presentations have been developed from the original source 'Original Apologetics', which focuses on the three elements of Preparation, Response, and Christian Manner, and the universal aspect, gleaned from 1 Peter and found through this lens in various New Testament and Vatican II documents. From the original study, courses have been developed initially as having four one-hour presentations and this paper has sought to show the feasibility of this adaptation and the developments taking place. Presented thus far in six parish / ecclesial community settings in the Czech Republic, it shows how this alternative approach to apologetics based on the calls can speak to all faithful.

Based on the original article's approach, by presenting the calls in Peter, Paul several times, and in Jude, as well as five Council documents, it has been feasible to adapt the content to be understandable and interesting for ordinary faithful, thus responding appropriately to GS 62 and AA 29. This has led to two follow-up groups having been formed, one of which is ongoing and developing what can be called Ordinary Apologetics.

Not only is presentation of Ordinary Apologetics to the faithful seen to be feasible, this paper shows some ways of developing Original Apologetics. However, the core concept can be applied in presentations or lectures in other ways, and feasibly can be extended in both scope and depth to academic courses. The presenting of the content and rationale behind the developments welcome both the creation of other forms of presentations, including for non-Catholics, as well as the organic development of how to fulfil more effectively Peter's original apologetical call.

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A Polemic with Kenneth Cragg on 'Divine Responsibility' and Theodicy in Islam

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Abstract

This article critically examines Kenneth Cragg's concept of 'divine responsibility' in relation to the problem of theodicy in Islamic theology. Cragg argues that Islam lacks a genuine theodicy because its understanding of God emphasises divine transcendence and sovereignty but lacks a corresponding sense of divine participation in the human condition. In response, this study contends that such a critique reflects the projection of Christian soteriological and Christological assumptions onto a fundamentally different theological framework.

Focusing particularly on the Qur'ānic concept of *ẓulm* (wrongdoing, injustice), the article analyses Cragg's interpretation in dialogue with Christopher Lamb's critique and the major currents of classical Islamic theology. Drawing on the works of Daud Rahbar, Eric Ormsby, Sophia Vasalou, and Frank Griffel, it examines Mu'tazilite, Ash'arite, Māturīdite, and Ghazālīan approaches to divine justice, human freedom, and the existence of evil. The study argues that Islamic theology does not deny the problem of evil but formulates it within a predominantly moral rather than ontological paradigm. Particular attention is given to al-Ghazālī, whose theological synthesis seeks to uphold both divine omnipotence and meaningful human moral agency.

The article further argues that Cragg's notion of 'divine responsibility' introduces a category derived from Christian doctrines of divine participation, kenosis, and redemption that cannot readily be applied to the Islamic conception of God. Whereas Christianity often interprets divine goodness through God's solidarity with human suffering, classical Islamic theology typically understands divine goodness in terms of God's justice, wisdom, mercy, and absolute sovereignty.

The study concludes that Cragg's claim that Islam lacks a theodicy results from applying Christian theological categories to an Islamic framework. Rather than lacking a theodicy, Islamic thought has developed a distinct practical and moral theodicy centred on divine justice (*ʿadl*), human accountability, the concept of *ẓulm* as injustice directed against oneself, and trust in God's wisdom.

Keywords

Kenneth Cragg, theodicy, Islam, *ẓulm*, divine responsibility, divine justice, Islamic theology, Christopher Lamb, al-Ghazālī, Mu'tazila

At the heart of the problem of theodicy is the tension between the three claims of classical monotheism: God is omnipotent, God is perfectly good, and there is evil and suffering in the world. Theodicy, in its own way, tries to explain how these claims do not contradict each other despite the experience of evil. The fundamental question is, then, how to defend God's justice and goodness in the face of evil.

The problem of theodicy – the justification of God in the face of the existence of evil – takes on different contours in Islamic thought than in the Christian tradition. Kenneth Cragg attempts to interpret the Islamic concept of God as ‘not fully theistic’,¹ lacking a sense of ‘divine responsibility’ for human sin. He explains this by saying that in Islam ‘God is not in a salvific relationship with man, nor is man in need of God for salvation. Just as Islam is intellectually a faith without theodicy, it is also a religion without a radical critique of life.’² He believes that Muslims still lack a full understanding of the Quranic texts that concern the human situation. Christopher Lamb believes that Cragg's criticism stems from a misunderstanding of the inner dynamics of the Islamic concept of evil – especially the concept of *ẓulm* (ظلم) – and from the excessive Christian emphasis on the reciprocity of God and man. According to Lamb, ‘for his Muslim partners in dialogue such a reciprocity of God and man would be unthinkable’.³ Cragg presents the Christian concept, where God understands his ‘divine responsibility’ and fights Evil as a spiritual entity. This study compares both approaches. Islamic theology understands evil as a consequence of free choice, which God inserted into the creative order through his wisdom. Islamic theodicy emphasises God's unconditional omnipotence and absolute limitlessness, which fundamentally complicates – and in some systems actually excludes – the possibility of synthesising both classical approaches to the problem of evil.

Definition of the Term

The topic of *Unde malum*⁴ was already addressed by Epicurus (†270 BC). The term ‘theodicy’ comes from the Greek words *theos* (God) and *dike* (justice). It was first used systematically by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) in his work *Essais de Théodicée* from 1710.⁵ It originally referred to the effort to show that God's justice remains intact despite the existence of evil in the world – that is, an attempt to explain ‘why God permits evil’, while remaining good and just. In this sense, it is an effort that John Milton aptly summarised in the words: ‘to justify God's ways to men’. In the philosophical tradition, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) defined the term more precisely: ‘Theodicy is understood as the defence of the supreme wisdom of the Creator of the world against the accusations that reason raises against it on the basis of the

¹ Kenneth Cragg, *Jesus and the Muslim: An Exploration* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1999), 46.

² Kenneth Cragg, *Islam in the Twentieth Century*, unpublished PhD diss., University of Oxford, 1950, pt. 1, 92.

³ Christopher Lamb, *A Policy of Hope: Kenneth Cragg and Islam* (London: Melisende, 2014), 68.

⁴ ‘Si Deus est, unde mala?

Si non est, unde bona?

Aut enim vult tollere mala et non potest;

aut potest et non vult;

aut nec vult nec potest;

aut et vult et potest:

si vult et non potest, impotens est, quod in Deum cadere non potest;

si potest et non vult, invidus est, quod pariter alienum est a Deo;

si nec vult nec potest, invidus et impotens est, ideoque nec Deus;

si et vult et potest, quod unum est proprium Dei, unde sunt mala, aut cur illa non tollit?’

quotation from Reinhold Gleis, ‘Et invidus et inbecillus: Das angebliche Epikurfragment bei Laktanz, *De ira Dei* 13,20–21’, *Vigiliae Christianae* 42, no. 1 (1988): 47, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1584470>.

⁵ Eric L. Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought: The Dispute over al-Ghazālī's ‘Best of All Possible Worlds’* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 3.

purposelessness of the world.’⁶ In later times, however, the term acquired a broader meaning. It denotes not only an intellectual defence of God against the problem of evil, but also a general belief in God’s management of the world and his care for creation – something close to the concept of providence.

Cragg’s Concept of ‘Divine Responsibility’

Cragg discusses the topic of *ẓulm* most extensively in his book *The Mind of the Qur’an*,⁷ drawing on Rahbar’s study *God of Justice*.⁸ Cragg points out that in the Qur’anic vision the world is ‘charged with the greatness of God’.⁹ For Muslims, however, this divine presence is not only manifested in nature, but also in ‘the submission of humanity to the authority, government, and final judgment of God’. While God’s mercy is manifested in good people, his justice is vindicated in those who do evil. The two poles – mercy and retribution – form a single unity of God’s sovereignty. Cragg’s analysis centres on two key concepts: *ẓulm*, which he translates as ‘wrong, oppression, evil’ and *nifāq*, or ‘hypocrisy’. According to him, man’s problem lies in the situations that these two terms describe. The consequences of sin are most convincingly described in Surahs 2:57 and 10:44, which repeat: ‘They wronged themselves’.¹⁰ Cragg writes: ‘Sometimes the emphasis here is clearly on the contrast: they wronged not God, but themselves. It is a matter of divine immunity rather than a human diagnosis.’¹¹ The emphasis on divine transcendence and inviolability nevertheless admits the existence of a power that leads God to human rebuke. Cragg sets himself the task of emancipating the divine realm from human measures that Muslim theology presents to him. The Qur’an describes the commission of evil as an injustice to the perpetrator himself, and designates it by the term *ẓulm al-naḥs* (wrong, injustice towards one’s own soul). Evil distorts his being, so that he finds himself condemned and betrayed by himself. Therefore, Cragg asks a penetrating question: ‘If on *ẓulm al-naḥs* matters and if it happens, as we have seen, in a world where the person cannot be isolated, can it be so entirely finalized in the solitariness of judgement and in the total hopelessness of hell?’¹² One cannot exchange one’s own soul ‘for anything in the world’ (Surahs 10:54; 13:18; 39:47). The meaning of *ẓulm* is not merely an individual matter, it extends to the social plane:

Zulm has frequently a collective character. It obtains in solidarity. Individual guilt, in its personal entail for the self, arises within the pressures of a whole society and from the forces at work in what we may call the larger dealers in *zulm*-nations, races, systems, structures, ideologies and other establishments, social and political.¹³

⁶ Immanuel Kant, ‘Über das Mißlingen aller philosophischen Versuche in der Theodizee’, in *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 8, *Abhandlungen nach 1781*, ed. Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1912), 253–271. (Quoted passage on p. 255 = AA VIII, 255.)

⁷ Kenneth Cragg, *The Mind of the Qur’ān: Chapters in Reflection* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973), 98–100.

⁸ Daud Rahbar, *God of Justice: A Study in the Ethical Doctrine of the Qur’ān*, Studies in the History of Religions 8 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), 5.

⁹ Cragg, *The Mind of the Qur’ān*, 99.

¹⁰ Kenneth Cragg’s commentary (see fn 15) in: Kamil Husayn, ‘The Meaning of *Zulm* in the Qur’ān’, *The Muslim World* 49, no. 3 (July 1959): 208. https://archive.org/details/muslim-world_1959-07_49_3/page/208/mode/1up Cragg notes that the Jesuit Arabic translation of Proverbs 8:36 employs the expression *ẓalama naḥsahu* (‘he wronged his own soul’), rendering the verse, ‘He who sins against me wrongs his own soul’, In Proverbs 6: 32, the adulterer is deccribed as “the destroyer of himself”.

¹¹ Cragg, *The Mind of the Qur’ān*, 99.

¹² Ibid., 101.

¹³ Ibid., 100.

