
Servant Leadership and Humility: The Foundational Pillars of The Apostolic Church, Nigeria (TACN)

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Abstract

This paper critically examines the leadership practices and policies of The Apostolic Church Nigeria (TACN) from its inception to the early 21st century. It explores the foundational role played by early missionaries like George Perfect and Idris J. Vaughan, alongside Nigerian leaders, in shaping TACN's leadership structure and governance. Central to TACN's development was the emphasis on servant leadership, humility, and cultural sensitivity, which became defining characteristics of its leadership ethos. The study further investigates how the National Council of Apostles and Prophets, as the ultimate governing body, has maintained these core values, ensuring the church's stability amidst challenges such as the exodus of youth members to Pentecostal movements. Through an analysis of TACN's organisational structure, intercultural leadership approaches, and the integration of dialogue and integrity in social leadership, the paper sheds light on the church's efforts to navigate both internal and external pressures. The findings highlight the significance of humility and servant leadership in fostering a cohesive and sustainable religious organisation in a rapidly evolving Nigerian religious landscape.

Keywords: Servant Leadership; Humility in Ministry; Intercultural Leadership; Youth Exodus; Organisational

Structure; Social Leadership; Cultural Sensitivity; Nigerian Pentecostalism

Introduction

Leadership in the church, particularly in its formative years, must be understood as distinct from secular leadership in business, government, or other social institutions. Unlike secular leadership, which often emphasises power, control, and personal ambition, church leadership is grounded in service, humility, and love, as modelled by Jesus Christ. The New Testament highlights this contrast in various passages, particularly in Matthew 20:25-28, where Jesus rebukes His disciples' notions of hierarchical authority, stating, "The rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them... Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant" (NIV). This idea of servant leadership is central to Christian leadership theory and practice, which emphasises that the authority given to church leaders is for the edification of the church body, not for personal gain (Greenleaf, 1977; Blackaby & Blackaby, 2011).

In contrast to secular models of leadership, the church's conception of authority is relational and rooted in the example of Christ. The Apostle Paul, in Philippians 2:5-8, instructs the early church to "have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God... made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant" (NIV). This teaching is central to the understanding of leadership in The Apostolic Church Nigeria (TACN) during its formative years, where early leaders like Pastor J. A. Babatope and Pastor J. B. Sadare exemplified this ethic of servanthood. These leaders, though responsible for shaping the spiritual direction of the church, consistently subordinated their authority to the mission of the church, placing the welfare of their congregation above their ambitions (Oshun, 2000; Adeleye, 2022).

As noted by DeSilva (2000), in his analysis of church leadership structures in early Christian communities, church authority is granted not for hierarchical control but for guiding the community in spiritual growth and communal responsibility. This is echoed in Hebrews 13:17, which asserts, "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account" (NIV). In the early years of TACN, this understanding of leadership as stewardship was evident. Pastor Babatope, for example, was known for consulting with the broader leadership in Lagos for difficult administrative and doctrinal decisions, acknowledging that his authority was derived from his role as a servant to the church and not from personal or positional power (Adegboyega, 1978).

In the context of TACN, leadership was not just about holding an office or asserting authority but about building up the community of believers. The Great Commission, as recorded in Matthew 28:19-20, was central to the leadership ethos of TACN's early pioneers, who prioritised the spreading of the gospel over personal recognition or leadership titles. As Kalu (2008) points out, many of the early Nigerian Pentecostal leaders viewed their authority as contingent on their ability to serve the mission of the church and the spiritual welfare of their congregations. This is exemplified in the life of Pastor J. B. Sadare, who, despite being one of the church's founding figures, did not vie for leadership positions but instead worked collaboratively with other leaders to further the mission of the church (Oshun, 2000).

The principle of servant leadership was not only a theological imperative but also a practical necessity in the early church. According to Adeleye (2010), one of the key factors that contributed to the stability of TACN's leadership structure during its formative years was the non-full-time ministerial assignments that many leaders held. Leaders like Pastor Babatope and Pastor Odubanjo operated as itinerant ministers, moving from one congregation to another, thus reinforcing the notion that leadership was about serving the broader

community rather than consolidating power in one place. In this respect, early TACN leadership avoided the factionalism and power struggles that have plagued many other religious movements (Oshun, 2000).

