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Editorial

There is always an anxious expectation that precedes every new edition of a journal both on the part of the editor and board members on the one hand and on the part of the authors, on the other. This edition is not exempted from this general emotion. But the joy of actually seeing the Journal in print is overwhelming. It is with this sentiment that I present this particular edition of Abuja Journal of Philosophy and Religions. As would be expected, this edition is rich with a variety of exciting and yet challenging articles that will arouse your academic interest. So I invite you to read on.

Joshua Bagudu Boyi in Historical and Sociological Perspectives of the Church's ministry to the Poor: A Challenge to the Church in the 21st Century Africa, acknowledges that the Church's ministry to the poor is rooted in the teaching of the Scriptures, both New and the Old Testaments. This ministry was epitomized in the life and teaching of Jesus, who is a model to the early church, the missionaries and the Church of 21st century in Africa. In Between the Honey and the Poison": An Assessment of Sacred Sites in the Post Independent Nigeria, Akiti Glory Alamu assesses the Sacred Sites of African Traditional Religion before and after independence. He notes with disappointment that the advents of Christianity and Islam and most of all, Globalization have not only robbed the Sacred Sites of the reference of their former years, but also many Sacred Sites have witnessed total destruction. He notes with dismay, the loss of the spiritual, economic, social and environmental benefits of the Sacred Sites. It is on these grounds that he describes the Sacred Sites as Honey and the modern adventures as Poison. Nigerian Gospel Musicians are very creative. Their creativity is not merely for economic purposes. The songs are spiritually uplifting, socially refreshing, but above all, they are a rich repertoire of messages for peace. Adeola Taiye Shola and Adeola Kehinde Adebayo take up this in Creative Imagination and the Quest for Peace: Reflections on Nigerian Gospel Music Song Texts. It makes a good reading. Musa Adeyemi Olaofe ex-rays the thoughts of Abdelwahab Elmessiri on modernity in An Appraisal of

are within the jurisdiction of the law makers, its effect must not be retro-active, and it must be made known to those who are to be subjected to it. We are therefore, of the view that:

"The essential feature of law is not command, nor is it sanction, since sanction is only an appendage attached to law in order to encourage its observance and discourage its violation. Rather, the essential feature of law is obligation. This is what distinguishes a legal command, for example, from the command of a gun man. While a legal command by its very nature entails obligation, the command of a gun man lacks any such obligation. Law by its very nature entails obligation which it imposes on those subject to it. In other words, all those subject to a law have an obligation to obey it, and this obligation comes immediately from the law itself" (Omogbe 1994:179).

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The Influence of the Social, Political and Economic Realities in Nigeria on Nigerian Gospel Music Song Texts

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Introduction

This paper embarks on a content analysis of song texts of selected Nigerian gospel songs to discuss the influence of the social, political and economic realities in Nigeria on them. Religious music has become a force to reckon with in Nigeria and the popularity of various forms of religious music in Nigeria grows by the day. Gospel music is one of the religious musical types that have developed over the years in Nigeria and it has become popular. Although gospel music is meant to proclaim the gospel of Christ as the musicians claim, it is discovered that it engages various themes and discusses contemporary issues as they find relevance from time to time. According to Ojo (1998 210) there is a continuous adaptation of Gospel music to the changing circumstances of the performers and the audience within a historical milieu.

The paper adopting the cultural-hermeneutical and textual analysis and discography approaches relies on the reflexivity social theory to discuss the influence of the social, economic and political realities in Nigeria from the 1980s to the present on the song texts of gospel music. The operations of

gospel music within the general context of the overall social, economic and political realities of the country subjects the musicians and by extension their music to the influence of the general situation in the country. To a great extent these realities forms part of the contents of their music either as a reaction, suggestion, commentary or prayer for a change.

This paper is based on the findings after the content analysis of over fifty gospel songs. It is discovered that many of these gospel songs can be grouped into songs of social concern; songs on economic situations and songs on political situations in Nigeria.

It is our conclusion in this paper that beyond the sole spiritual relevance and focus of gospel music which the musicians claim and project gospel music to serve, gospel music has become a social commodity that influences and is being influenced by the society in which it exists as the content and themes of the songs are greatly influenced by the social, economic and political situations in the country.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Reflexivity Social Theory in the social sciences which refer to the bidirectional consequences of any cause or effect. Reflexivity theory is concerned about the ways the social and the individual mirror or co-determine each other and how changes in the behavior of one creates corresponding changes in the other, which in turn may reflect back again(Wikipedia). The principle of reflexivity was perhaps first enunciated by the sociologist William Thomas (1923, 1928) as the Thomas theorem: that 'the situations that men define as true, become true for them. Sociologist Robert K. Merton (1948, 1949) built on the Thomas principle to define the notion of a self-fulfilling prophecy: Reflexivity was taken up as an issue in science in general by Karl Popper (1957), who called it the 'Oedipal effect', and more comprehensively by Nagel (1961). In sociology, reflexivity therefore comes to mean an act of self-reference where examination or action "bends back on", refers to, and affects the entity instigating the action or examination.