In conclusion, Cragg states that the final judgment (*yawm ad-dīn*) represents the absolute consummation of this inner process: 'To counter *ẓulm al-nafs* is not, therefore, a simple search for private rectitude or personal acquittal. It requires also a will to righteousness within the wider whole. If there is no diagnosis that can rightly isolate the individual, there is no merely individual escape from *ẓulm*.'¹⁴ If there is a real and in-depth analysis of the impact of *ẓulm al-nafs*, then hope, according to Cragg, will bring the opposite of *ẓulm*, which is active goodness.

In response to Husayn's article 'The Meaning of Zulm in the Qur'an', Cragg discusses¹⁵ the presence of *ẓulm* in the soul *al-nafs* based on the verse of Surah *Yusuf* (Joseph) 12:53, 'Truly the soul of man is prone to evil.' Cragg claims: 'This verse probably comes closer than anything else in the Qur'ān to the Christian view of sin.'¹⁶ Husayn argues: 'Islam is firmly of the opinion that the human soul is essentially good and that the transgressor is he who wrongs his own soul. If evil were the nature of man, it would not be possible to say to the one who commits an evil deed, "You have wronged your own soul."¹⁷ Husayn does not accept that Surah Yusuf in any way suggests that the human soul is burdened with a tendency to evil. Cragg views the verse from a different perspective and believes that 'The phrase *la ammaratun bi-sui* is very illustrative and suggests bias, an inner tendency to deviate from the truth by some inner law.'¹⁸ Joseph does not regard it as his own merit that he resisted lust, in contrast to the women who attempted to seduce him. He attributes his resistance to God's mercy. Cragg shows that temptation comes from the inner disposition of the soul, but the authority of the decision ultimately lies in the soul itself. The consequences do not fall only on the soul of Joseph, but, like in the story of the Prodigal Son, also on the father, for whom the son's departure caused anxiety, regret, and loneliness. Temptation does not come from outside, but from the soul itself in the form of thoughts. The notion of 'dangerous thoughts' is not unique to Christian theology but also finds parallels in Greek tragedy and Jewish tradition. The term denotes inner impulses, desires, and self-deceptions that often remain partially hidden from conscious awareness, echoing the psalmist's recognition that human beings may be unable to discern their own "hidden faults" (Ps 19:13).¹⁹ The Greek solution is to change and control thinking. Cragg suggests that 'biblically speaking, "saved thoughts," thoughts that accept the nature of man's creation and recognize that freedom comes only in right obedience, in ordered desire, in the worship of God as Lord.'²⁰ The mere realisation that one wrongs oneself through *ẓulm* will not bring greater power or effectiveness if one is determined to resist. 'Nor can we suppose that the root of human evil is simply intellectual ignorance, which mere education will remedy. For reason itself can become morally depraved when placed in the total context of the whole personality.'²¹

According to Cragg, the solution is based on soteriological logic: God the Creator must participate in the consequences of human evil, otherwise his creation would remain without redemption. That is why he speaks of 'obligatory divinity' – of God's 'inner necessity' to be faithful to his own love. However, Lamb points out that in Islam such a necessity would compromise God's sovereignty: 'For Islam, such a view compromises the greatness of God, who cannot be understood as having obligations towards humanity.'²² Cragg, however, argues

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Cragg, as joint editor of *The Muslim World*, published a translation of Husayn's article with his own commentary inserted both in the article's footnotes and after it.

¹⁶ Cragg in footnote n.9 in Husayn, 'The Meaning of Zulm', 205.

¹⁷ Husayn, 'The Meaning of Zulm', 204.

¹⁸ Cragg in footnote n. 9 in Husayn, 'The Meaning of Zulm', 205.

¹⁹ Psalm 19:13 Who can discern errors? Forgive me even the hidden sins of my heart.

²⁰ Cragg in Husayn, 'The Meaning of Zulm', 208.

²¹ Ibid., 211.

²² Lamb, *A Policy of Hope*, 68.

that this position reflects what he calls a Muslim ‘reluctance to be fully theist’.²³ In his view, classical Muslim theology resists the idea that God is voluntarily and personally involved in the human predicament. He therefore insists that the act of creation entails a form of divine responsibility. As he states: ‘You cannot create and be as if you hadn’t. You cannot have law and be indifferent to what happens to it. You cannot educate and be indifferent to what is happening in education... God is involved in wrong that jahiliyyah does to him.’²⁴ For this reason, Cragg rejects the notion of an ‘unobligated deity’, describing it as ‘a terribly desolating and finally contradictory concept’. The refusal to attribute such divine involvement to God therefore appears, in Cragg’s interpretation, as a failure to follow the implications of theism to their fullest extent.

In this context, Cragg responds sharply to Husayn’s claim that human wrongdoing affects only humanity and not God:

However, this concept is clearly incompatible with any serious faith, with *Islam* as such, if it suggests that our wickedness is indifferent to Him. Our evil harms Him at least in the sense that every legislator must take the violation of the law seriously. The very divine requirement of *Islam* (conscious conformity) from man requires that the deficiency (in *zulm*) matters to Him and in this sense afflicts Him unpleasantly.²⁵

In Cragg’s view, God’s act of creation also implies responsibility for the restoration and correction of fallen creation – a fact that can be summed up in the word ‘redemption’. As will be shown below, in the Islamic context of mainstream theology, such a conception could be understood as a weakening of God’s majesty, since it would suggest that God is bound by some obligation to man. However, in unorthodox fringe currents, the activity of a ‘descending’ benevolent God can be found. The fundamental criticism remains that Cragg essentially confuses two levels – the ontological and the moral. The Islamic tradition has never delved deeply into the question of why God permits evil, but rather how one can be righteous in God’s eyes, as will be pointed out below.

Islamic Theodicy as an Answer: Justice, Trial, Freedom

A Study by Daud Rahbar

According to Daud Rahbar, the central ethical principle of the Qur’an is God’s justice (‘*adl* Allāh), especially as manifested in the final judgment. In contrast to Christianity, where love of God functions as the primary motive of moral conduct, Rahbar argues that Qur’ānic ethics is fundamentally rooted in reverence for God’s stern justice and fear of divine judgment.²⁶ Rahbar argues that the Qur’anic concept of God is primarily judicial in character.²⁷ The dominant theme of the Qur’an is God’s stern justice, manifested in his role as the final judge who rewards and punishes human actions. In this respect, Qur’an 10:44 illustrates a fundamental principle of divine justice: ‘God does not wrong people in anything, but people wrong themselves.’ From this divine justice, then, the fundamental motive of human virtue arises – fear (*taqwā*) and responsibility (*mas’ūliyya*). Man is obliged to act justly, because God’s justice is perfect and inexorable. Rahbar points out that the Quran does not command love of God in this regard in a universal sense, because the relationship between God and man is asymmetrical: Surah 3:76 states: ‘Indeed, God loves the righteous’ (*innā Allāha yuḥibbu al-muttaqīn*). Love is therefore not a universal moral imperative, but a reward for those who

²³ Cragg, *Jesus and the Muslim*, 46: ‘reluctance to be fully theist characterise the classical Muslim theologians’.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Cragg in Husayn, ‘The Meaning of Zulm in the Qur’ān’, 198–199.

²⁶ Daud Rahbar, *God of Justice: A Study in the Ethical Doctrine of the Qur’ān*, Studies in the History of Religions, 4–5 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), 5.

²⁷ Ibid., 22: ‘the consistent dominance of the idea of God’s stern justice, the real basis of Qur’ānic morality.’

already live in a state of piety. 'The relationship of love, as we have already said, is reciprocal. The Quran never commands love of God. This is because God Himself loves only those who are strictly pious.'²⁸ In contrast, fear of God's justice is the initial and permanent motor of moral life. Rahbar writes that 'in Quranic thought, fear of God becomes the fundamental principle of virtuous action.'²⁹ However, this fear is not irrational anxiety, but the awareness of God's justice, which judges everything according to deeds. Because God in the Quran is just and 'never commits *ẓulm*', human responsibility is entirely individual; evil and injustice only exist as a consequence of human free choice, not God's will.

In Islam, *ẓulm* is usually translated as 'oppression', 'injustice', or 'tyranny', and *ẓulm* as 'darkness', 'gloom'. In the Sunni tradition, *ẓulm* distinguishes between sinful actions against the law of God, human rights, and neglect of duties. A person who commits *ẓulm* must correct it. He asks for forgiveness from God and seeks compensation for the injured. The Islamic concept of *ẓulm* appears as a moral problem of man, not in an ontological sense.

In the Islamic intellectual tradition, the 'problem of evil' is primarily associated with the questions of God's justice (*ʿadl*), power (*qudra*), and human responsibility (*taklīf*). The dispute over how to reconcile God's omnipotence with the existence of evil has, from an early period, been concentrated in different theological 'schools' and currents that developed distinctive theodicies. Although the term theodicy is unknown to Islamic theology, it does address the problem of 'unde malum' and the problem of responsibility for Evil. First, it assumes that God is absolutely just (*al-ʿadl*). Second, the world is a place of trial (*ibtilāʾ*) and third, man has a responsibility that, from God's perspective, gives evil a moral, not a metaphysical, weight.

The basic Quranic principle is expressed in Surah 4:79: 'Whatever good befalls you is from God, and whatever evil befalls you is from yourself.' This verse places evil within the moral framework, not within cosmic injustice. The idea that man could harm God is alien to Islamic theology. However, what it does address is the issue of causality, divine omnipotence, and human freedom.

Muʿtazila – the Rational Basis of Ethics

Around the middle of the Umayyad reign, opponents of determinism, the early Qadarites, appeared. They emphasised human responsibility and *qadar* (freedom of action). From this they concluded that God could not be the author of evil. Opposing them were the advocates of *jabr* (determinism), who claimed that man had no real freedom and that everything was from God. However, both extremes were gradually surpassed by the emergence of the rational kalam of the Muʿtazila. The doctrine of 'optimum' – God's obligation to do what is most beneficial to his creation (*al-aṣḥaḥ*) – appears as early as al-Nazzam († 835 – 845). Subsequently, the idea was elaborated by the schools in Basra and Baghdad. Muʿtazilite theology fundamentally rejects the possibility that God could be the author of evil, since this would deny his own justice (*ʿadl*). Evil was therefore understood as the result of human freedom and God's rejection of evil as its moral necessity. In the introduction to his monumental ethical encyclopaedia, the representative of the late Basra Muʿtazila ʿAbd al-Džabbār († 1025) explicitly states: 'God does only what is good, and He does without reservation what is obligatory...'³⁰ This clearly excludes the possibility that a good God could have any part in evil.

All Muʿtazilites were based on the belief in divine justice and the rational knowability of moral values, which is summarised by the thesis that 'God and humans are bound by the same moral code'. This implies that some actions are necessary for God (*wājib*) – for example, to

²⁸ Ibid., 180.

²⁹ Ibid., 179.