Additionally, leadership in the early church, and by extension in TACN was not defined by ethnicity, gender, or social status. Paul's assertion in Galatians 3:28 that "there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (NIV) was foundational to TACN's leadership philosophy. Early leaders worked across ethnic and regional lines to build a unified church. Pastor D. O. Odubanjo, for example, deferred to Pastor Sadare, despite his significant role in establishing the church's affiliation with the Faith Tabernacle Congregation (FTC) in Philadelphia (Oshun, 2000; Ayegboyin & Ishola, 1997). This collaborative approach reflected a deep commitment to the biblical ideal of leadership as a shared responsibility, grounded in humility and a desire to serve the body of Christ rather than to control it.

In contrast to the corporate world, where leadership is often synonymous with personal ambition and hierarchical authority, church leadership, as exemplified by TACN's early leaders, was deeply rooted in love, humility, and service. The model of Jesus washing His disciples' feet in John 13:14-15 serves as a perpetual reminder that church leadership is not about exerting authority or gaining power but about sacrificially serving others. This ethic of service is reflected in the leadership style of early TACN figures like Pastor J. A. Babatope, who travelled extensively to minister to scattered congregations, seeking not to assert his authority but to build up the church community (Adegboyega, 1978).

This article explores the foundational pillars of TACN's leadership, with a focus on the early adoption of servant leadership and humility. It examines the contributions of key figures such as Pastor J. A. Babatope and the impact of missionaries George Perfect and Idris J. Vaughan in shaping

TACN's governance and leadership practices. Additionally, it addresses the challenges faced by the church in maintaining its leadership ethos amidst evolving dynamics in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. By analysing these aspects, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how TACN's leadership has evolved while adhering to its core principles of servanthood and humility.

Leadership in the Early TACN

The early leadership of The Apostolic Church Nigeria (TACN) was characterised by pioneering efforts and a unique approach to governance that set the tone for the church's development. Central to this early period was the work of Pastor J. A. Babatope, whose contributions were instrumental in establishing the church's foundational structure and ethos.

The Pioneering Work of Pastor J. A. Babatope

Pastor J. A. Babatope stands out as a pivotal figure in the early history of TACN. His role was not merely one of administrative leadership but also spiritual guidance and church planting. As one of the early leaders, Babatope was known for his dedication to nurturing the spiritual growth of the church community. He played a crucial role in the development of early church leaders, many of whom later assumed significant positions within the church. For instance, his mentorship led to the emergence of prominent figures such as Samuel Ogunkunle Akindiya and Gabriel B. Oladele, who continued to serve in TACN's ministry (Olutola, 2014).

Babatope's approach to leadership was deeply rooted in the principles of humility and service. His leadership style was reflective of the broader Pentecostal movement's emphasis on servanthood, rather than personal aggrandisement. This model of leadership fostered a cooperative and supportive environment within TACN, allowing for the church's growth and stability during its formative years.

Early Leaders and Their Collaborative Spirit

In the nascent stages of TACN, leadership was marked by a notable absence of power struggles. Unlike many organisational settings where leadership positions are fiercely contested, the early leaders of TACN exhibited a spirit of collaboration and mutual respect. This was exemplified by leaders such as Pastor Sadare (later known as Pastor Esinsinade) and Pastor D. O. Odubanjo. These individuals were recognised for their commitment to the church's mission rather than personal ambition (Oshun, 2000).

The lack of internal competition for leadership roles was a significant factor in the early stability of TACN. Leaders were united by a common purpose, which is, to advance the church's mission and serve its members, rather than seeking to dominate or elevate their positions. This collaborative spirit was crucial in laying a solid foundation for the church's administrative and doctrinal framework.

The Supportive Leadership Structure

The early organisational structure of TACN was notably supportive and interconnected. Lagos, as a prominent centre for the church, served as a reference point for both administrative and doctrinal matters. This arrangement allowed for a centralised approach to resolving issues and making important decisions, which was essential for maintaining consistency and unity across the various branches of the church (Adegboyega, 1978).

In the early years, administrative and doctrinal guidance was often sought from Lagos, reflecting a hierarchical but supportive structure where decisions were made with the broader church's welfare in mind. This system facilitated the growth and development of TACN, ensuring that the church's activities and teachings remained aligned with its foundational principles.