The social, political and economic realities in Nigeria forms one of the strong bases for the construction of Nigerian gospel musicians' notions and ideas reflected in their compositions and expressed through the text of their

songs. The impact of the social, political and economic realities on the lives of the musician cause the reactions exhibited in the contents of the songs by the gospel musicians which in turn influence the society for a change when they hear the songs.

Nigerian Gospel Music: A conceptual framework

The definition of a thing is an attempt to describe or say exactly what that thing is or mean. This attempt is usually influenced by certain factors reflecting the background, exposure, relationship or involvement with what is being defined. In discoursing gospel music people have variously defined the subject based on their perceptions, involvement and analysis of the music as well as the historical development of gospel music in Nigeria. While this is not the focus of this paper it is important to have a conceptual framework of what Nigerian gospel music is within the general concept of gospel music.

Gospel music is defined differently by various groups ranging from the musicians themselves, the audience or patrons and the scholars with emphasis on various aspects of it such as its origin, its functions and its contents. The definition of gospel music is also influenced by the culture within which it is developed and practiced.

The origin of gospel music in Nigeria has been put in the 1960s. This is the position of scholars like Femi Adedje (2004) According to him; the term 'gospel music' was first used in Nigeria by the pioneers in the same period. He defined gospel music as a branch of Christian music which has become so popular and well grown howbeit in divergent dimensions. (Adedje 2007 85-100). Tosin Ajirire and Wale Alabi (1992 73-78) simply define it as an arm of religious music. Gospel Music was a genre of popular American hymnody that emerged about 1870. At first a predominantly white style, it later became prominent in the urban religious revivals led by the evangelist Dwight Moody with the musician Ira Sankey. Its roots were in Sunday school hymns, camp meeting spirituals, and the melodies and harmonies of popular music; the text often deals with salvation and conversion. Black gospel music, which became distinctive by 1930, developed from the traditions of the Negro spirituals of the slavery period. In the twentieth century, it was a combination of the church hymns, black performance styles, and elements from Negro spirituals. Singing, which may merge into

ecstatic dance, is usually accompanied by piano or organ, often with handclapping, tambourines, and electric guitars. Although the black and white varieties of gospel music have remained distinctive, repertoire has been shared, and they have freely influenced each other stylistically.

The definitions given above by Femi Adededeji, Tosin Ajirire and Wale Alabi established the fact that gospel music as being rooted in Christian religion, even though in recent times, it is being associated with social and entertainment music because of its popularity. Gospel music derives its essence from the word 'Gospel' with which it is identified and distinguished from other forms of Christian music.

Nigerian gospel music is also defined as a new type of church music brought about by the move of religious fanaticism which has resulted in the proliferation of Christian churches in Nigerian society. (Adegbite 1994 83-94) Like other forms of Christian music, the creation, performance, significance, and even the definition of gospel music varies according to culture and social context. The definition of gospel music is greatly influenced by the culture in which it is being performed and the context in which it developed in that society. Gospel music as perceived in Africa may therefore not be exactly the same in North America even though there may be some points of convergence especially in the common term 'Gospel' portraying the spreading of the Christian message of good news. For example, Melva Costen (2004), Jon Michael Spencer (1990), and Carl Halter (1955) in their writings as Americans perceived and defined gospel music as a genre that emanated from the clandestine slave religious environment of Africans enslaved in America and later became a part of liturgy in black churches expressing hope and preaching good news in the hopelessness that the blacks were confronted with.

Jon Michael Spencer citing Louis-Charles Harvey, Wyatt Walkers and Irene Jackson writes:

Black music is called gospel because it attempts to relate the good news of Jesus Christ primarily to the existence of black folk in this country. For blacks who encountered oppression and desolation upon migrating to Southern and Northern cities following reconstruction this jubilant music has been a song of faith which rallies the hope and aspiration of the faithful in the face of devastating social conditions. Gospel songs deal with the immediate problems

affecting Blacks and are specifically designed to help Black people to surmount immediate circumstances of their lives (Spencer 1990)

Writing as a Nigerian, Femi Adededeji submits that gospel music may be defined from an African perspective as a type of Christian music that preaches the 'good news' of Jesus Christ made popular by public performances, the electronic media such as radio, television, the recording world and the Internet. Gospel music is dualistic in nature; on the one hand it is a Christian religious form and on the other, a part of urban popular culture. In the words of Costen Black gospel songs from their inception deliberately combined the sacred with the secular. Therefore, it would be expected that the black gospel would find a home in and outside of the liturgical space of black folks. This dual purpose of gospel music is also emphasized in the works of other scholars like David P. Pass (1989), Eveline Miller (1993); and Darden, Robert (2005).