³⁰ Sophia Vasalou, *Moral Agents and Their Deserts: The Character of Muʿtazilite Ethics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 19, citing ʿAbd al-Jabbār ibn Aḥmad, *al-Mughnī fī abwāb al-ʿadl wa-l-tawḥīd*, vol. 6, pt. 1 (*al-Taʿdīl wa-l-tajwīr*), ed. ʿAbd al-Karīm ʿUthmān (Cairo: al-Dār al-Miṣrīya li-l-Taʿlīf wa-al-Tarjama, 1960).

reward the efforts of the righteous, because ‘doing good deeds was seen as necessarily involving hardship (*mašaqqa*) and hardship suffered in fulfilling the Law must be rewarded with an equivalent (*muqābil*)’.³¹ This logic of reciprocity is crucial to Mu‘tazilite ethics.

On this basis, the Mu‘tazilites formulate the principle of *aṣlah*, based on the assumption that God, as the absolute good, will always do ‘the best / most beneficial’ for his creatures. In theology, the question of whether and to what extent God is bound by an obligation to do what is most beneficial for people has become a contentious issue. Vasalou summarises the debate between the two main schools as follows: the Baghdadi Mu‘tazilites argued that the moral value of human good deeds is in fact the repayment of an infinite debt for God’s previous beneficence, and therefore cannot constitute real merit – which would in turn lead to a new ‘debt’ on God’s part. The Basra school reversed this asymmetry, understanding the power of reward as stronger than the power of punishment. Vasalou comments on this: ‘They adopted a position of weak retributivism; positive treatment—praise and reward—was considered a duty (*wājib*). God was therefore obliged to reward, but not to punish.’³²

While the Basra Mu‘tazilites limited God’s duty to the afterlife – God, according to them, is ‘obliged to provide the highest degree of *lutf* (help) so that people may fulfill the Law and attain bliss’ – the Baghdad school extended God’s duty to do *aṣlah* to the realm of earthly good. In their view, God is obliged to choose the most beneficial not only in eschatological matters (*āchira*), but also in the ordinary order of this world (*dunyā*). According to critics, the Mu‘tazilites, with their rationalist theodicy, limited God’s omnipotence by attributing to him duties analogous to those of humans.

Sunni Orthodoxy – Good as a Command from God

The Ash‘arī reaction of the 10th–11th centuries could be summarised by the verse of Surah 2:20: ‘God is over all things omnipotent’ (*wa-Allāhu ‘alā kulli šay’in qadīr*). God’s omnipotence and will are absolute, good and evil have no objective rational basis, but are determined from above by God’s command (divine fiat). The Ash‘arīs underestimated the intellect’s ability to judge good and evil. Al-Ijī unequivocally states: ‘We declare its judgment null and void’ (*ab ṭ aln ā ḥ ukmahu*), because ‘God is the judge’ (*ḥ akim*) and ‘He decides what He wills’ (Surah 5:1).³³ God is above everything, including the good and evil that He establishes in the Law. Ash‘arīya insists that God is the author of good and evil, but is not morally limited by this. God is the creator of deeds; man only ‘acquires’ deeds (*kasb*), but does not create them. By ‘acquiring’ (*kasb*), man assumes responsibility for them. It is unthinkable to attribute to God any ‘obligation’ that would limit His dominion. Yet this very ‘voluntarism’ opens up new questions about power, necessity, and justice. An accurate summary of Ash‘arī is offered by the scholar of early Ash‘arī theology Abu Bakr Muhammad al-Baqillani (†1013): ‘We emphatically deny that reason alone can know whether an action is evil or good, whether it is legally forbidden, permitted or obligatory. These judgments can be established about actions only through divine law, not by any determination of reason.’³⁴ What appears to humans as Evil may be, from God’s perspective, a test, a cause for the emergence of a greater good, which

³¹ Vasalou, *Moral Agents and Their Deserts*, 79–80.

³² For discussions of *aṣlah*, *lutf*, asymmetries of reward and punishment, and the differences between the Baṣran and Baghdadi Mu‘tazila, see Sophia Vasalou, *Moral Agents and Their Deserts: The Character of Mu‘tazilite Ethics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), esp. 79–80 and chaps. 2–4.

³³ Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought*, 234, citing ‘Abd al-Qādir ibn Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Jazā’irī, *Kitāb al-Mawāqif fī al-Taṣawwuf wa-al-Wa’z wa-al-Irshād*, 3 vols. (Damascus, 1966–67).

³⁴ Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought*, 25, quoting al-Bāqillānī, *Kitāb al-Tamhīd*, 105.

is part of God's wisdom beyond human comprehension.³⁵ Ash'arī theodicy insists that God creates all events, good and evil, but precisely because God's will is the absolute standard of justice, God's actions are never unjust; man bears responsibility through the appropriation of actions (*kashb*), and evil is only a relative aspect of God's perfectly wise order.

The Maturidiyya, associated with Abu Mansur al-Maturidiyya (†944), together with the Ash'ariyya, represent the 'second orthodox school' of Sunni kalam.³⁶ They differ mainly in that the Maturidiyya emphasises the rational knowability of good and evil. Human reason has the ability to grasp basic moral qualities. Actions are 'acquired by choice' (*ikhtiyār*). Their epistemology therefore allows for a wider autonomy of reason in the field of ethics than Ash'arism. Ormsby describes how the Ash'ariyya consistently rejected the idea of God's obligation to provide the best possible state of the world. This framework also applies to the Maturidiyya: God is not bound by anything, but acts wisely and justly, his attributes do not change. The Maturidiyya theodicy is therefore more balanced: it recognises God's sovereignty, but at the same time attributes to human reason sufficient ability to understand the order of the world so that human responsibility is real.

Al-Ghazali – a Compromise between Reason and Revelation

The debate between the 12th and 19th centuries often centred on a single sentence attributed to al-Ghazali, according to which there is nothing more wonderful than this world in its wisely ordered form. Al-Ghazali himself, however, put this formulation in the context of the classic dilemma of theodicy, when he emphasised that if there were a better possible world and

If, however, there were (a possible better world) and God were to deny it, although He had the power (*qudrah*) to do it, but did not deign to do it, that would be stinginess (*bukhl*) contrary to divine generosity (*jud*) and injustice (*zulm*) contrary to divine justice ('*adl*). But if He were not able, that would be inability ('*aj*) contrary to divinity.³⁷

This argument serves al-Ghazali to rule out the assumption that God could create imperfectly or in a limited way.

Ormsby shows that al-Ghazali explicitly rejects the Mu'tazilite notion of *the optimum*, that is, the obligation of God to do 'the best'³⁸ independently of His will. This is not because of a hypothetical 'debt' of God to creatures, but from the premise that everything God actually does is best, since God's actions are necessarily a manifestation of His perfect wisdom and free will. Al-Ghazali thus rejects Mu'tazilite rationalism: 'al-Ghazali explicitly rejected the Mu'tazilite concept of objective good and evil, but he accepted that the human intellect is itself capable of perceiving good and evil from an aesthetic point of view.'³⁹

It follows that al-Ghazali is not a rationalist optimist, but a theologian who holds the Ash'arite position: the world is the best possible not according to the criteria of human reason, but because it was created by the will of God, which does not err and does nothing without a purpose. Although God is therefore an absolute agent and 'can do with man whatever He wills',⁴⁰ he always remains wise, just, and good. Ormsby emphasises that al-Ghazali builds on two premises: the absolute nature of God's power and His immeasurable wisdom (*hikma*), from which it follows that every aspect of creation has its function, even if it is often hidden from

³⁵ Qur'an 18:60–82 presents a notable episode in which Moses is guided through a series of actions that appear unjust, yet are later revealed to belong to God's far-reaching wisdom. His repeated protests, despite a prior commitment to refrain, make this a significant illustration of Islamic theodicy.

³⁶ Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought*, 25.

³⁷ Ibid., 62, quoting al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, 4:223–24.

³⁸ Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought*, 237.

³⁹ Ibid., 238.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

man. Understanding this wisdom therefore requires spiritual purification and *tawakkul*, that is, complete surrender to God, which consists in the trust that everything is governed by His perfect wisdom and will (*irāda*).

This framework is closely related to the question of human responsibility. Although God creates all actions, man ‘acquires’ them (*kasb*) and is responsible for them – a classic Ash‘arite position that al-Ghazali affirms. He mitigates the paradox of God’s omnipotence and human responsibility by emphasising inner spiritual discipline and the practice of trust in God’s guidance. Al-Ghazali thus formulates a theodicy that rests not on philosophical necessity but on the theological premise of God’s perfection: the world is not best by rational standards, but because *God*, whose wisdom does not tolerate imperfection, created it that way. Evil, then, does not represent a gap in God’s wisdom, but an aspect of a larger order that human intellect cannot fully grasp.

Closely related to al-Ghazali’s theodicy is his concept of causality. His critique of necessary causalism and his emphasis on God’s immediate action became defining for Sunni theology. Frank Griffel shows that al-Ghazali created a framework in which God’s freedom, wisdom, and at the same time the possibility of natural explanation can be combined, without God being ‘subordinated’ to necessity. ‘Voluntary human actions are caused by the will and its basic motives. Motives are caused by human knowledge and its desires; and human knowledge is the result of various causes... Redemption or reward in the afterlife is the causal consequence of our actions in this world.’⁴¹ For al-Ghazali, acquiring the right kind of knowledge is crucial, becoming one of the most important human tasks in this world.

Controversy: Why Cragg’s Model Does Not Correspond to the Islamic Logic of Evil

Regarding God’s relationship to man, al-Ghazali writes in his *Ihyā’ ‘ulūm ad-dīn*: ‘God the Most High is not obliged in his perfect attributes to consult [have regard for] the benefit of his creatures.’⁴² This statement is not a manifestation of deism, as Cragg fears, but a consequence of the Islamic emphasis on God’s *ghinā’* – independence. God does not need man, but man needs God; this is the meaning of *ibād*, worship. Lamb argues with Cragg: ‘In fact, there is a denial in later classical Muslim thought that the fact of creation has any special significance in pointing to some truth about God, which contradicts the very basis of Cragg’s argument.’⁴³ Cragg’s statement ‘You cannot create and be as if you hadn’t’⁴⁴ has a strong existential charge, but theologically it suggests a necessity that Islam rejects on principle. Islam distinguishes between God’s *irada kauniyah*⁴⁵ (general will – what happens) and *irada shar‘iyah*⁴⁶ (moral will – what should be). God can allow evil without approving it; his sovereignty therefore also includes the mystery of allowing it. In this framework, the concept of ‘divine responsibility’ is logically redundant: God is just precisely because he allows evil only within the framework of wisdom, not because he ‘associates’ with it.

Cragg’s thesis of ‘divine responsibility’ is based on the assumption that God *must* respond to human failure, otherwise he would be immoral. In doing so, he projects into the Islamic

⁴¹ Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195331622.001.0001>.

⁴² Richard J. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of al-Ghazālī’s al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl and Other Relevant Works of al-Ghazālī* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), 241.