No doubt, the early leadership of TACN was marked by a commitment to service and humility, with key figures such as Pastor J. A. Babatope playing a central role in establishing a supportive and collaborative framework. The lack of leadership conflicts and the reliance on Lagos for administrative and doctrinal guidance contributed significantly to the church's early stability and growth (Adegboyega, 1978; Adeleye, 2010; 2011).

Humility and Servant Leadership

The leadership structure of The Apostolic Church Nigeria (TACN) has been historically defined by principles of humility and service. This contrasts sharply with secular leadership models, where positions of authority are often associated with power and personal ambition. Leaders such as Joseph Ayodele Babalola, Pastor Sadare (Esinsinade), and Pastor D. O. Odubanjo exemplified these principles, demonstrating a deep sense of humility and commitment to serving God and the church community.

Joseph Ayodele Babalola and the Model of Humility

Joseph Ayodele Babalola, regarded as one of the founding figures of the Apostolic movement in Nigeria, set the tone for servant leadership in TACN. He played a pivotal role in the 1930 revival at Oke-Ooye, Ilesa, which became the foundation for the church's growth. Despite the widespread fame and respect he gained through this revival, Babalola maintained a profound humility throughout his ministry. He consistently deflected praise and adulation, attributing all glory to God. Babalola's life, characterised by fasting, prayer, and simplicity, reflects the biblical model of leadership rooted in humility, as exemplified by Jesus Christ (Matt 20:26-28). His adherence to spiritual discipline over personal recognition allowed him to remain focused on his mission as a servant of God, rather than seeking to build a personal empire (Oshun, 1981).

Pastor Sadare (Esinsinade) and His Humility in Leadership

Pastor Sadare, who later became known as Pastor Esinsinade, was another key figure in the early years of TACN. His leadership was marked by his quiet demeanour and his dedication to collective leadership. Sadare avoided the centralisation of power, focusing instead on collaborative leadership, which aligned with the ethos of servanthood. This form of leadership, underpinned by humility, allowed for greater inclusiveness within the church, ensuring that no single leader sought to dominate the decision-making processes. His attitude was a living embodiment of 1 Peter 5:3, where elders are encouraged to lead by example, rather than by lording over others (Oshun, 1981).

Pastor D. O. Odubanjo and His Legacy of Service

Pastor D. O. Odubanjo, an early administrative leader within TACN, also exemplified humility in his approach to church governance. Known for his role in organising and formalising many aspects of the church's structure, Odubanjo was never driven by personal ambition. Instead, his contributions to the development of TACN were motivated by a deep sense of duty to God and the church. He embodied the principle that leadership is about stewardship, a concept echoed in Luke 22:26, where Jesus teaches that "the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves." Odubanjo's leadership focused on nurturing the spiritual life of the church rather than asserting personal control over its operations (Adegboyega, 1978).

Leadership as Service in TACN

The servant leadership model adopted by TACN was firmly grounded in the teachings of Jesus, especially the concept of humility. In Mark 10:45, Jesus famously stated that "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (NIV). This scriptural principle

became the cornerstone of TACN leadership, where leaders understood their role as primarily serving the needs of the congregation, both spiritually and materially. Unlike leadership models that emphasise hierarchy and authority, TACN leaders such as Babalola, Sadare, and Odubanjo operated under the belief that leadership was not an opportunity for self-promotion, but for advancing the mission of the church through humble service.

This emphasis on humility and servanthood aligns TACN with broader trends within early Pentecostal movements worldwide. Early Pentecostal leaders often emerged from modest backgrounds and maintained a focus on spiritual authority rather than institutional power (Kalu, 2008). In Nigeria, the combination of spiritual fervour and humble leadership played a significant role in the rapid spread of the Pentecostal movement, with leaders committed to a vision of communal service and spiritual renewal (Oshun, 1981; Ngwoke, 2024).

The emphasis on humility and service as foundational to leadership in TACN set a strong precedent for future generations of church leaders. It remains a guiding principle in the church today, ensuring that leadership positions are held by individuals who prioritise the spiritual welfare of the congregation over personal gain or status.