The definition of gospel music by Matthews Ojo (1998 210 – 231) as a distinct kind of music composed and rendered by men and women who call themselves Christians, and who refer to their music as "ministration of the Good News in songs" is also relevant. He identifies similarity between Nigerian gospel music and Afro-American gospel music in its audience participation, in the repetitiveness of its song verses, in constant improvisation during performance, in the pattern of its calls and responses, and so on.

The inclusion of the performer and their religious claim to Christianity is worthy of note in the definition given by Ojo. This further emphasizes the claim of the gospel musicians and what their music is intended to achieve which is to minister the good news about Christ to people through music. Giving her own definition of gospel music, Gbemi Olaleye a gospel musician says "It is the declaration of the gospel of Christ which is good news to the world through music". She goes further to explain that the only difference between gospel musicians, pastors and evangelists that preach is that the gospel musicians carry out their own declarations through the use of music as such they are ministers in their own right and not mere entertainers. Supporting this view, Evangelist Florence Babalola, another gospel musician defines gospel music as "a ministry into which God calls people with the gift of music to proclaim total gospel of the kingdom of God. Such people can be

evangelists, pastors or teachers but they carry out their ministry through music"

Femi Adediji has also done a study of the definitive concepts, historical background and musical qualities of the styles employed in gospel music in one of his articles. In his study he attempted to answer questions such as: What is gospel music? How did the Nigerian gospel music originate and develop? Are there different styles of Nigerian gospel music? What are the styles and their distinguishing features? And what is the future of Nigerian gospel music? In another article on "Pitch and Tonality in Contemporary African Music: Nigerian gospel music as a case Study" Femi Adediji gave an historical development of Nigerian gospel music as emanating from the music used by indigenous Pentecostal churches in evangelistic parades between 1930 and the 1960s. Further substantiating the development of Gospel music in Nigeria from the church, Omibiyi-Obidike traced it to songs performed at special festivals such as harvests, thanksgiving and so forth which was later taken out of the confines of the church in order to cater for the social interests of the youths.⁵ Matthews Ojo agrees with this position when he writes that:

Gospel music came into being as a result of the Church's attempt to provide music for non-liturgical use, especially festal occasions. Gospel music is different from other kinds of music with regard to the text, the performer, and the context.⁶

Okafor however, traced the origin of Gospel music in Nigeria to the Christian music performed by missionary school bands during the colonial era. In his words:

That was the era in which Nigerians wrote very beautiful Handelian counterpoints, but in Nigerian languages. And that was also the period when people collected Nigerian folk songs and arranged them for the choral stage and even modified them and used the tunes for worship. That was the trend that really developed into what we call the gospel music of Nigeria of today.⁷

It is the opinion of Ajirire and Alabi that the Nigerian gospel music is as old as the Nigerian Church. According to them apart from the normal church services conducted with songs in Nigerian, Christian festivals like Christmas, Easter and Harvest are celebrated with a special service of songs performed

by the choir and with the advent of the electronic age borrowing from the western gospel singers Nigerian churches through their choirs began to wax gospel records and to perform outside the confines of the church.

We are of the opinion that Ajirire and Alabi's submission that gospel music is as old as the Nigerian Church is informed by the classification of every form of music performed in the church in the name of Christ and the preaching of the Christian doctrine as gospel music. There is certainly a difference between the liturgical music of the church used strictly in the context of church services within the four walls of the church and that which eventually developed later in the life of the Nigerian church. This came out of the process of taking the gospel out in contexts that were not as formal, strict and rigid as in the church during which music was also used with a fusion of the dimension of entertainment at social gatherings.

It is observed that definitions of gospel music are given from different perceptions by different people comprising of the musicians, the audience, and scholars who conduct research into the music. The definitions of gospel music as examined in this discourse can then be classified into three, namely:

- (1) Gospel music defined in terms of its origin;
- (2) Gospel music defined in terms of its content; and
- (3) Gospel music defined in terms of its function

Gospel music defined in terms of its origin is given more by people who are not practitioners but analysts and scholars. These definitions focus on the separation of the liturgical music in the strict church setting to Christian religious music that is used for entertainment. Therefore the emphasis of definitions of gospel music in this category is on the music being taken outside of the church to meet social needs of members of the church. Definitions of gospel music by Americans will also come under this category.