⁴³ Lamb, *A Policy of Hope*, 68.

⁴⁴ Kenneth Cragg, *Islam and the Muslim* (Milton Keynes: Open University, 1978), 407, cited in Lamb, *The Call to Retrieval*, 43.

⁴⁵ The concept of the cosmic will (al-irāda al-kawniyya; الإرادة الكونية) occupies a central place in Sunni theology (Ash‘arī, Māturīdī, and Atharī). It denotes God’s universal creative and determining will, by which all events in the created order occur, including good and evil, belief and unbelief, life and death.

⁴⁶ Irāda shar‘iyya (الإرادة الشرعية) refers to God’s legislative or religious will, that is, what God loves, approves of, and commands, even though it may not always be realized in human actions.

framework the Christian logic of kenosis (divine limitation) and incarnation (the incarnation of God in man). That is, what Christian theology understands by the word redemption of the world in that God (Christ) took upon himself the punishment for the sins of the world. Islam, on the other hand, understands God as absolutely transcendent and at the same time immanent through management (*tadbīr*), not through engagement in the defeat of Evil.

Cragg understands the Mu‘tazilite concept of ‘divine obligation’ to do *aṣlah* as the closest to the Christian idea of divine salvific intervention. This brings him closer to the Mu‘tazilite concept, but without its logical support: the Mu‘tazilites argued that God must do what is best for people (*aṣlah*), while Cragg moves towards a moral *necessity* for God to act redemptively. However, both run into a fundamental problem: necessity in God means the loss of his freedom, as understood by the Sunni traditional school.

The fundamental difference lies in the fact that, in Islam, *ẓulm* is never merely a social or legal category but always possesses a moral and spiritual dimension. But it is rarely understood as a personal, demonic entity that stems from the evil nature of man, as understood by Jesus⁴⁷ or, for example, in the Epistle to the Romans.⁴⁸ However, metaphysical interpretations of the term do appear – especially in Sufism and from the mouths of philosophers. They sometimes speak of *ẓulm* almost as a force of darkness that opposes the light of God (*nūr*).

From the perspective of Islamic theology, then, Cragg’s ‘divine responsibility’ identifies God’s goodness with His connection to the human world, while Islam identifies it with His independence and wisdom. Evil reflects humanity’s fallen condition rather than any culpability on God’s part. Therefore, Lamb persuasively notes that ‘given the political character of all theological disputes in Islam, the charge of non-existent theodicy cannot stand.’⁴⁹ The discussion of God’s justice in Islam has always been conducted, but in a different language – that of law and power, not of the philosophy of evil.

Theological Implications for Islam-Christian Dialogue

Cragg’s attempt to ‘open the suffering of the world to God’ is essentially a Christian response to the problem of theodicy in the post-Holocaust era. His ‘God’s responsibility’ seeks to prevent images of a non-participating God, but in an Islamic context it becomes theologically untenable because it abolishes God’s *transcendence* (*tanzih*).

From an Islamic perspective, God is not indifferent but sovereign. His compassion is expressed not in sharing suffering but in guidance (*hudah*). The Quran does not allow God to ‘suffer with us’ – because that would deny His divinity – but it promises again and again that ‘God is with those who are patient’ (2:153). This is a form of immanence that does not violate transcendence.

Cragg’s conception would mean, in Islamic terms, that God has an ‘intrinsic duty’ to redeem the world. But Islamic belief says that God’s *rahma* – mercy – is nonbinding and yet unlimited. God makes himself known through mercy, not necessity. This is a theologically more subtle concept than Cragg’s moral projection.

Cragg himself asks: ‘How great is God?’ The Islamic answer is: God is so great that he is free from all obligations, but so merciful that he always acts for good. The Christian answer is: He is so great that he humbles himself in Christ. These statements are not mutually exclusive, but stem from different anthropologies. Nevertheless, Cragg’s polemic should be seen as valuable in that it forces Islamic theology to think more deeply about the meaning of God’s

⁴⁷ ‘But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts...’ (Mt. 15:18–19, NKJV).

⁴⁸ ‘So then, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find’ (Rom 7:17–18, NKJV).

⁴⁹ Lamb, *A Policy of Hope*, 65.

concern for man, but his ‘divine responsibility’ would, in Islamic epistemology, mean a limitation of God rather than a glorification of him.

Conclusion

Cragg’s attempt to introduce the motif of ‘involvement’ into the Islamic image of God is based on Christian revelation, not on the Quranic concept of sovereignty. His criticism that ‘Islam is a faith without theodicy’ is in fact a misunderstanding: Islam has a practical, not a speculative, theodicy. Every dispute over God’s justice in Islamic history – from the Kharijites to the Mu‘tazites – has been a way of wrestling with God’s *how*, not *whether*. God in Islam is not passive or uninvolved, but wise (*ḥakīm*). Evil makes sense in his order of testing and education. To claim that God is responsible for Evil is to a Muslim the same as to claim that a doctor is to blame for the bitterness of medicine. Cragg’s God is ethically sensitive; the Islamic God is ontologically perfect – and it is in this perfection that his compassion and justice lie. Therefore, one can conclude with Lamb: Islam is not a ‘faith without theodicy’,⁵⁰ but a faith that refuses to defend God because it knows that God does not need defending. This is the highest form of theodicy – the theodicy of silence and trust.

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⁵⁰ Lamb, *A Policy of Hope*, 65.

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Theological Assessment of Auditing Effects on Fraud Detection and Prevention in Lagos Mainland Diocese

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Abstract

Nigeria ranks fifth in a global survey on cybercrime activities, following the US, China, Russia, and Ukraine. The World Cybercrime Index identifies Nigeria as a major hotspot for cybercrime, fraud, and corruption. Despite auditing being crucial for financial accountability, fraud remains a significant issue globally, particularly in Nigeria and the Church. Frequent fraud incidents raise questions about Nigeria's current auditing procedures, highlighting potential financial losses, reputation damage, legal and regulatory consequences, and public trust in the nation and religious organisations. The aim of this study is to examine auditing effects on fraud detection and prevention from a theological perspective, using the Diocese of Lagos Mainland (Anglican Communion) as a case study. The study examined the influence of auditing on fraud detection and prevention in the Lagos Mainland Diocese, Nigeria. It involved 25 Diocesan Headquarters personnel and 25 auditors, selected through purposive sampling. Data was collected through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, with the Treasury Department providing qualitative data. Internal audit reports, financial statements, and regulatory guidelines were reviewed for context. The study on the auditing's impact on fraud detection and prevention is vital for enhancing knowledge and informing policymakers, regulatory bodies, and professional auditing organisations. It provides practical recommendations for improving fraud detection and prevention mechanisms, enhancing internal controls, reducing risk, and enhancing financial integrity. The findings also support the professional development of auditors and accounting professionals, promoting financial transparency and accountability in organisations.

Keywords

Nigeria, Lagos Mainland Diocese, fraud, corruption, fraud detection, fraud prevention

Introduction

The prevention of fraud, public trust, ecclesiastical integrity, and the development of the Lagos Mainland Diocese (Anglican Communion) depend on the auditor's reports at the parish, archdeaconry, and diocesan levels. In Nigeria, the auditing sector has changed to concentrate on fraud prevention and detection via the use of cutting-edge technologies like data analytics and artificial intelligence. In Nigeria, especially in the Lagos Mainland Diocese (Anglican Communion), auditing is essential for bolstering fraud prevention strategies and improving the dependability of financial reporting. Long-term survival and parishioners' faith depend on

financial transparency and honesty. During each Diocesan Synod, auditing offers an objective evaluation of the Lagos Mainland Diocese's yearly financial reports.

An audit is an impartial review of an organisation's financial data to ensure correct bookkeeping and adherence to regulatory standards. Auditors can be employed by the company or a third-party company.¹ Most businesses audit their cash flow, balance sheet, and income statement financial statements annually. Auditors gather data and assess working papers from previous years. They provide third-party assurance that no major misstatements have been made. Audits help stakeholders assess governance, control, and risk management over legal entities. Since ancient times, auditing has served as a protective precaution.² Due to the rising differentiation of joint-stock enterprises throughout the 18th century industrial revolution, auditing grew in importance. The aim of audits has changed from being to find fraud to making sure that accounting is honest and fair. The Companies Act, 1913, which prioritises fair financial portrayal, requires audits in India. In 1951, fraud detection in the United States gained importance, with an emphasis on bookkeeping details.³ In the 1970s, auditing shifted from verifying transactions in books to relying on systems due to increased transactions and company size and complexity. Auditors placed greater reliance on internal control in their procedures. In the 1980s, auditors reduced system work and used analytical procedures. Risk-based auditing emerged in the mid-1980s, focusing on areas with errors. Accounting scandals in the early 2000s led to the Sarbanes-Oxley Act 2002, which expanded auditors' duties to audit internal controls over financial reporting.⁴ Currently, auditors, appointments, removals, resignations, eligibility, qualification, disqualification, compensation, powers, ties, and auditing standards are all covered in Chapter X of the Companies Act, 2013.⁵

Lloyd-Jones asserts that the Bible places a strong emphasis on stewardship and responsibility in the church, calling for frequent financial audits and recommending that Christians participate in a 'God audit'. It promotes reciprocal accountability, stewardship, and the punishing of suspected fraud or poor management. To guarantee accuracy and openness, churches should conduct routine financial audits. Both internal and external audits can be carried out by church members or outside auditors. Self-evaluation, sin confession, repentance, and following God's instructions are all part of a God audit. This keeps believers close to Christ and helps them become more holy.⁶ The Bible has many references to accountability, transparency, and stewardship in the church,⁷ which can be interpreted as a biblical view on auditing, including those following.

1. Ezra 8:24–27: Ezra chose trusted servants to count and weigh the gifts of gold and silver given to God's house in Babylon.
2. Galatians 6:1–2: Believers are accountable to God and to each other.
3. Hebrews 10:24: Believers should hold each other accountable to help each other grow in holiness.

¹ K. Gupta, *Contemporary Auditing* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004), 1095.

² S. E. Loeb and A. E. Shamoo, 'Data Audit: Its Place in Auditing', *Accountability in Research* 1, no. 1 (1989): 23–32.

³ M. Derek, *History of Auditing: The Changing Audit Process from the Nineteenth Century till Date* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), 6.

⁴ E. P. Kumar and B. Mohan, 'Origin and Development of Auditing', *Indian Journal of Research* 4, no. 9 (2015): 43–44.

⁵ Derek, *History of Auditing*, 7.

⁶ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, 'An Honest Audit: A Sermon on Philippians 3:7', 2022, <https://www.mljtrust.org/sermons/other-sermons/an-honest-audit/>.

⁷ D. O. Ogunbiyi, 'Nigeria's Economic Challenges and the Hope of Restoration: A Socio-Theological Reading of Psalm 126:1–6', *Kwaghe International Journal of Arts, Humanities and Religious Studies* 3, no. 1 (2026): 15–35, <https://doi.org/10.58578/kijahrs.v3i1.9081>.