Missionary Activities of Pastor George Perfect in The Apostolic Church Nigeria (TACN)

Pastor George Perfect was born around 1881, and according to his co-missionary to Nigeria, Pastor Idris John Vaughan, he was about twenty years older than Vaughan (Vaughan, n.d). In June 1932, at the request of the International Missionary Council of TAC, Bradford, England, Pastor Perfect arrived in Nigeria as one of the first two resident missionaries to TACN. Initially, alongside Pastor Vaughan, he visited various parts of Nigeria, including Ibadan and Ilesha. They were instrumental in the transition of the Faith Tabernacle in Nigeria to The Apostolic

Church, with their arrival marking the beginning of TAC's strong presence in the country. The missionaries also visited Evangelist Joseph Ayo Babalola, who was imprisoned in Benin City at the time. According to Vaughan (1991), their visit confirmed Evangelist Babalola's religious experience concerning TAC's ministry in Nigeria.

One of Pastor Perfect's notable contributions was establishing an evening Bible school at his residence in Yaba, Lagos, where he instructed the students. Some of the first students of this school, including Pastor I. G. Sakpo and Overseer A. O. Ogunsanya, went on to become influential leaders in TACN (Adegboyega 1978; Church Document, 1993). Additionally, tarrying meetings were held regularly, with many receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit, evidenced by speaking and interpreting tongues. Pastor Perfect also worked closely with British authorities in Nigeria, presenting his credentials and securing permission to establish TAC without hindrance. This facilitated the expansion of TAC's assemblies, schools, and revivals across the country (Adegboyega, 1978).

Pastor Perfect was deeply involved in nurturing TACN, focusing on divine governance in the church, the proper use of spiritual gifts, and regular prayer meetings. He also promoted financial stewardship, encouraging members to own property, open bank accounts, and engage in public and personal evangelism. Under his leadership, TACN grew rapidly, with several churches and schools established to cater to members and local communities. His missionary work also earned him recognition from local authorities, exemplified by his participation in the founding of Ilesa Grammar School in 1934.

Pastor Perfect played a crucial role in organising the administrative structure of TACN, contributing to the formation of the Nigerian General Council of TAC. He served as the council's first president while Pastors J. O. Sanya and S. A. Sole were appointed General Secretary and Treasurer, respectively. During his three-year tenure in Nigeria, Pastor Perfect

emphasised the ordination of church officers, ensuring that spiritual gifts and callings were properly examined before ordination. In 1933, following a prophetic message, he ordained Pastor I. G. Sakpo as Nigeria's first prophet at a significant ceremony in Lagos (Church Document 1993, *Biography of Pastor Sakpo*, 1993).

However, Pastor Perfect's tenure was not without challenges. Financial disagreements with Nigerian leaders, particularly Pastor D. O. Odubanjo, strained relations. Issues surrounding the management of missionary funds and perceived financial impropriety during a mission to Ikare caused tensions. This dispute contributed to a broader push by some Nigerian leaders, including Pastor Odubanjo, to reduce European control over TACN, reflecting the nationalistic spirit of the time. Another contentious issue was the use of medicine for healing. Pastor Perfect's stance on the use of quinine for prophylactic reasons was controversial, particularly as TACN officially discouraged the use of medicine in favour of faith healing. This disagreement, alongside the financial issues, led to a breakdown in relations between the European missionaries and Nigerian leaders.

In 1936, TACN established an administrative structure known as "Areas" in Lagos, Ilesa, Zaria, and Calabar. Pastor Perfect became the superintendent of the Lagos Area and continued to contribute to the church's governance. However, by 1938, disagreements over the use of medicine and financial management had escalated, leading to a significant policy dispute within the church. These challenges underscored the intercultural tensions between European and African leaders of TACN during its formative years. Despite the difficulties, Pastor George Perfect's missionary work left a lasting legacy in TACN, contributing to the church's growth and development in Nigeria (Adeleye, 2010; 2022).

Missionary Activities of Pastor Idris John Vaughan in The Apostolic Church Nigeria (TACN)

Pastor Idris John Vaughan was born on March 13, 1901, in Abertridwr, a township in South Wales. Tragically, his father died in a mining accident when Vaughan was only a few weeks old. Despite the hardships, Vaughan committed to serve Christ at the age of 12, influenced by the powerful Welsh Pentecostal evangelist, Stephen Jeffrey. Between 1913 and 1919, he served as a preacher in local churches and mission halls while working in the coal mines. After a brief stint in the Royal Navy, where he came into contact with West African cities, Vaughan felt a calling to evangelistic ministry (Vaughan, n.d).

