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CORONAVIRUS (COVID -19) PANDEMIC A GLOBAL MENACE: AN APPRAISAL OF ITS PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE NIGERIAN CHURCH.

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Abstract

Pandemic has not been new to human history, however the current Coronavirus (COVID-19) global plague has become one too many in terms of its overriding menace to the global community. At the communication, political, economic, education, social, cultural and religious platforms nations are undergoing great challenges and reversals in the usual ways of doing things. Nigeria as a microcosm of the global community is not exempted from this present evil. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to examine the philosophical and theological implications of the menace to the Nigerian Church. The work which adopted a survey approach employed content analysis technique as its method of data interpretation and analysis. The work identified that the above pandemic has become an instrument that is fueling racism, hatred, xenophobia and fear across the world as well as the culture of de-socialization. The work therefore made the following recommendations namely, stressing public health theology as an academic discipline of study, recognizing the need to live right and desist from the abuse of nature, adopting information technology in advancing today's Church and building bridges of brotherhood of all men.

Keywords: Coronavirus, Pandemics, Philosophy, Theology, Church.

1.0 Introduction

Late last year the world was hit by a strange disease which began to spread and kill people in Wuhan, China. It was first seen by many as a disease arising out of the careless eating habits of the Chinese, who delight in eating a wide range of wild animals. It was viewed as a Chinese problem, and its pandemic nature was highly underestimated. It never entered the imagination of anyone, that the virus will travel thousands of kilometers to almost all the continents and countries of the world. Presently, it has altered the entire social and economic arrangement of nations and even shutdown global business and travels. The dreadfulness of the above pandemic is made highly pathetic by the report published by Johns Hopkins

University (2020), which states that as at May 10th, 2020 more than 4million persons had been affected globally by the virus out of which 279,303 have been reported dead. Equally it notes that in the same period 3,151persons had been infected while 128 have died from the above disease in Nigeria.

A very striking feature of ancient history according to Mathuna (2018) is the recurrence of pandemics or what is also called pestilences or plagues. Moreover, he submits that these ugly developments in our history often result in very dangerous consequences. For instance, he notes that in the middle of fourteenth century, the Black Death and the Sweating Sickness pandemic led to the death of about twenty-five million people indifferent parts of Europe. It is becoming increasingly clear that pandemic threats can no longer be viewed from medical perspectives only. This is because they now pose challenges that pervade all spheres of our lives namely social, cultural, political, economic and religious. Furthermore, UNAIDS (2000:26-33) states that in the light of the above submission, pandemics should not be seen as individual problem as it affects families, communities, nations, and continents and indeed the whole world. The earth had battled with various diseases of epidemic proportion in the past. These include but not limited to Small pox, HIV, Ebola, Lassa Fever, SARS, Spanish flu etc. This paper, will attempt to x-ray the theological and philosophical implications of the COVID-19pandemic within the context of the Nigerian Church.

1.1Theoretical Framework

According to Madhav, Oppenheim, Gallivan, Mulembakani, Rubin, & Wolfe (2017) there are three theories that relates to pandemics threats in the modern world namely the pathogenic, the spark and spread risks as well the bio- terrorism theories. They note that pandemics have occurred throughout history and appear to be on the increase due to rise in viral pathogenic diseases from animals. Furthermore, they posit that the spread risk theory relates to the influence of globalization which has ushered an age of increased global travel, integration, urbanization and greater exploitation of the natural environment. Moreover, they state that bio-terrorism which has to do with the use of chemical weapon may also be a possible source.