4. Hebrews 13:18: Leaders should be transparent and responsible, and strive for a clear conscience and honourable behaviour.
5. 2 Corinthians 8:20–21: Church leaders should be transparent and open in how they manage funds.

Statement of the Problem

Like other Nigerian institutions, the Lagos Mainland Diocese has serious problems with financial fraud, which compromises operational openness, financial integrity, and confidence. Even with the adoption of auditing procedures, fraud is still widespread and may be ascribed to a number of variables, including those below.

1. Internal Weaknesses: Extravagant lifestyles, financial challenges, peer pressure, and a lack of internal audit control and monitoring create vulnerabilities for fraud in the Diocese.
2. Auditing Challenges: Non-cooperation, inaccurate inventory, and technical issues make it difficult for auditors to successfully identify and stop fraud.
3. Technological and Structural Gaps: The diocese is more vulnerable to fraud because of the intricacy of contemporary financial operations, globalisation, and dependence on antiquated systems.
4. Ethical and Professional Concerns: The issue is made worse by low ethical standards among workers, a lack of ongoing training for auditors, and a lack of professional capability.
5. Economic and Legal Pressures: Efforts to guarantee financial openness and accountability are further strained by economic volatility, antiquated legal frameworks, and the slow implementation of fraud prevention measures.
6. Cultural and Religious Expectations: Church leaders are supposed to be transparent and honest as stewards of God's resources. However, the church's financial systems are weakened by deviations from stewardship procedures and theological principles.

These problems necessitate robust auditing frameworks, the integration of advanced technologies, and an emphasis on ethical and theological principles to enhance fraud prevention and detection.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this research is to investigate the theological assessment of Auditing Effects on Fraud Detection and Prevention in Lagos Mainland Diocese, other objectives are to:

1. Assess auditing's role in identifying and preventing fraud at parish, archdeaconry, and diocesan levels;
2. Analyse auditors' problems like non-cooperation, technology issues, and inventory discrepancies;
3. Identify underlying reasons of financial fraud – ethical failings, personal financial strains, and internal controls deficiencies;
4. Combine auditing procedures with religious ideas to promote financial honesty and ecclesiastical responsibility;
5. Offer actionable suggestions for improving fraud detection and prevention systems;
6. Help regulators, legislators, and church leaders understand need for improved auditing practices and fraud prevention strategies.

These objectives aim to enhance financial accountability, improve fraud prevention systems, and reinforce the moral and ethical responsibilities of church leaders and auditors.

Research Questions

1. What is the auditor's role in identifying and preventing fraud at the parish, archdeaconry, and diocesan levels?
2. What challenges do the auditors face with organisational inventory, cooperation, and technologies?
3. What are the underlying reasons for financial fraud?
4. How can organisations combine auditing procedures with religious ideas to promote financial honesty and ecclesiastical responsibility?
5. What are the actionable suggestions for improving fraud detection and prevention systems?
6. How can this research help regulators, legislators, and church leaders understand the need for improved auditing practices and fraud prevention strategies?

These research questions align with the objectives, addressing the core themes of auditing, fraud prevention, theological integration, and professional development.

Conceptual Review

Auditing is a systematic process driven by human curiosity to verify and obtain expert opinions. Its history can be traced back to the separation of agents from principals in accounting. Agents use funds provided by the principal, prepare accounting reports, and provide an auditor's opinion before presenting them to the principal.⁸ Agency theory, accounting theory, and auditing theory are intertwined.⁹ Auditing is a systematic process where a competent, independent person objectively obtains and evaluates evidence to form an opinion about an entity or event's conformity to specific standards.¹⁰

Internal, external, and government audits are the three primary categories of audits. While independent auditors do external audits, firm workers undertake internal audits. Government audits calculate taxable income and verify tax compliance. For their credibility, auditors must retain independence while reporting financial accounts, offer professional, unbiased assessments, and exhibit the greatest calibre of professional diligence. To increase professionalism and confidence, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN) stresses how crucial it is for auditors to follow independent auditing guidelines. Accurate financial representation, optimal business operations, prevention of fraudulent reporting, accurate record-keeping, independent advice to management teams, staff accountability and responsibility, reassurance to shareholders, instilling confidence in potential creditors, strengthening internal control mechanisms, and legal compliance are all made possible by auditing. Additionally, it instils trust in potential creditors, reassures shareholders, and raises staff accountability, all of which help firms expand and obtain financing more easily.¹¹ Audits have distinct types that focus on various aspects of an organization's operations and financial health, serving different purposes.

1. **Compliance audit:** This is a crucial process that evaluates a company's compliance with industry standards and regulations.¹² It involves a thorough review of policies, procedures, and documentation, assessing compliance preparations, security policies,

⁸ S. A. Owolabi, O. O. Jayeoba, and A. T. Ajibade, 'Evolution and Development of Auditing', *Unique Journal of Business Management Research* 3, no. 1 (2016): 32–40.

⁹ D. A. Adamu, 'Public and Private Audit: An Overview of Nigerian Context', *Scholars Bulletin* 1, no. 5 (2015): 121–27.

¹⁰ J. E. Kiger and J. H. Scheiner, *Auditing* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1994), 4.

¹¹ B. Bassey, O. Ubi, O. Olatunbosun, I. Asi, and E. Emmanuel, 'Auditors' Independence and Audit Quality in Nigeria', *Journal of Critical Reviews* 7 (2020): 624–35.

¹² K. Cassidy, 'Compliance Unit', accessed 8th July 2024, <https://www.techtarget.com/searchcio/definition/compliance-audit>.

user access controls, financial accuracy, and risk management procedures. Non-compliance can result in legal repercussions and fraud.¹³

2. **Financial audit:** A financial audit verifies financial statements using international accounting standards or other methods to identify material errors or misstatements. It helps organisations maintain a healthy financial position and avoid potential misstatements. In order to offer an unbiased assessment, a financial audit examines various financial data points and takes into account every facet of the financial process and paperwork. Account balances and transactions, historical records, IRS records, internal records, financial statements, and promises are all included.¹⁴ The auditor gathers evidence to ensure fairness and maintain a healthy financial position. The audit also considers financial commitments, such as loans, lease agreements, employee benefits, and liabilities, and provides context for other financial reporting activities within the organisation.¹⁵
3. **Information system audit:** An essential procedure for assessing management controls in business applications and IT infrastructure is an information systems audit. It evaluates if the systems are protecting resources, preserving data integrity, and functioning efficiently to meet the objectives of an organisation.¹⁶ It can be performed alongside a financial statement audit, internal audit, or other attestation engagement. Independent observers assess the effectiveness of controls, identify potential security breaches, and implement preventative measures.¹⁷ As technology advances, more information technology threats and disruptions are introduced, necessitating high levels of assurance to mitigate these risks.
4. **Internal audit:** Internal auditing is a consulting practice that enhances an organisation's operations by evaluating risk management, control, and governance procedures.¹⁸ It provides recommendations based on data and business process analysis, focusing on legal and regulatory compliance, financial reporting accuracy, risk management, and governance.¹⁹ Internal auditors can also participate in investigations, conduct proactive fraud audits, and conduct post-investigation fraud audits.
5. **Operational audit:** An operational audit is a systematic review of an organisation's business practices, focusing on processes, procedures, and systems. It goes beyond financial analysis and examines management practices to identify areas for improvement. Operational auditing is a future-oriented, systematic evaluation of activities using financial data, primarily focusing on operational policies and achievements related to organisational objectives.
6. **External audit:** An external audit involves independent auditors examining a company's financial records to identify fraud, errors, or embezzlement misstatements. The goal is to ensure accuracy, compliance with laws, and fair results. The auditor's

¹³ M. Green, 'Conducting a Compliance Audit', 8th July 2024, <https://www.skillcast.com/blog/conduct-compliance-audit>.

¹⁴ E. B. Arens, *Auditing and Assurance Services*, 14th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2012), 3.

¹⁵ N. Blank, 'What Is a Financial Audit & How to Prepare for One (+ Checklist)', 20th July 2024, <https://www.order.co/blog/finance/financial-audit-tips/>.

¹⁶ R. K. Rainer and G. C. Casey, *Introduction to Information Systems*, 3rd ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2011), 3.

¹⁷ M. D. Stoel and D. Havelka, 'Information Technology Audit Quality: An Investigation of the Impact of Individual and Organisational Factors', *Journal of Information Systems* 35, no. 1 (2020): 135–40.

¹⁸ D. A. Wood, 'A Descriptive Study of Factors Associated with the Internal Audit Function Policies Having an Impact: Comparisons between Organisations in a Developed and an Emerging Economy', *Turkish Studies* 14, no. 3 (2013): 581–591.

¹⁹ D. A. Wood, 'Internal Audit Quality and Earnings Management', *Accounting Review* 84, no. 4 (2009): 1255–65.

appointment, qualifications, and reporting format are regulated by statute and jurisdiction.

7. **Performance audit:** A performance audit can be defined as a systematic evaluation of a government or nonprofit organization's operations, management systems, or programme, aiming to assess its financial sustainability, resource efficiency, and effectiveness, typically conducted by external bodies or internal auditors in Nigeria.
8. **Construction audit:** A construction audit is a crucial process that ensures a project's proper functioning and alignment with the contract, maintaining schedules, and budgets. It can be performed by the construction business, stakeholders, or government officials and can provide a competitive advantage by expanding financing ties or accessing lenders, investors, or capital markets.
9. **Forensic audit:** Forensic auditing is a specialised accounting practice that investigates a company's financial records to provide evidence in court or legal actions. It focuses on detecting financial reporting fraud or workplace misbehaviour by employees, executives, or directors.²⁰ Forensic accountants can prosecute parties for financial crimes, embezzlement, bankruptcy filings, business closures, and divorces and may serve as expert witnesses in trials.²¹

Empirical Framework

Some scholars, such as Richet,²² Nwanaka,²³ Olufidipe,²⁴ Idowu,²⁵ and Olaoye,²⁶ believe that fraud is a global issue involving paper falsification, obtaining personal information, and identity theft. The internet's global nature, convenient hiding places, online identity verification issues, and hacking methods contribute to its growth. In some countries, tax fraud is punishable as false billing or tax forgery. It is a deliberate deception or trick used to obtain dishonest benefits or financial loss. Studying fraud in Nigeria provides insights into the challenges faced by individuals and organisations. Financial fraud, which includes mortgage, insurance, and securities fraud, is a major concern. Identity theft and income fabrication are components of mortgage fraud, minor claims rejected for lack of evidence are components of insurance fraud, and high-yield investments, Ponzi schemes, pyramid schemes, foreign exchange fraud, broker embezzlement, pump-and-dump, hedge-fund fraud, and late-day trading are all components of securities fraud. Fraudsters swindle investors by acting on insider knowledge, delivering incorrect advice, hiding important information, and misrepresenting themselves. Fraudulent organisations take advantage of generosity by asking people to give to respectable causes, frequently setting up false campaigns under trustworthy identities.²⁷ Nigeria's Auditor General confirmed large-scale fraud in revenue collection and remittance to

²⁰ E. M. Homer, 'Testing the Fraud Triangle: A Systematic Review', *Journal of Financial Crime* 27, no. 1 (2020): 172–187.