In 1921, Pastor Vaughan began his ministry with TAC in Wales. After receiving spiritual impartation through prayer and prophetic messages, he was called to serve as a missionary to Lagos, Nigeria, arriving in the country on June 2, 1932. Alongside Pastor George Perfect, Vaughan played a key role in establishing TAC in Nigeria. As a prophet and evangelist, he contributed significantly to the church's spiritual development and leadership training (Vaughan 1991; Adeleye 2022).

Vaughan's mission work in Nigeria included visiting key locations, spreading the gospel, and establishing foundational church structures. Like Pastor Perfect, he emphasised the importance of spiritual gifts, regular prayer, and the proper governance of TACN. He was deeply committed to his missionary work and collaborated with local Nigerian leaders, including Pastor Odubanjo, despite the occasional disagreements that arose. However, while Pastor Vaughan's tenure was filled with spiritual successes, it was also marked by tensions similar to those faced by Pastor Perfect, particularly over theological issues and the management of missionary funds.

Pastor Vaughan's contributions to TACN were significant in shaping the early growth of the church. His evangelistic efforts, prophetic ministry, and close collaboration with Nigerian leaders laid the foundation for the church's expansion. Despite the challenges, his legacy in TACN remains enduring,

particularly in terms of fostering a strong, spiritually grounded church in Nigeria.

Challenges in TACN Leadership (Late 20th and Early 21st Century)

The Exodus of Youth Members to Other Pentecostal Churches

One of the most significant challenges faced by TACN in the late 20th and early 21st centuries was the exodus of youth members to other Pentecostal churches, particularly to rapidly growing movements like the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) and Winners Chapel. These churches, led by charismatic leaders like Pastor Enoch Adeboye and Bishop David Oyedepo, respectively, attracted a large number of young Nigerians with their vibrant worship styles, emphasis on prosperity, and dynamic leadership models. Studies have noted that the allure of these churches for young people often lies in their more contemporary forms of worship, their focus on personal empowerment, and their ability to blend spirituality with modern social and economic aspirations (Amankwa & Akoto, 2022; Marimbe 2024).

In contrast, TACN, with its more traditional and structured form of worship, was seen as less appealing to the younger generation, many of whom desired more interactive and participatory church experiences. This generational shift can be partly attributed to the rise of Pentecostalism's "prosperity gospel" and its emphasis on individual success, which resonated strongly with youth in a country grappling with economic instability and high unemployment rates (see Achunike, 2007; Adedibu & Igboin, 2019). The hierarchical leadership structure of TACN, where authority was largely centralised among senior leaders, was also a factor in youth disengagement. Younger members felt alienated by the church's rigid governance and sought spiritual environments where they

could participate more actively in decision-making processes and leadership roles.

The exodus to RCCG and Winners Chapel was not only a spiritual loss but also a significant demographic shift that weakened TACN's youthful base. Many scholars have noted that churches that fail to adapt to generational shifts risk becoming irrelevant to younger audiences (Anderson, 2004). TACN's struggle to retain its youth members highlights the challenge of balancing traditional ecclesiastical models with the demands of a rapidly changing religious landscape in Nigeria.

Establishment of the Youth Convocation in 1995

In response to the declining youth membership, TACN leadership took strategic steps to engage the younger generation and revitalise youth participation within the church. One of the key initiatives was the establishment of the Youth Convocation in 1995. The Youth Convocation was conceived as a platform for addressing the spiritual, social, and economic needs of young members, and to foster a sense of belonging within the church. The convocation featured youth-centred programmes, leadership development initiatives, and contemporary worship styles that were designed to appeal to the interests of younger congregants.

The creation of the Youth Convocation marked a significant shift in TACN's approach to youth engagement. For the first time, the church leadership explicitly recognized the need to adapt its ministry to meet the expectations of a younger, more dynamic audience. According to Gifford (1998), the success of similar youth-targeted programs in other Pentecostal churches indicated that vibrant youth ministries were key to church growth in the late 20th century. In this light, TACN's establishment of the Youth Convocation can be seen as an effort to compete with the more youth-friendly environments offered by churches like RCCG and Winners Chapel.

However, while the Youth Convocation was a positive step, its impact was not as widespread as hoped. Some critics argue that the initiative, though well-intentioned, did not fully address the deeper systemic issues that continued to drive young people away from TACN. The traditional leadership structure of the church remained largely intact, and there were limited opportunities for youth to take on leadership roles or influence key decisions within the broader church governance system (Kalu, 2008). Moreover, the emphasis on spiritual revival during the convocations, while important, was sometimes seen as disconnected from the socio-economic realities facing young Nigerians, such as unemployment and poverty, which were central themes in the messages of churches like RCCG and Winners Chapel (Marshall, 2009).