Mathuna (2018) in his own contribution posits, that from earliest records divine fiat theory has subsisted as the cause of pandemic disease. The above theory holds that plagues or pestilences arise as a result of the wrath or malice of unseen powers or divinities; a view which he notes is still upheld in Judeo- Christian thought. Against this backdrop he states that the sacred literature is filled with records of divine warning of imminent plagues from God's prophet to Israel and the nations. One example of such writings is the epidemic that destroyed fourteen thousand seven hundred lives of the people of Israel and which was held under check by prayers and offerings of Aaron the high priest(Numbers 16 :41-50). The problem with the divine wrath theory he observes is that the religious community gives too much emphasis to prayer and atonement for sin as the way out of the epidemics at the expense of evolving sanitary options. Against this background, infectious disease that poses threat to the global community can be traced to divergent sources ranging from natural causative factors like viral infections to human forces of development such as globalization, overcrowding, urbanization and cruelty or strife for political, economic, religious, cultural or technological domination. Some of these factors may predispose nations to resort to the use of deadly chemicals as weapons of war to achieve their intentions. Furthermore there is also

the moral dimension which according to Christian Theology holds the view that pandemics are product of man's rebellion to divine laws and principles. This work therefore shall be situated on the theories outlined above.

1.2 Conceptual Clarification

In this section an attempt would be made to define some of the key words relevant to this study. This no doubt would provide underlying background for understanding of the subject matter of this work.

Coronavirus: Madhav et al (2017) states that Coronovirus are viruses that belong to the pathogenic family of influenza, filovirus (such as Ebola virus), flavivirus (such as Zika virus) that have caused epidemics and pandemics due to the fact that they are ribonucleic acids that have high mutation rates. They also unleash what is generally referred to as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) hence it is sometimes referred to as SARS-COV. Furthermore, they posit that because they are pathogenic organisms that have high rate of mutation they pose great health risk to the society. They are therefore biological microorganisms that are responsible for the spread of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and which in most cases exert severe complication on the respiratory system.

Pandemics: Pandemics have been defined by Madhav et al (2017) as a large scale outbreaks of infectious disease that can engender disease or even death on a wide geographic area resulting in significant economic, social, political disruption. The Chambers Dictionary (2000) defined the above word as an epidemic that covers a wide area, a wide spread epidemic or one affecting whole people. On the other hand, an online English Dictionary defines pandemic as a disease that hits a wide geographical area and affects a large proportion of the population. From the foregoing the above word as used in this context refers to Corona virus as a great threat to the lives, health, economy and overall wellbeing of the global community.

Theological: The term theological relates to the scientific study of God. It embraces the study of religion which according to Jurgi (2014.101)is defined as a systematized body of beliefs and practices that relates to sacred things and which blend or bond a people into a single community called church. In this context we shall be examining the theological implication of Christian religion in the face of COVID -19.

Philosophical: The American Online Dictionary, defines the word philosophical as a concept pertaining to philosophy, rational, analytical or critical thinking. The Chambers Dictionary corroborates the above view when it defines the word as the disposition of being skilled or inclined to philosophy. Furthermore, it states that philosophy relates to the following ideas: the quest for wisdom and knowledge; investigation or contemplation of the nature of being as well as the enquiry into the causes and the laws of all things. Against this backdrop the above word is used in this context to refer to a critical enquiry of moral questions and challenges of the coronavirus pandemic to Christian theological space in Nigeria.

Church: The word Church as used in this work refers to the adherents of Christian religion in Nigeria as well as the institutionalized bodies representing the Christian community in the country.

2.0 Dimensions of Global Menace of COVID-19 Pandemic

According to Puck (2020) as the Corona-Virus (COVID-19) pandemic spreads globally thousands of deaths have forced decision makers to cancel sporting events, restrict international travels as well as discourage common social interactions. Furthermore, he submits that the above development has led governments of nations to demand that people self-quarantine themselves and this he notes is currently disrupting the daily lives of people. Moreover, he notes that while industries, businesses and financial markets are being put in disarray, our traditionally long held social values like hugging and shaking hands are being sanctioned because of fear of transmitting the virus.

Besides, he posits that to the elderly the virus is not just an inconvenience but has become a deadly threat. Moreover, the above pandemic has also led to the banning of corporate worship through Bible Study and fellowship on the ground that such routine interactions can easily facilitate the transmission from one person to another. What this means is thatCOVID-19 is grossly undermining moral and spiritual fiber of the global community as the above religious activities represent the largest platform of weekly gathering of the church community through which they build one another up morally, emotionally and spiritually. The scourge therefore, has far reaching implications, transcending beyond political, social, cultural, and economic to religious and spiritual realms of life.