²¹ C. Honigsberg, 'Forensic Accounting', *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 16, no. 1 (2020): 147–164.

²² J. Richet, 'How Cybercriminal Communities Grow and Change: An Investigation of Ad-Fraud Communities', *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 174 (2022): 5–19.

²³ C. Nwanaka, 'Chapter 3: Overview of the Concept of Fraud in the Nigerian Banking System', *BW Academic Journal* 1, no. 1 (2022): 8–24.

²⁴ E. O. Olufidipe, 'Fraud in Nigeria and Its Implication for Banks and Financial Institutions', *Nigeria Institute of Bankers Journal* 30, no. 1 (1994): 7–29.

²⁵ I. Idowu, 'Assessment of Fraud and Its Management in Commercial Banks in Nigeria', *International Journal of Auditing* 3, no. 3 (2009): 341–359.

²⁶ C. O. Olaoye and R. A. Dada, 'Analysis of Frauds in Banks: Nigeria's Experience', *European Journal of Business and Management* 6, no. 31 (2014): 90–112.

²⁷ J. Chen, 'Fraud: Definition, Types, Consequences of Fraudulent Behaviour', 10th January 2024, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/f/fraud.asp>.

the federal government in 2009, involving revenue-generating agencies and oil firms.²⁸ This leads to significant money loss, draining resources, and causing significant consequences for development, socio-economic, and political programs. The AG reported sharp practices in calculating revenue from the oil sector, resulting in billions of Nigerian naira (millions of US dollars) lost annually.²⁹ It is crucial to report these crimes to law enforcement and dispute fraudulent charges, while victims should gather relevant documentation and continue filing important information.³⁰

Fraud detection is crucial in various sectors like banking, insurance, medicine, government, and the public. Machine learning and statistical models help identify suspicious patterns, ensure compliance, and minimise damage. In the UK, a 'Failure to Prevent Fraud' offence was introduced in April 2023, holding firms liable for employee fraud without adequate prevention programmes. Increased regulation and enforcement will impact compliance requirements.³¹ Internal control is a crucial aspect of an organisation's management to ensure the safety, security, and reliability of records. Accountants and auditors are responsible for detecting fraud, but management can influence their commitment. Effective fraud detection techniques are essential for protecting businesses and consumers from evolving risks. The capabilities of fraud detection solutions, such as machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI), behavioural analytics, anomaly detection, data analytics, real-time monitoring, collaborative fraud intelligence, and continuous monitoring and updates, should be taken into consideration by compliance professionals. Large volumes of data can be analysed in real time by AI and machine learning, which can spot trends and abnormalities that might point to fraud.³² Behavioural analytics can monitor user behaviour, flag suspicious activities, and detect fraudulent transactions. Data analytics tools can identify potential fraud indicators, minimise damages, and enable quick responses to fraud. Collaborative fraud intelligence can lead to a comprehensive understanding of evolving fraud tactics, enabling proactive prevention and collective defence against fraudsters.³³

Theoretical Review

This study focuses on three key theories related to auditing's impact on fraud detection and prevention: stewardship, credibility, and fraud triangle theories.

Church leaders and administrators have a moral obligation to manage the church's money and resources as obedient stewards of God's gifts, according to stewardship theory in church auditing. This philosophy emphasises responsibility and transparency by showcasing prudent and moral financial management.³⁴ Church leaders are viewed as more than just administrators; they are stewards of the resources that God and the church have entrusted to them. To show how money is being spent and foster confidence among churchgoers, regular financial reports

²⁸ J. F. Adebisi and D. O. Gbegi, 'Fraud and the Nigerian Public Sector Performance: The Need for Forensic Accounting', *International Journal of Business, Humanities and Technology* 5, no. 5 (2015): 5–19.

²⁹ Y. Kamaludden, 'Auditors, Frauds, and Fraud Detection in Nigeria's Public Sector', paper presented at the Faculty of Social Science and Administration, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Nigeria, 1995, 3.

³⁰ K. A. Adeyemo, 'Frauds in Nigerian Banks: Nature, Deep-Seated Causes, Aftermaths and Probable Remedies', *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 3, no. 2 (2012): 280–295.

³¹ A. Chia, 'What Is Fraud Detection and Prevention', 19th July 2024, https://www.splunk.com/en_us/blog/learn/fraud-detection-prevention.html.

³² I. F. Sydney, *Management Control System and the Prevention and Detection of Frauds in Banks* (Lagos: CIBN and Landmark Publication Ltd., 1986), 3.

³³ V. Ramaswamy, 'Corporate Governance and the Forensic Accountant', *CPA Journal* 73, no. 3 (2005): 68–79.

³⁴ H. M. Nalle, S. P. Pradnyani, and P. A. Wasita, 'Accountability and Internal Control of Religious Organisations (Study on GKPB Immanuel Tabanan)', *International Journal of PERTAPSI* 1, no. 1 (2023): 21–30.

and audits are essential.³⁵ When it comes to handling church funds, stewardship philosophy places a strong emphasis on operating honourably and avoiding conflicts of interest. The Bible has a strong foundation in the idea of stewardship, which exhorts people to use God's gifts responsibly. When evaluating a church's financial management systems and procedures, auditors use stewardship theory with an emphasis on financial openness and accuracy.³⁶ They point out opportunities for improvement as well as instances of exemplary management. To ensure efficient communication and accountability, auditors often meet with church leaders to talk about incorporating stewardship concepts into financial procedures.

An area of actuarial mathematics called credibility theory aids insurance firms in calculating risk premiums and generating experience-based estimations from past data. It reduces exposure to claims and losses and aids actuaries in understanding the risks involved with coverage. Actuaries and insurance firms develop models based on past losses, evaluating the veracity of statistically tested hypotheses. To project future insurance costs, they look at the losses incurred when insuring a certain subset of policyholders. In order to determine how the insurance company's experience may have varied from that of other insurance firms, actuaries then look into the company's past experiences, policy by policy.³⁷

The Fraud Triangle Theory is a concept used by anti-fraud professionals and researchers to predict high fraud risk. It consists of three elements: perceived pressure, perceived opportunity, and rationalisation of fraud. Financial pressure, structural incentives, and economic conditions can increase the temptation for fraud. Opportunities for fraud are high when fraud goes undetected, and researchers often point to internal structural factors like internal controls or auditing procedures. Economic conditions, regulatory oversight, and employee risk calculation can also increase opportunities. Auditors can use the Fraud Triangle Theory to create audit procedures that address these factors, promote an ethical and accountable culture, and monitor transactions to prevent fraud.³⁸

Theological Framework

According to Rae and Wong,³⁹ theological concepts such as stewardship, justice, fairness, responsibility, and integrity have an impact on theologians' views on auditing. The biblical concept of stewardship views people and institutions as stewards of God's resources (Luke 16:10). In the context of moral resource management, auditing is viewed as an accountability instrument. Theological viewpoints also place a strong emphasis on justice and equity, especially in Christian and Jewish traditions (Prov. 11:1). The idea of responsibility is similar to the necessity of financial accountability in businesses and in the Church (Rom. 14:2). In fact, Christian theological ethics places a strong emphasis on honesty, making sure that financial records accurately represent the truth and encouraging moral responsibility and trust (Prov. 10:9).⁴⁰

³⁵ J. Gilman, 'Financial Stewardship & Compliance: Simplifying Church Finances', 21st January 2025, <https://www.acstechnologies.com/church-growth/financial-stewardship-compliance-simplifying-church-finances/>.

³⁶ J. S. E. A. Panggabean, S. Baldrice, S. Djoko, and A. D. Santos, 'The Influence of Spirituality and Competency Toward Financial Accountability: An Empirical Study in the Christian Church', *IOSR Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM)* 25, no. 2, ser. 2 (2023): 1–7.

³⁷ A. Gisler and H. Bühlmann, *A Course in Credibility Theory and Its Applications* (New York: Springer, 2005), 3.

³⁸ R. Abdullahi, N. Mansor, and M. S. Nuhu, 'Fraud Triangle Theory and Fraud Diamond Theory: Understanding the Convergent and Divergent for Future Research', *European Journal of Business and Management* 7, no. 28 (2015): 30–37.

³⁹ S. B. Rae and K. L. Wong, *Business for the Common Good: A Christian Vision for the Marketplace* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 43.

⁴⁰ M. Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 8.

The New Testament views God as the ultimate auditor and places a strong emphasis on introspection, responsibility, and comparing one's life to God's standards. This idea is frequently called a 'spiritual audit'. Scriptures like 1 Corinthians 11:31 exhort people to evaluate their spiritual well-being and behaviour on a frequent basis. The idea of an ultimate judgement day, when God will examine one's life, is widely held. It implies that God will examine every thought and deed (Rom. 14:12; 2 Corin. 5:10). Transparency and honesty are necessary for a successful audit. Although financial auditing isn't specifically mentioned, the term 'spiritual audit' is frequently used to refer to the process of assessing one's life in terms of faith and conformity with God's plan. According to Beales, the early church fathers were required to account for gifts and utilise them prudently, demonstrating a concern for appropriate financial monitoring and introducing the idea of responsible church fund management.⁴⁷

Annual audits are essential in the Anglican Church to protect church assets and prevent mishandling of funds or investments. Confirmation of audit completion boosts parishioners' confidence. Auditors are appointed and elected during the vestry meeting, similar to corporate AGMs. The Diocesan Synod shall elect or appoint the following officers: Synod Secretary, three Assistant Secretaries, Treasurer, two Assistant Treasurers, and two Auditors. The Parish Vestry meeting shall appoint two members of the Parish as Auditors. They shall not be members of the Parish Church Council. They must have an understanding of accounting and financial procedures, and they may not be licensed public accounting firms. Some churches cannot hire professional auditors, but they must find individuals with adequate understanding. Auditors can be church members, but they must be independent of management and financial processes. The church's accounts, including operating accounts and funds, should be audited to ensure proper, authorised, complete, and accurate transactions throughout the year. The audit should also verify the proper recording of transactions, the accurate representation of assets, liabilities, income, and expenses, the effective implementation of adequate internal control procedures, and the fair presentation of financial statements for the year. The audit should also ensure that the financial records accurately reflect the church's financial position, ensuring that all financial transactions are recorded in the correct amounts and accounts.