Leadership's Response to Retention Challenges

In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, TACN leadership recognized that more than just spiritual programs were needed to address the exodus of youth members. They also focused on broader structural reforms and community engagement initiatives aimed at creating a more inclusive church environment. One strategy was to promote youth leaders within the church who could serve as role models and bridges between the younger generation and the older, more established leadership. This was somewhat effective, as younger leaders often brought fresh perspectives on worship and ministry that resonated with the youth (Akinsulire, 2021).

However, the leadership's response has been critiqued for being reactive rather than proactive. While the Youth Convocation and other youth-focused initiatives helped stem some of the exodus, they did not fundamentally alter the hierarchical nature of the church. Leadership was still largely concentrated among senior elders and apostles, which limited the long-term effectiveness of these programs. Scholars like Adeleye (2010; 2022) argue that for TACN to fully overcome its retention challenges, it would need to undergo deeper reforms that

empower younger members to participate more fully in church governance and leadership. This includes creating pathways for youth leadership development and greater flexibility in worship styles that reflect the changing preferences of younger generations.

Moreover, TACN's response to the challenges posed by churches like RCCG and Winners Chapel also reflects broader tensions within Nigerian Pentecostalism, where traditional churches are often at odds with the newer, more dynamic movements that emphasise prosperity, modernity, and personal success. This competition between churches has forced older denominations like TACN to rethink their strategies for retaining members, particularly among the youth, who are more likely to be drawn to churches that offer a sense of relevance and empowerment in their everyday lives (Nkundakozero, 2024).

Staffing and Organisational Structure in The Apostolic Church Nigeria (TACN)

Leadership Selection by the Council of Apostles and Prophets

In The Apostolic Church Nigeria (TACN), the process of selecting church leaders is deeply rooted in its ecclesiastical governance structure, which is based on a combination of divine inspiration and hierarchical decision-making. Leadership roles, particularly at the higher levels such as apostles, prophets, and pastors, are filled through the resolution of the Council of Apostles and Prophets. This council, which serves as the highest authority in the church, is responsible for discerning and affirming individuals who are believed to have a divine calling to leadership positions. The process is characterised by a strong emphasis on spiritual guidance, as the council seeks to ensure that appointments are in alignment with God's will for the church (Adeleye, 2022).

The council's decision-making process often involves periods of prayer, fasting, and prophetic consultations, reflecting TACN's commitment to seeking divine direction in leadership matters. However, while spiritual qualifications are paramount, candidates for leadership roles must also demonstrate a strong track record of service, loyalty, and adherence to the church's doctrines. The reliance on the Council of Apostles and Prophets for leadership appointments underscores the centralised and hierarchical nature of the church's governance. This top-down approach ensures uniformity and control over leadership appointments but can also limit opportunities for broader congregational involvement in decision-making processes (Adeleye, 2022).

Role of the Apostleship Council in Administrative Decision-Making

The Apostleship Council plays a critical role not only in the selection of church leaders but also in the broader administrative functioning of TACN. The council is responsible for major policy decisions, including matters related to church growth, doctrinal interpretation, and the allocation of resources across various districts and assemblies. This body serves as the ultimate authority on issues that affect the entire church, ensuring that decisions are made in a manner consistent with TACN's theological principles and organisational objectives (see Anderson, 2004).

In practice, the Apostleship Council operates as a key governing entity that provides oversight to the regional and district pastors, ensuring that leadership at lower levels aligns with the strategic direction set by the central leadership. While this centralised governance model has allowed TACN to maintain doctrinal consistency and strong organisational unity, it has also been critiqued for being overly rigid and resistant to change. Critics argue that the lack of decentralised decision-making can stifle innovation and limit the ability of local assemblies to address specific community needs promptly.

Furthermore, the concentration of decision-making power in the hands of a few senior leaders may create a bottleneck, making it difficult for emerging leaders to influence the church's direction.