The definition in terms of content comes more from the musicians who do not by any means want to be regarded as entertainers in spite of the social and entertainment dimension that the Nigerian gospel music today has taken. The gospel musicians refer to themselves as ministers, preachers, and so on and not just ordinary singers. This is in defense of the message that their music carry and their desire not to be compared with secular musicians. Evangelist Bola Are in one of her interviews says "the Gospel

there is Jesus Christ and when you are out of the gospel, you are out of Jesus. If you are singing and Jesus is not there, then you are not singing gospel music" The definitions in this category usually rise in defense of the gospel of Christ and the stand or relationship of the musicians to the Christ that is being preached in the music; hence emphasis is placed on the content of the music as preaching Christ and the musicians as ministers of Christ.

The definitions in the third category are premised upon the function of the music. These in my view are usually given by the recipients or patrons of the gospel music. According to Femi Adediji (2008) the Nigerian public sees gospel music as many things in terms of its functional roles. To some, it is an entertainment, to many; it is a devotional music while to others it is just like any other music.

We propose our own definition of gospel music as follows: Gospel music refers to the Christian branch of religious music employed for the purpose of propagating the gospel of Christ to non-Christians and edifying the believers through its performance in both strict religious context (in the church) and social/entertainment context (outside the church) which has been made popular by the electronic media, technology and its performance.

Social, Political and Economic Realities in Nigeria

An overview of the situation in the country reveals that all is not well. The economic, political and social structures seem to be failing by the day leading to poverty and deprivation of the citizens of basic amenities of life. Tayo Fakiyesi (2004 389) observed that the recent experience in Nigeria have posed questions about the understanding of our leaders and hence their ability to come to grip with the dynamics of the political economy of the country as envisioned in the countries' various development platforms. According to him, no meaningful achievement has been realized despite the massive inflow of funds from the sale of oil for over a period nearing three decades. Fakiyesi summarized the social, political and economic context during this period as follows:

Nigeria's public policy has been in disarray, devoid of any consistent ideology; policy consistency was anathema, corruption, bad governance, social insecurity, unstable political economy and hence a free and laissez faire environment for rent seekers and rent seeking behavior were the norm

The situation described above is obviously indicative of disorder and has its attendant effects on the citizens of the country. Poverty, instability, hunger and other forms of social, economic and political disabilities became dominant in the nation. Emmanuel Martey and Onary Nwagwu (1998:18) defined poverty as being poor, living in lack and inferiority, the lack of opportunity to develop our abilities to control our lives because of economic deprivation, political injustice and disorientation of our lives due to protracted wars and other natural disasters.

This definition of poverty aptly describes the Nigerian social, economic and political context that informs the gospel musicians' reference to disorder, chaos, poverty, illness and prayers for healing. The Nigerian situation is described by Eteng (2004: 37-81) as depicting an apparently stalemated crisis condition, in which prevailing socio-economic, political and cultural conditions inherent in the nation's multi-ethnic pluralism generate endemic and seemingly irresolvable conflicts whose frequently destabilizing impact on the political community are so objectively obvious and pervasively felt, but obdurately denied and efforts to address them rejected by the nation's state managers and dominant ethno-class beneficiaries of the status-quo.

An historical overview of the socio-economic and political situation in the country since the 1970s indicate a progressive decline from economic surplus to economic depression both at the national and individual levels due to corruption, mismanagement, and bad leadership. From the oil boom of the 1970s which gave Nigeria as a nation enormous wealth and its citizens basic comforts of life and social amenities, Nigeria through the 1980s to the present time have moved to a state of economic hardship with each decade presenting peculiar features that contributed to the problems.

By the 1970s, with the oil boom, Nigeria shifted attention from agriculture to oil production. Anthony Kirk-Greene and Douglas Rimmer (1981 70) observed that farming no longer dominates Nigerian economic life as it did before the civil war of 1967 – 70. It has ceased to be the major source of export products and public revenue.

The gains of the oil exploration were however not consolidated as a result of corruption and mismanagement that characterized the Nigerian political scene since the days of military dictatorship of about fourteen years. This corruption syndrome was carried on to the civilian rule of the second republic headed by Alhaji Shehu Shagari in 1979 and further heightened by

the military who took over in the 1980s. Bade Onimode (1983 213-217) identified six extravagant projects into which the oil money of the 1970s went which negatively affected the economy of the nation. According to him, military expenditure was the most visible of these. Others are highly inflated contracts; frivolous and extravagant festivals such as FESTAC '77, the Udoji salary restructuring comprising of over-generous and wasteful salary arrears for about one year, in addition to about 100% salary increase for public servants by Gowon in 1975 were other sources of dissipation of the country's oil wealth. Outright theft and embezzlement also frittered away immense oil fortunes. The N2.8 billion of oil revenue allegedly 'inadvertently' diverted from the accounts of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) to a private bank account since 1976 during the Obasanjo regime comes to mind. Grandiose and white-elephant projects and conspicuous consumption also took their wasteful toll on Nigeria's oil money under the military.