Historical Concept

Luca Pacioli's invention of double-entry bookkeeping in 1494 led to the development of modern auditing. The Industrial Revolution led to the formation of modern businesses, requiring directors to present audited financial accounts to shareholders. Since the 18th century, auditing has been used as a safety precaution, with early check and countercheck procedures. The Industrial Revolution in England increased trade volume, leading to partnerships and major firms. The Renaissance in Italy introduced double entry accounting ideas, strengthening the accounting system and emphasising impartial audits.⁴⁸ The Society of Accountants was established in Edinburgh in 1853 and merged with the Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales in 1880. The 1862 English Companies Act mandated educated specialists to perform independent evaluations of firm financial accounts. As joint-stock corporations emerged, the need for independent auditors developed, leading to the English Companies Act of 1900. Legal requirements for assurance providers, particularly auditors, are found in various countries, including Nigeria.

By the 19th century, auditing evolved, with the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. In the 1960s, Internal Audit was established as a unit within the Finance

⁴⁷ K. Beales, 'Auditing Revival: George Whitefield and Public Accounting in Colonial America', *Church History* 90, no. 4 (2021): 824–846.

⁴⁸ J. H. Thomas, 'Reviewed Work: *A History of Accounting Thought*, by Michael Chatfield', *Business History Review* 49, no. 2 (1975): 256–257.

Department in the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, now the Bursary Department, to examine payment vouchers and perform accounting functions like checking salaries and taking stock. After an inquiry by Professor Ola's Committee into stock losses in various rations, particularly Jerry and Mammalade, resulting in significant financial losses in the Catering Department of the University of Ibadan, the council decided to establish an independent audit department in 1974.

Before 1960, audit practice in Nigeria was not limited to companies but also to the government. Public accounts were subjected to audits since the Colonial era in 1866. The Colonial Branch of the Exchequer and Audit Department was established in 1910, and Southern and Northern Nigerian heads of audit were appointed. Nigeria was established as a nation in 1914, with an audit section as a division of the Central Secretariat in Lagos. The first Audit Ordinance in Nigeria was enacted in 1956, establishing the Federal Audit Department within the Ministry of Finance.⁴⁹

The Nigerian National Assembly has various committees that oversee budgeting provisions and ensure strict adherence to the constitution. The Public Accounts Committee, chaired by an opposition party member, works closely with the Office of the Auditor-General. The Audit Bill, domiciled with the National Assembly, establishes the Office of the Auditor-General for the Federation, headed by the Auditor-General for the Federation. The Auditor-General's powers under this bill are not under the direction or control of any authority or person. The bill was passed in 2018 but sent for the president's assent in January 2019. The Nigerian Supreme Audit Institution is divided into four operational departments: the ministerial department, which audits accounts of government members and agencies; the extra ministerial department, which vets audited accounts of government companies, corporations, agencies, commissions, and other authorised departments; the project monitoring and evaluation department, which conducts value for money and performance audits; and the revenue audit department, which audits revenue accrued to the government.⁵⁰

The Church of Nigeria and the Diocese of Lagos Mainland (Anglican Communion) have their roots in the founding of the Church Missionary Society, which was influenced by the spiritual reawakening and evangelism in the 16th century in England. The first church in Nigeria was founded in Badagry, Lagos State, in 1842 by the Methodist Church Mission. Anglican and Methodist collaboration began in Nigeria, especially in missionary endeavours. By 1849, the evangelistic activities of missionaries in Abeokuta had resulted in over 500 regular worshippers, 80 communicants, and 200 candidates for baptism. Abeokuta was the first station of the CMS in the interior of Nigeria, except for Oshiele. Within ten years, Ijebu became the largest group of Christians in Yorubaland and Nigeria. The United Church of England and Ireland's bishop in West Africa was Samuel Ajayi Crowther in 1864, who translated the Bible into Yoruba. The Anglican Communion was founded in the 16th and 17th centuries, but it was not until 1867 that it started operating as a communion of separate churches. The Church of Nigeria was founded in 1906 as a result of a conference of bishops in Lagos who were in communion with the Anglican Church. At this meeting, the necessity for a West African province was first brought forward. The CMS decided to divide the Diocese of Western Equatorial Africa into two dioceses in 1919 due to its significant growth, transforming the former Yoruba and Niger missions into the Diocese of Lagos.

The Diocese of Lagos Mainland was established in 2006 by reorganising the three archdeaconries of Old Lagos Diocese into seven, including the Cathedral Group of Churches,

⁴⁹ S. A. Owolabi and A. O. Olagunju, 'Historical Evolution of Audit Theory and Practice', *International Journal of Management Excellence* 16, no. 1 (2020): 2256–2269.

⁵⁰ O. F. Umanhonlen, I. R. Umanhonlen, and O. K. Ogiedu, 'Performance Audit Effectiveness in the Nigerian Public Sector: A Review of Literature', 1st September 2024, <https://cnaj.anan.org.ng/article-details.php?article=12>.

Idi-Oro, Yaba, Ikate, Mushin, Aguda, and Surulere. The nine-archdeaconry structure was expanded to eleven with the inauguration of Odi-Olowo Archdeaconry in 2009 and Orile/Coker from the Old Surulere Archdeaconry in 2014. Two new archdeaconries, Ijesha from Aguda and Okotafom Idi-Oro, were created at the Clergy and Clergy Wives Convocation in 2014, bringing the number of archdeaconries to eleven. In 2016, the pioneer bishop, Most Rev. (Prof.) Adebayo Akinde, retired from active episcopal responsibilities after seventy years of service. The second Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Lagos Mainland, Rt. Revd. Babatunde Colenso Akinpelu Johnson, was enthroned on 24th August 2016, and the number of clergy in the diocese is around 126.

Research Design

The study aimed to investigate the impact of auditing on fraud detection and prevention in the Lagos Mainland Diocese (Anglican Communion), Lagos State, Nigeria. The research involved 25 Diocesan Headquarters personnel and 25 auditors, selected through purposive sampling. The study used structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to gather quantitative and qualitative data on auditing practices and challenges. The Treasury Department provided qualitative data, while internal audit reports, financial statements, and regulatory guidelines were reviewed for context.

Validity and Reliability

To assure its validity and re-validity, the study employed a variety of data gathering techniques, such as surveys, interviews, and document analysis. Before the structured questions were properly administered, a small sample of participants was employed to pre-test the questionnaires and interview guides to assess their clarity and relevancy. Additionally, an impartial research survey was carried out to reduce bias and preserve the integrity of the study.

Data Analysis

The findings and analysis are as follows.

Table 1: Official Position

S/N	Official Position	Frequency	Percentage
1	Auditor	25	50
2	Diocesan's Staff	25	50
	Total	50	100

Source: Field Survey, May 2024 – July 2024

Table 1 reveals that 25 respondents, representing 50% of the total sampling population, were certified auditors, while 25 respondents, representing 50%, were staff of the Diocesan Headquarters, Lagos Mainland Diocese (Anglican Communion), who participated in this study.

Table 2: Causes of Fraud in Lagos Mainland Diocese

Key: Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Agree (SA), Strongly Disagree (SD), Undecided (U)

S/N	QUESTION	A	D	SA	SD	U
1.	A person's extravagant lifestyle, financial hardships, coworkers or friend's pressure, and lack of internal audit control and monitoring can lead to financial fraud in the Diocese of Lagos Mainland.			50		

Source: Field Survey, May 2024 – July 2024

Table 2 shows that 50 respondents, representing 100% of the total sampling population, firmly believe that financial fraud in the Diocese of Lagos Mainland can be caused by an individual's extravagant lifestyle, financial hardships, pressure from friends or coworkers, and a lack of internal audit control and monitoring.

Table 3: Challenges and Effects of Auditing on Fraud Detection and Prevention in Lagos Mainland Diocese

Key: Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Agree (SA), Strongly Disagree (SD), Undecided (U)

S/N	QUESTION	A	D	SA	SD	U
1.	Auditors in Nigeria face significant challenges such as non-cooperation, fraud, inventory inaccuracy, and technical glitches across various sectors, including the church.			50 100%		
2.	Auditors play a crucial role in detecting and preventing financial fraud in the Lagos Mainland Diocese by ensuring the integrity of financial statements at various levels.			50 100%		
3.	The Diocese of Lagos Mainland hosts regular conferences and seminars on financial integrity, fraud detection, and prevention for auditors, church wardens, and parish accountants to equip them with the necessary skills and policies.			50 100%		
4.	The diocese has seen a significant reduction in fraud and embezzlement cases due to the hiring of experienced auditors at the Diocesan, Archdeaconry, and Parish levels.			50 100%		
5.	The Lagos mainland Diocese has seen a significant increase in the internal income and financial stability of parishes and archdeaconry, with leaks effectively addressed by both internal and external auditors.			50 100%		

Source: Field Survey, May 2024 – July 2024

Table 3 shows that 50 respondents, representing 100% of the total sampling population, strongly believe that auditors in Nigeria face significant challenges such as non-cooperation, fraud, inventory inaccuracy, and technical glitches across various sectors, including the church.

Additionally, 50 respondents, representing 100% of the total sampling population, strongly believe that auditors play a crucial role in detecting and preventing financial fraud in the Lagos Mainland Diocese by ensuring the integrity of financial statements at various levels.

Also, 50 respondents, representing 100% of the total sampling population, strongly believe the Diocese of Lagos Mainland hosts regular conferences and seminars on financial integrity, fraud detection, and prevention for auditors, church wardens, and parish accountants to equip them with the necessary skills and policies.

Further, 50 respondents, representing 100% of the total sampling population, strongly believe the diocese has seen a significant reduction in fraud and embezzlement cases due to the hiring of experienced auditors at the diocesan, archdeaconry, and parish levels.

Finally, 50 respondents, representing 100% of the total sampling population, strongly believe the Lagos mainland Diocese has seen a significant increase in the internal income and

financial stability of parishes and archdeaconries, with leaks effectively addressed by both internal and external auditors.