Criteria for Leadership Appointments and Promotion to District Pastor Roles

Promotion within TACN's leadership hierarchy follows a structured process that is guided by both spiritual and practical considerations. To be considered for promotion to a district pastor or other senior leadership roles, candidates must meet specific criteria that encompass spiritual maturity, doctrinal fidelity, and leadership experience. One of the primary criteria for appointment is the individual's spiritual calling, which is often confirmed through prophetic insights or direct revelations to the Council of Apostles and Prophets. This ensures that leadership roles are filled by individuals who are perceived to have a divinely sanctioned mission within the church (Gifford, 1998).

In addition to spiritual qualifications, candidates must also demonstrate a history of service and commitment to the church. This typically involves years of experience in lower pastoral or administrative roles, where candidates are expected to prove their leadership capabilities and adherence to the church's core values. Furthermore, candidates must have a deep understanding of TACN's doctrines and ecclesiastical traditions, as well as the ability to manage the practical aspects of running a district, such as overseeing church finances, coordinating community outreach programs, and ensuring the spiritual welfare of congregants (Adeleye, 2022).

The promotion process also takes into account the candidate's ability to work within TACN's hierarchical structure and follow the directives of the Apostleship Council. As a result, the church tends to favour individuals who have demonstrated loyalty to the established leadership and are willing to uphold

the church's governance model. This can sometimes lead to criticism that the promotion process is more about conformity to institutional norms than fostering innovative leadership that could address the evolving needs of the church, particularly in areas like youth engagement and community outreach (Marshall, 2009; Adeleye, 2022).

Intercultural Leadership in The Apostolic Church Nigeria (TACN)

Pastor Olutola's Use of Local Languages and Dialects

One of the key elements of intercultural leadership in TACN is the ability of its leaders to engage with the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of its members. Pastor Gabriel Olutola, a former president of TACN, exemplified this approach through his adept use of local languages and dialects, such as Esan and Urhobo, to foster stronger connections with congregants across various ethnic groups. His leadership was marked by a deep understanding of the cultural diversity within Nigeria, and he utilised this knowledge to enhance communication and build trust within the church community. By speaking the native tongues of different groups, Olutola not only made the church's messages more accessible but also validated the cultural identities of his audience (Adeleye, 2022; see also, Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013).

Language is a powerful tool for inclusion, and Olutola's decision to address members in their indigenous languages was seen as a strategic and culturally sensitive leadership approach. In Nigeria's highly multicultural context, where ethnic and linguistic diversity often leads to division, this effort promoted a sense of unity and belonging within the church. By acknowledging and incorporating the diverse linguistic traditions of the Esan, Urhobo, and other ethnic groups, Olutola's leadership helped TACN maintain its appeal to a wide cross-section of Nigerians, ensuring that no group felt marginalised or alienated. His intercultural competence

enabled him to lead in a way that transcended ethnic boundaries, facilitating better pastoral care and church growth (Adeleye, 2022).

The Importance of Cultural Sensitivity in Church Leadership

The success of TACN's leadership in unifying diverse congregations is largely attributed to the church's emphasis on cultural sensitivity as a core component of its leadership strategy. In a multicultural country like Nigeria, culturally sensitive church leaders are more likely to navigate the complexities of ethnic and regional differences. This involves not only linguistic adaptability but also an understanding of local customs, values, and social norms, which vary significantly across Nigeria's ethnic groups (Kalu, 2008).

Cultural sensitivity in church leadership allows for a more inclusive environment where members feel respected and understood, regardless of their ethnic or cultural backgrounds. Leaders who demonstrate this quality are often seen as more effective in managing conflicts that may arise from cultural misunderstandings and are better equipped to foster intercultural dialogue within the church. This inclusiveness also extends to worship styles, music, and church rituals, which are often adapted to reflect the cultural heritage of the congregation, making church activities more relatable and engaging (Adeleye, 2022).

In TACN, cultural sensitivity goes beyond language and includes an awareness of the social and political implications of cultural differences. Leaders like Pastor Olutola were attuned to the broader historical and socio-political contexts in which different ethnic groups operated, allowing them to address specific needs and concerns in their pastoral care. For instance, in regions where economic hardships or political marginalisation were prevalent, culturally sensitive leadership

was involved in addressing these issues from the pulpit and through the church's social programs (Adeleye, 2022).