2.1 Economic Menace

The *unnews.un.org/economic –development* online of 4th March 2020 reports that COVID-19 has at February this year wiped off $50 billion from global exports, a development which it notes, has great negative ripple effects globally. This, it posits is predicated on the fact that any slowdown in manufacturing in any part of the world has a ripple effect across the global community because of regional and global value chains. Miler (2020) corroborates the above view when he posits that the above pandemic which emerged in Wuhan, China in 2019 resulted in their implementation of the extraordinary quarantine of varying severity ranging from preventing work and travel in other to contain the disease. The result was that as at February this year the economy of China came to an unimaginable low level in recent times; a development which he stated created a global economic distress as China occupies the position of second largest economy in the world. According to him, as Chinese tourists stay at home, Chinese consumers buy less, and Chinese factories fail to supply global markets. Unfortunately, he notes that as the virus spreads across the globe, its economic impact did not stop in China. Madhev et al (2017) captures the above view pointedly when they state i*nter alia*:" Pandemics can cause economic damage through multiple channels, including short term fiscal shocks and long term negative shocks to economic growth". It is against this backdrop that from Wuhan, China to New York, United States and United Kingdom in Europe to Lagos in Nigeria the COVID-19 spread to these nations is creating untold economic agonies.

The *https://www.americamagazine.org*online publication states it pointedly when it posits that: Coronavirus has grounded all engines of the economy including, manufactures, malls, airlines, hotels and Disney worlds. Most cities are in lockdown isolation, and people staying home. They are not going out to restaurants not heading to shopping centers, not travelling or buying cars… As an example, seventy percent of the US economy is driven by consumer spending, and it has been in an unprecedented shutdown. It is highly unlikely most economies can avoid recession in the short run.

This menace agrees with an African adage which states that 'when one finger touches oil it spreads to other fingers'. In other words, a problem to one man is a problem for all men. Or as is popularly said an injury to one is an injury to all. This means that economically developed nations are interdependent on other nations, and therefore must strive to promote global health collectively in other to promote healthy humanity that would work to promote globally vibrant economies.

2.2 Political Menace

Globally the political leadership of nations are under severe pressure as they strive to manage several complex and competing demands of the citizenry and their nations at the same time. The import of the above dilemma can be captured in the speech of President Muhammad Buhari on Monday, 13th April, 2020when he states as follows:

In my address on Sunday, 29th March, 2020, I asked the residents of Lagos and Ogun states as well as the Federal Capital Territory to stay at home for an initial period of fourteen days from Monday, 30th March 2020. Many State Governments also introduced similar restrictions. As your democratically elected leaders, we made this very difficult decisions knowing full well it will severely disrupt your livelihoods and bring undue hardship to you, your loved ones and your communities. However, such sacrifices are needed to limit the spread of COVID-19 in our country. They were necessary to save lives.

The speech underscores the tough political terrain which those at the helm of affairs must grapple with while dealing with the issue of choosing the best out of two evils in governance. It is against the dangerous nature of the above decisions that many economically distressed citizens caged under the lockdown in many cities are resorting to violence against the army and police in other to break loose and seek for their daily bread.

The *https://www.americamagazine.org*online publication in addition notes, that while the spread of COVID-19 in some countries are slowing down in others such as United States, Europe, and Iran they are getting worse. According to him, what this means is that those nations that are making progress in the war against the pandemic, as well as those countries that are yet to witness the epidemic, must put in more pressures to secure their border from further threat. This therefore, points to the fact that in the fight against the above evil, nations must collaborate internationally to ensure that gains made in any country is consolidated.