Discussion of Findings

Fraud is a prevalent issue in various organisations, particularly in the Church of God. Nigerian Christian organisations have been affected by economic downturns, employee dissatisfaction, disregard for internal controls, potential ethical deterioration, outdated systems, and regulatory delays. Church officials should monitor staff and be aware of potential opportunities for fraud.⁵¹ Perceived opportunities include lack of security, ignorance of fraud types and methods, lack of monitoring, trust in fraudsters' ability to evade detection, and the use of technology like online and mobile banking.⁵²

In 2023, Nigeria's financial institutions lost N17.67 billion due to fraud, with Lagos having the highest fraud count at 48% and 49%, respectively. The previous year saw losses of N9.9 billion. Lagos made little progress in combating financial fraud, but reduced the value of losses by 12% to N8.7 billion. Abuja's fraud count decreased by 26 to 4,548, while the value of money stolen soared by 73.17 percent to N994 million. Rivers State saw a decline to 3,285 while Ogun State remained in the top 10. Kaduna State's fraud count decreased slightly to 2766. Lagos and Kano States saw an increase in fraud, while the NIBSS reported a 325 percent increase in losses via Internet banking due to N2.4bn internal fraud on corporate accounts.⁵³

Age fraud, often known as age cheating, is a global problem that lowers productivity in the public and commercial sectors, including the church, particularly in developing nations. In nearly every agency in Nigeria, more than 40% of the workforce is under-represented, which results in over-aged workers in a variety of fields, including football, Holy Orders, public service hiring, and security forces. The issue is concerning because individuals don't think twice about lying about their age if it helps them, even if it goes against the ethics and conduct code of their place of employment. This problem is not exclusive to the public sector; organised commercial industries such as finance, agriculture, oil and gas, and engineering all face this difficulty. The reasons behind age fraud could vary depending on the nation or occupation.⁵⁴

Nigerian bank customers were scammed by over 80,658 fraudsters in 2023, a 4% decrease from 2022. However, this decline is still significant, as fraud losses have risen by 496.96% over the past five years, resulting in financial institution customers losing N59.33 billion between 2019 and 2023. The National Institute of Bankers and Supervision (NIBSS) reported in 2023 that 92% of all frauds involve deposit money institutions and that fraudsters often target people over the age of forty. A total of 62,901 fraud instances involving social media resulted in losses of N8.03 billion. Cases of armed robbery rose by 89.13%, while financial institution clients lost N658.8 million and N317.7 million as a result of card and phone theft, respectively. In 1,733 fraud cases, the absence of two-factor authentication led to losses of N192.3 million. An additional 5,273 fraud instances using compromised passwords cost N1.30 billion in damages. Phishing had a surge of 167.37 %, with 4,457 cases reported and N551.2 million in damages.⁵⁵

⁵¹ L. M. Lister, 'A Practical Approach to Fraud Risk: Comprehensive Risk Assessments Can Enable Auditors to Focus Antifraud Efforts on Areas Where Their Organisation Is Most Vulnerable', *Internal Auditor* 64, no. 6 (2007): 63–70.

⁵² F. Pomeranz, 'Fraud: The Root Causes', *Public Money & Management* 15, no. 1 (2009): 15–40.

⁵³ 'Lagos, Abuja, Rivers Lead States in N18bn Bank Fraud Loss', *Punch*, 21st August 2024, <https://punchng.com/lagos-abuja-rivers-lead-states-in-n18bn-bank-fraud-loss/#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20report%2C%20the,loss%20in%202023%20at%20N3.>

⁵⁴ S. U. Erude, O. C. Orogun, and J. O. Iyamah, 'Age Falsification and Public Perception in Nigeria', *Journal of Public Administration and Social Welfare Research* 8, no. 1 (2023): 17–30.

⁵⁵ T. Jaiyeola, '13 Tactics Scammers Used to Defraud Nigerians in 2023', *Business Day*, 6th August 2024, <https://businessday.ng/technology/article/top-tactics-scammers-used-to-steal-from-nigerians-in-2023/>.

The report reveals that employees and managers are the most likely to commit fraud, accounting for 40.9% of cases and 36.8% of managers. The owner/executive category makes up 18.9% of crimes. Employees of 1-5 years commit the most fraud, at 42.4%. Around 76% of frauds come from seven key departments: accounting, operations, sales, executive/upper management, customer service, purchasing, and finance. Perpetrators with a college degree are 47.3% more likely to commit fraud than those without a degree, possibly due to higher authority and access within the organisation. Approximately 83% of individuals committing fraud have never been terminated or punished before the crimes, which could be slightly inflated due to cases never being referred to law enforcement, offenders not receiving punishment, or confidential settlement agreements.

Nigeria's anti-fraud initiatives aim to raise public awareness of fraud and the shadow economy. The Diocese of Lagos Mainland collaborates with the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to improve society. The ICPC investigates corruption reports, prosecutes criminals, and educates the public, while the EFCC investigates financial crimes like advance fee fraud and money laundering. While the Diocese of Lagos mainland (Anglican Communion) recognises the fact that the 1999 Constitution is the Nigeria's most significant law, with the Fifth Schedule (Code of Conduct) prohibiting public officers from accepting property or benefits for their actions. The Criminal Code, applicable in southern Nigeria, addresses corruption and unjust enrichment by public officials. Section 98 defines corruption and prescribes offenses for it and related offenses. The Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act states that money laundering occurs when a person in or outside Nigeria conceals or disguises the origin of, converts, transfers, removes from jurisdiction, acquires, uses, retains, or takes possession of any fund or property, knowingly or reasonably should have known, or forms part of the proceeds of an unlawful act. Whether or not a disagreement involves clerical or lay issues pertaining to religious administration, the Diocese supports resolving conflicts amongst its members outside of civil courts. In light of this, the Diocese exhorts all of its members to resolve any disputes that may arise in the manner described above, in compliance with the Church of Nigeria's (Anglican Communion's) Constitution as well as the guidelines established by our Lord Jesus Christ, His Apostles, and Disciples.

Education on corruption and its effects on society are being promoted by the Diocese of Lagos Mainland. It is believed that the House of Clergy and Laity may bring about constructive change. In order to carry out an anti-corruption campaign successfully, they have to work together using creative strategies such as media platforms, sermons, and workshops. A potent instrument for reaching out to bigger congregations and alerting the public about wrongdoing is the pulpit. Every Nigerian citizen, from the elites to the underclass, where corruption is rife, should adopt this strategy. It must be noted that financial statements are crucial for a diocese's financial success, serving as a log of all monetary exchanges within the diocese. They aid in making investment decisions, obtaining loans, assessing financial status, and evaluating the diocese's performance. Financial statements also aid the Diocesan in making decisions on assessments, donations, and regulations based on the diocese's operations.

In Lagos Mainland Diocese, it is believed that auditors in the twenty-first century have problems as a result of the complexity of financial transactions, globalisation, and technological advances. They must comprehend how these activities affect a company's financial records and stay up to speed on accounting crises to assure compliance. Auditors must efficiently analyse massive data volumes as the auditing process becomes more reliant on technology and data analytics. To assure the accuracy and dependability of financial data, auditors must adapt and evolve. Auditors face the challenge of maintaining independence and objectivity in an interconnected business world where they rely on clients' information for audits. They must adhere to strict professional ethics to ensure the integrity of their audits. In

a highly competitive market, auditors must balance meeting client expectations with maintaining the integrity of the auditing process. They must also develop new techniques and strategies to detect and prevent fraud, requiring strong investigative skills and staying updated on fraud prevention trends. Auditors must also adapt their processes to audit virtual assets and transactions, understanding cybersecurity risks and controls to effectively audit in a virtual environment. In summary, auditors must navigate these challenges to ensure the integrity of their work and maintain their independence in a rapidly changing business landscape. Auditors in the 21st century face the challenge of auditing in a rapidly changing accounting environment. They must stay updated with accounting standards and new business practices to ensure accurate and reliable audits. This requires a strong technical understanding of accounting standards and continuous knowledge updates. By developing the necessary skills to adapt to these challenges, auditors can ensure the accuracy and reliability of financial information in a dynamic world.

In Lagos Mainland Diocese, auditors are required to provide assurance services, including assessing financial statements, including financial statement notes. These notes provide crucial information on balances, transactions, and other data. It is crucial for auditors to gather sufficient audit evidence about the disclosures made in these notes and to consider them throughout the audit process. Auditors in the Lagos Mainland Diocese are in charge of assuring financial reporting accuracy by verifying information and resolving potential fraud. They must follow high professional standards, which include ongoing technical training, and acquire abilities for establishing confidence in information. The move to technology and data has resulted in new business models, with much of an organisation's value driven by information other than audited financial accounts. The Diocese hosts frequent conferences and seminars on fraud detection and prevention, and the implementation of internal and external auditing methods has helped auditors avoid violating international norms.

Recommendations and Conclusion

The economic crisis has led to a significant increase in fraud, with over half of respondents reporting a slight or significant increase in fraud in the past year. Employers should closely monitor these individuals to prevent unethical behaviour and be aware of employees seeking opportunities to be alone in the workplace. Artificial intelligence (AI) is crucial in anti-fraud analytics and forensic accounting methodologies, ensuring the integrity and trustworthiness of corporate organisations and financial institutions. To combat fraud and corruption, multiple approaches, repetition, and follow-up activities are needed. Technology and social media can mobilise citizens to participate in anti-corruption issues, but improving access to these platforms at the grassroots level is essential. Low-tech communication approaches should be included in engagement and outreach strategies. Moving beyond monitoring and evaluation for accountability allows for adaptation and improvement, ensuring no one is left behind.

The results of the study suggest a three-pronged method for detecting and preventing fraud: sophisticated risk management, anti-fraud technology, and education on fraud risks. By training employees to spot suspicious activity, education can lower the number of CEO fraud cases, phishing, social engineering, and account takeover problems. Digital footprinting, social media lookups, device fingerprinting, and AML checks are all part of a comprehensive anti-fraud approach. This strategy is enhanced by transaction monitoring, which analyses real-time payment data and verifies credit card information using technologies like card BIN lookups. To improve detection accuracy and adjust to changing fraud trends, rule development and machine learning are crucial. There are several methods for preventing and detecting fraud, including inventory management, bank reconciliations, internal controls, corporate codes of conduct, and operational audits.

Auditors in the Diocese of Lagos Mainland are responsible for providing assurance services to build trust and confidence in information and ensuring sufficient measures are in place to identify, report, provide guidelines, and stop financial fraud and financial misappropriation. In light of the study's results, and to guarantee that all hands are on deck to eliminate financial fraud in Nigeria, the Church, and elsewhere, institutions should use the most efficient fraud prevention and detection procedures. This is because the survey found that the present fraud prevention and detection techniques are viewed as the least effective in addressing fraud threats. Forensic accounting procedures and the employment of forensic accountants, which are widely regarded as the most successful ways, should be promoted at all levels of government, including municipal, state, and federal.

The Bible has played a significant role in shaping the field of auditing, influencing key figures, guiding ethical practices, and promoting accountability. While there are both positive and negative aspects to consider, the future of the relationship between the Bible and auditing is bright. By upholding biblical values of honesty, integrity, and stewardship, auditors can continue to serve as ethical leaders in the profession, ensuring the trust and confidence of stakeholders. It is hereby recommended that the use of more internal and external data to respond to external risk indicators and provide electronic confirmations for audit evidence be adopted. Churches and organisations should use cloud bookkeeping solutions for remote bookkeeping procedures, enabling smooth communication and data exchange. Auditors should be trained in cybersecurity and cybercrime, and all parish accounting officers should be retrained. In summary, the auditors' tasks in the Lagos Mainland Diocese shall include the following: auditing the diocese's accounts before each session of the synod, examining and confirming the correctness of the diocese's books and finances, providing a report to the diocesan board before each session of the synod, and certifying that the diocese's securities exist and are secure.

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