Dialogue and Social Leadership in The Apostolic Church Nigeria (TACN)

Importance of Dialogue and Exemplary Behaviour in Church Leadership

Effective leadership in TACN has historically emphasised the importance of dialogue and exemplary behaviour. Church leaders are expected to not only communicate effectively with congregants but also to serve as moral exemplars, modelling ethical behaviour both within and outside the church. This expectation is rooted in the belief that the spiritual authority of church leaders is significantly linked to their comportment. Leaders who exhibit humility, integrity, and transparency can foster a stronger sense of trust and loyalty among congregants, which in turn enhances the overall efficacy of church governance (Lee *et al.*, 2022).

Dialogue serves as a critical tool for maintaining open communication between church leaders and the laity. Through consistent dialogue, leaders can engage in conflict resolution, provide pastoral care, and guide their members in both spiritual and social matters. In the context of TACN, this communication extends beyond doctrinal teaching to include discussions on societal issues like poverty, unemployment, and political instability. Leaders who actively participate in such dialogues are seen as more attuned to the challenges their congregants face, thus fostering a deeper connection between the church and its community (Akinwowo, 1980).

Integrity in Leadership: Financial and Sexual Ethics

A central pillar of TACN's leadership framework is the requirement for integrity, particularly in matters concerning financial and sexual ethics. The late 20th and early 21st

centuries saw increased scrutiny of church leaders across many Christian denominations, and TACN was no exception. Church leaders are expected to handle financial matters with the utmost transparency, ensuring that church funds are allocated for the benefit of the congregation and the community at large. Financial mismanagement or corruption is not only seen as a breach of leadership ethics but also as a factor that can significantly damage the church's reputation and trust within society (Gifford, 2009).

Sexual ethics are equally critical in TACN's leadership discourse. Leaders are expected to maintain strict personal and moral discipline in their relationships, as any deviation, such as sexual misconduct, can lead to scandal and the erosion of the church's moral authority. Maintaining sexual integrity is viewed as integral to setting an example for the congregation and broader society. As leaders represent not only the church but also its teachings, their behaviour is often held up as a reflection of the spiritual health and integrity of the church itself (Obi *et al.*, 2021).

Maintaining a Good Relationship with Society

The relationship between TACN leaders and the wider society hinges on the church's ability to maintain a standard of ethical behaviour that aligns with societal expectations. Leaders are called to act as agents of moral guidance in an increasingly secular world, and their conduct is scrutinised not only by their congregants but also by the public. When church leaders uphold high ethical standards, they contribute to a positive perception of the church, thereby reinforcing its role as a moral beacon in the community. Conversely, ethical failures among church leaders, particularly in matters of financial mismanagement or sexual misconduct, can have detrimental effects on the church's reputation, leading to social alienation and a decline in membership (Oderinde, 2014)

Moreover, the ability to engage in constructive dialogue with both congregants and societal leaders allows TACN to play an active role in addressing broader social issues. This includes participating in initiatives aimed at social justice, economic development, and political advocacy. Leaders who embody both spiritual and social responsibility can elevate the church's influence, reinforcing its role as a central institution in shaping social values and norms (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013).

Conclusion

The leadership practices and policies of The Apostolic Church Nigeria (TACN) in its formative years laid the foundation for the church's growth and influence in Nigerian society. Missionaries like George Perfect and Idris J. Vaughan, alongside early Nigerian leaders, played crucial roles in establishing the church's organisational structure, leadership ethos, and theological direction. Their collaboration bridged cultural and spiritual divides, helping TACN to emerge as a dynamic force in Nigerian Christianity. The leadership structure implemented during these early years emphasised humility and servanthood, which set a tone that shaped the church's development well into the 20th and 21st centuries. The approach of TACN leaders, which focused on transparency, moral integrity, and effective pastoral care, established a sense of trust and loyalty among the laity. These qualities contributed to the church's ability to navigate both internal challenges, such as factionalism, and external pressures from the rise of Pentecostalism and other Christian movements in Nigeria.

The National Council of Apostles and Prophets has remained the ultimate governing body within TACN, ensuring that church governance follows the foundational principles laid by the early leaders. This council continues to play a pivotal role in decision-making processes, the appointment of leaders, and the overall spiritual direction of the church. Through its adherence to core principles of humility, servant leadership, and intercultural sensitivity, TACN has managed to maintain its relevance and

spiritual authority within Nigeria's religious landscape. TACN's early leadership, marked by a collaborative missionary spirit and a commitment to humility, has left an enduring legacy that continues to shape the church's policies and practices today. These leadership structures not only ensured the church's survival during its early years but also established the framework for its long-term growth and influence in Nigeria and beyond.

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