2.3 Socio-Cultural Menace

Epidemics create socio-cultural pressure on societies and nations. This is corroborated by Spinney (2019), when he states that history has shown that pandemics have played no lesser a role in shaping the social evolution of nations as has been done by wars, revolutions and economic crisis. From a global history spanning more than a millennium of outbreaks covering bubonic plague, smallpox, malaria, the respiratory illness SARS, Ebola, have been known to elicit violence, religious extremism and mass hysteria. This unfortunately, ends up in exerting long term social, cultural and political consequences. Madhev et al (2017) posit that pandemics express itself in" behavioural changes such as fear-induced aversion to workplaces and public gathering places." Social distancing which is now one of the major ways of checking the spread of COVID-19, is currently posing a serious socio- cultural erosive power

on the long entrenched and traditionally accepted mode of greeting such as embracing, hugging, shaking and touching.

3.0 The Philosophical and Theological Implications of COVID-19

In this section an attempt would be made to examine the philosophical and theological implications of COVID-19 for the Nigerian Church.

3.1 The Philosophical Implications of COVID-19

Disease or infection is an external enemy that attacks the human body. It was not innate in man but rather comes as an attack on the human system. It is therefore perceived as an external enemy. This is why it is commonly regarded as an attack. At the metaphysical plane, the thought of an invincible power influencing the cause of events on earth can no longer be wished away. This is against the background of the inability of the world's best brains, advanced nations, scientists as well as the erudite medical professionals to articulate a cure for the pandemic. Too many questions remain unanswered. The human curiosity is in search of answers with regards to, what is the origin of the virus? Was it created? If yes, was it created by God or Man, and for what purpose? It is the inability of science and philosophy to provide answers to these questions that have led to numerous conspiracy theories.

Epidemics and pandemics were largely viewed as arising from the wrath of the gods especially in traditional African societies. It is either the gods are angry because of withheld sacrifices or someone somewhere has committed an abominable act for which atonement must be made.

Pandemics and Hate: Michael Mccauley, Sara Minsky, Kasisomayajula (2013) observes that throughout history, people have soothed their fears of disease outbreak by searching for someone to blame. In April, 2009, HINI, a novel strain of human influenza appeared in Mexico and spread rapidly around the world. Since some of the earliest cases were discovered near Mexican pig farms, Latinos immigrants were pronounced guilty by association. Covid-19 has equally thrown up a lot of non- logical and uncritical stigmatization which currently is threatening the gains of globalization. It appears that fear of death has a way of taking humanity back to primordial thinking patterns, discountenancing all reasonable facts, and throwing up much pseudo philosophies of hate. Anything can be blamed ranging from individuals to scientific advancement.

The current pandemic is being blamed on several things and organizations. Some of the victims of the ongoing hatred include the Chinese and their government, the Bill Gates Foundation and 5G network. The worrying dimension of the blame game is that even notable politicians are becoming champions of it. When the Black Death pandemic erupted in Europe from 1342-1353, it generated diverse reactions just as we are seeing today. In some European regions, Jews offered the conspicuous targets of accusation of spreading the plague (Tibayrenc,2007:518).

One of the latent impacts of covid-19 is the phobia which the press has clothed it with. Though fear of death is one of torments confronting humanity, it rose to its crescendo during the current pandemic. This is partly due to the media hype concerning the virus. The media campaign seems to have succeeded in making people afraid rather than precautionary. Even

the manner in which medics treating the virus are completely hooded like dreadful masquerades, is fearful enough as to give a patient no hope of survival. However, Plato is quoted to have laid three principles concerning fear; a virtuous person will not fear her own death, a virtuous person will not fear nor grieve the death of her family or friends and a virtuous political organization will train its citizens not to fear death and will prohibit public manifestation of grief (Emily Austin, 2009:2). Though there is little sense in the third point, the two other points are too idealistic. Fear is a psychological impulse that is stimulated by a sense of danger. Its gravity may also depend on the level of knowledge available to the person. When the basis of fear is real, it cannot be wished away.

It can therefore be rightly inferred, that the quantum of information, illustrations, and the graphic images of dead bodies being displayed by the media, has heightened fear in people. The effect of these fears may live with the people even after the virus is gone. The approach also adopted in treating the virus, leaves some victims with no hope. When a human being is isolated from the world, family and friends because of a sickness, it can generate sufficient fear to kill the person. This explains why several patients are running away from isolation centres.

Gradually, the gains of globalization and freedom of movement is being rolled many centuries back. There is a resurgence of nationalism as countries are busy closing their borders against people from other nations. Though, it is reasonable not to allow persons from pandemic infected areas to freely migrate to other places for fear of spreading the disease, but it becomes ethnic sentiment when your own nationals from those places are allowed to come in. The policies most countries have adopted is to lock out non-nationals, while at the same time keep the border open for their own nationals returning from the same place. This action as simple as it might look goes beyond protecting people from importing the disease. It is discriminatory and simply shows how nepotism and nationalist consciousness still influence government actions across the world. This will ultimately affect people's perception of people from other nations and other ethnic nationalities.

The Moral Implication: To a large extent the moral state of our present civilization is facing a great test. This is because the present challenges present an opportunity to raise basic moral questions. Authers (2020), notes that the epidemic forces everyone to confront deep questions of human existence. Indeed, there are deep questions that people are beginning to ask. There are deep questions about life and death. Can human life be so fragile? How come all our scientific knowledge and advancement in human medicine has no answer to this simple virus? Is this the beginning of the end for mankind on earth? Why is the virus targeting only humans?

Another serious moral issue is the social distancing prescribed as preventive measure against contracting the virus. This seems to have put a sharp dislocation in what makes man a social animal, and their brother's keeper. There is an inherent fulfillment and joy derived by people as they interact one with another in work places and outside the workplace. The social distancing abrogates age long interactive component of the human person and gradually turns man into a solitary being. The moral obligation to help and assist the sick seemed bared as people rather avoid the sick, robbing the sick the needed comfort and encouragement to

psychologically fight sickness. It may not be out of place to argue that social isolation associated with coronavirus patients may be contributory to its high mortality rate.

The world is at the verge of learning a new culture of suspecting the next man, because he may be an asymptomatic carrier of the virus. The age long tradition of social gatherings, handshakes, hugging and the rest of the person to person means of greetings and sharing affection is giving way. How fast the people will transit out of this old order still remains to be determined.

Liberty and freedom is one of the treasured heritages of modern democratic societies. It was the cry of several philosophers and revolutionaries. J. S Mill, while emphasizing the crucial need for liberty, notes that there are three inalienable rights which every citizen is entitled to. They are; freedom of thought and emotions, including freedom to express the thought, freedom to pursue ones taste as long as it doesn't harm another and freedom to associate and form unions. In its efforts to fight the virus, the freedoms and liberties of millions of people around the world have come under server restriction as nation after nation impose lockdowns on their people. And these lockdowns are enforced by security agencies including the military. The implication of this is that the virus has the capacity to erode all democratic rights.

At the epistemological level, COVID-19 exposes the state of poverty of knowledge in our dispensation. It has become obvious that there is a long way to go in understanding infectious diseases and its control and management. One would have thought that with the level of scientific development already attained, that no virus will defy medical science. The fragility of human life was brought to the fore by the assertion in some quarters that the virus has animal origin. This seems to suggest that animals are actually stronger than human beings. If the speculation that the virus was transmitted by animals to humans is true, it raises a great speculation that animals can one day poison mankind out of existence and takeover the earth. There are rituals and beliefs with regards to the dead in many African societies. Traditionally, people don't just die and disappear out of existence. There is strong conviction among the people that there exists a world of spirits to which the dead transit to. This is the world of ancestors. In Africa, religious, cultural and sociological factors combine to demand that a deceased person is buried with his or her ancestors because of attachment to one's ancestral land. (Kamsen, &Biwul, (2014:21).The journey to the ancestral world for the dead is often accompanied by burial rites. Anyone not accorded a befitting burial is believed to have been denied a good placement in the world of the ancestors, and the spirit of such persons turn round to torment and afflict his children.

This is the major reason why in many African societies people are buried only in their ancestral land. This is to ensure there is no disconnect between the deceased and his ancestors. Even when Africans die in foreign lands, the corpse is flown home for burial. It is the responsibility of the living relatives and friends to ensure that the corpse gets home, no matter the financial implications. Due to the contagious nature of COVID-19 virus, several Africans who died abroad were not brought home for burial. COVID-19, therefore, is rewriting African concept of being.

3.2 The Theological Implication

Theologically, sickness was not in the original plan of God for man, because right there in the garden, there is a tree of life. Sickness and pain emerged after the fall of man in Genesis chapter three. This implies that sickness emerged as a result of man's inability to remain submissive to his creator so as to continue to enjoy His divine provision for good health. After God has finished the entire work of creation, the bible notes, that everything he made was good. By implication the earth was a package of goodness all arranged to keep mankind happy. It was an environment without natural enemy as every other creature was subjugated to man. It is also implied in the scriptures that evil and the ideas of evil didn't exist, and it was alien to the nature and consciousness of the original man that God created.

To illustrate the theological implication, it is necessary we review some aspects of the Christian bible, where epidemics featured and why? In the book of exodus, there is the story of how God delivered the Israelites from the hand of Pharaoh. One can glean from exodus chapters 8-12, that God can allow a pandemic to come upon a nation as a retribution for defiance against God's word and instruction. One can infer from this that Covid-19 can be interpreted as a sign of divine anger against the world for departing from the Word of God. If this is the case, it then follows that if the world fails to return to God, there may be worse pandemics on the way. However, this interpretation may still not be case since the saintly and the righteous have fallen prey to the pandemic. To emphasize this point, it is on record that even innocent children have died of coronavirus.

Another possible theological interpretation is the much expected end of the world, popularly contained in the Christian bible. In Mathew Chapter twenty-four, and verse number seven, Jesus said; "for nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in diverse places" (The Holy Bible, King James Version). In verse eight, he observes that this is the beginning of sorrows. Some sections of the population of the world are linking the present pandemic with this passage. It is the early part of the sorrows that the earth will pass through as it marches towards the end. It is also a known fact that this pandemic has sent sorrow to all parts of the world irrespective of social class.

Religion has always been accepted internationally as the right of every citizen. Freedom of worship is a provision commonly enshrined in every national constitution. It is historical that every religion has identified place of worship where it is popularly believed they meet and interact with their God. This makes places of worship a sacred arena. Every worshipper equally looks up with hope for an encounter with God/gods at the places of worship. But this age long tradition, received a fatal blow as nations battles the corona virus. This is because religious worship of all forms was banned. Worshippers were advised to pray privately in their homes.

The implication of the above is that it may mark the beginning of a decline in temple or cathedral worship, as citizens are awakened to a new understanding that they can privately worship God in the comfort of their homes, even on designated worship days. This in turn will affect the office of the principal officers of different religions, who have wholly devoted their time and labour to officiate in those temples or cathedrals. The other implication is that this may gives rise to a change in the mode of conducting religious service using such technological innovations like Zoom and video conferencing and tele -conferencing.

4.0 Conclusion/Recommendations

The above work has shown that COVID-19 is presently exerting a deadly and highly dangerous impact on the global community in all strata of lives and Nigeria is not exempted from the ravages of the above pandemic. The study identified that the disease is unleashing great economic, political and socio-cultural burdens on nations, individuals and organizations as well as fanning the embers of division, hatred, fear and solitary lifestyle. It equally observed that coronavirus is threatening the traditionally entrenched way of religions, such as corporate fellowship and coming together. The following recommendations are advanced as the way forward in redressing the threats of coronavirus pandemic by the church community.

i)**Stressing Public Health Theology as a Discipline of Study**: The church must go beyond general Christian education to advanced research that would enable it develop practical resource material that would serve as her public heath theological manual or blueprint for the modern man. Theology therefore should not stop at teaching man how to be holy. It should also strive to provide humanity with resources on how to secure society from the ravages or triggers of global pandemics. In other words, the salvation message of the Church as God's redemptive agency in the world, should include not only how to gain soul salvation but also how to secure human beings from environmental threats that undermine our collective life, health and well-being. Such teaching should include practical hygiene, dietary laws, being our brother's keeper, building synergy between medical science and theological science so that ancient biblical principles relating to public health management could be taught alongside health education in our institutions of learning.

ii) **Recognizing the Need for prayer and reconciliation**: In Christian theology individuals as well as nations can be afflicted with a plague(s) whose only remedy is divine intervention through prayers and repentance. In such condition no amount of expertise in medical science can ameliorate such evil until the prescribed time for it expires. It is against the backdrop of such reality that God told his covenant nation Israel that when he brings an epidemic or wide spread calamity such as death, disease, famine, drought, or flooding that if they pray to him and turn from their evil ways he would intervene and deliver them(2Chron. 7:14).The church community should strive to demand that rulers of nations should as a matter of priority seek for divine mercy in times of national or global disasters, be it medical, ecological, economic or political. Commenting on the efficacy of prayers in dealing with our existential needs 'The Spendthrift Group' states *inter alia:*

> Someday… the scientists of the world will turn their laboratories over to the study of God and prayer and the spiritual forces which as yet have been hardly scratched. When this day comes, the world will see more advancement in one generation than it has seen in the past four decades.

However, beyond prayer the Church must promote the gospel of repentance by calling nations and individuals to repent and return to God and godly lifestyle as a key to securing cosmic harmony between the creation and the creator. This is against the background, of divine injunction that when His people humble themselves in the face of natural disasters and turn back to God in repentance that he will hear their prayers and forgive their sins and heal their land (2Chron.7:14). Cleansing of the land or nations from national plagues in some cases

therefore should go beyond seeking scientific or medical professionalism to reaching out for divine mercy and intervention.

iii) **Adopting Information Technology in Advancing Today's Church:** The Church community must develop compliance with modern technology as a means of not only making herself relevant in an age where information technology serves as the hub that drives almost all sectors of today's world but also as a platform for containing the threat of social distancing which is greatly undermining the traditional way of corporate Church worship.

iv)**Building Bridges of Brotherhood of All Men:** Corona virus has only revived the age-old tradition of isolating the infected victim but it has equally given birth to the idea of deporting people to their home country as a way of containing the spread. The above action is rooted in hatred and prejudice, and the Church must strive to be at forefront of standing against all forms of racial or ethnic bigotry whether as a health control measure or political instrument of dehumanizing humanity. Commenting on the resurgence of hatred and racism in modern times the UN – Secretary General Antonio Guterres, states that divisions and hatred appears to be on the increase globally even after 75 years of Second World War. According to him while speaking at the 75th anniversary to mark the end of the Second World War, he states, that coronavirus pandemic was aggravating the situation of global conflict by fueling new efforts to divide people and promote hatred. It is unfortunate he posits, that in trying to curb the spread of the scourge of coronavirus "the voices of populism, authoritarianism, nationalism, and xenophobia are making themselves heard more loudly". Christianity is a religion rooted in love for persons irrespective of their colour and must therefore strive to promote advocacy that engender peace and the brotherhood of all men in times like these to ensure the world does not drag itself back to her shameful, ugly and violent past. Church leaders must not only speak up against dehumanizing victims of the global pandemic on the ground of their nationality, colour, sex, ethnicity, or any other difference, they should equally endeavour to provide practical health care assistance to those who are exposed to abandonment, rejection or injustice because of their health status.

v) Promoting Advocacy, Collaboration and Adequate Sanctions: The church community must encourage and promote global, regional and/ or national sanctions against the use of chemical weapons as instrument of political, economic, cultural, religious, or technology warfare by nations. Moreover she should invest in academic research and institutions that advance better medical and scientific options in addressing the threats of global pandemics. In other words, she should build partnership and collaboration with agencies or bodies that strive to promote safer world through advocacy, science and technology and appropriate legislations.

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