The Military rule of Babangida who took over from Alhaji Shehu Shagari in 1984 obviously legalized corruption and this was built upon by General Sanni Abacha when he seized power in 1993. The wide spread corruption, mismanagement and insensitivity to the yearnings of the masses greatly has its negative impact on the economy of the nation and the lifestyle of the people especially the common citizens who find it difficult to make ends meet. Many Nigerians have become poverty stricken while the very few who have access to power get richer feeding on the national wealth.

In the last thirty years, ethnic/religious violence, political instability and social unrest have become a prominent feature of the Nigerian sociopolitical terrain. As Dejo Adepoju (2004 291-326) observed, they have also assumed a frightening dimension as exemplified in the violent upheavals and the attendant destruction of lives and properties in Kano, Kaduna, Lagos, Shagamu, Jos, the Niger Delta, to name just a few. Adepoju states further that the underlying and most prominent factor that has been advanced for the crisis situation in Nigeria is the path of development adopted by the political elite which, to use Kofi Annan's words "has been very fruitful for some but dreadfully flawed for many" and has not only resulted in stunted growth and poverty but also extreme and intolerable inequalities between individuals, groups and geographical areas.

The recent trend in the Nigerian socio-economic landscape reveals a deterioration and absolute collapse in some cases of structures, facilities and institutions that are supposed to make life comfortable for the citizens. The health sector, educational institutions and social amenities have had their negative share of the impact of recession in the economy of the nation. Many graduates turned out from the Nigerian Universities are jobless; the government hospitals are not functioning properly. Basic facilities like water and electricity supplies have become so erratic that having them is considered luxury in the country because only those who are rich can afford to generate water and electricity for themselves. The roads are bad especially in the rural areas. Farmers' produce are wasted because of poor road network to transport the produce to the urban centers where they can sell them. The public schools have been neglected and the common man cannot afford sending his child to a private school because it is expensive. The civil servants' salaries are unable to sustain them hence most of them live below the expected level of life. The most recent and frightening menace of the Boko Haram that has led to great loss of lives and properties in Nigeria gives expression to the progressive decline that has characterized the Nigerian Social, political and economic life. All of these are indications that all is not well with the country and therefore have influenced the themes of the song texts of the gospel musicians in Nigerian.

Influence of the Social, Political and Economic Realities on Gospel Music Text

One of the factors that have greatly influenced the popularity of Nigerian gospel music is technological advancement which has led to the production of the music in diverse forms: cassettes, records, compact discs and videos. As Peter Martins (1995: ii) observed, contemporary music resonates with the consequences of cultural globalization and the transformation wrought by new electronic media. Gronow (1981 251-284) pointed out that in West Africa the first commercial recording of music occurred in the 1920s.

The recording industry in Nigeria since its inception in the 1960s have progressed from the days of mono taping to the days of four tracks to eight track, to sixteen, to twenty four tracks and then thirty two tracks recording analogue facilities. In the 21st century, the recording industry in Nigeria has advanced to the use of digital and computer facilities for their recordings.

This has greatly influenced the growth and spread of Nigerian gospel music both within and outside Nigeria. More musicians now have access to studio recordings, technological advancement has made recording easy and less stressful.

An examination of recordings by selected Nigerian gospel musicians reveals the treatment of various themes in their songs. These themes range from religious/spiritual to social concerns, economic and political. These themes are reflected both in the title of the albums and the contents of the songs. Femi Adediji (2004) and Mathew Ojo (1998) have identified these themes in previous works. Specifically themes of Nigerian gospel songs can be classified into four broad categories namely: Spiritual Themes; Issues of social concern; Commentaries on economic and political situation and Theological contents.

The social, political and economic realities of the country are either directly addressed in the song texts or can be inferred. They are also either directed or addressed to Nigeria as a nation or expressed at personal levels as prayers or comments reflecting how the situation have affected the musician as a person or the nation at large. Since the concern of this paper is on the influence of the social, political and economic realities of Nigeria on gospel music song texts, attempt will not be made to discuss all the themes in their classification but recordings of some Nigerian gospel musicians will be analyzed to substantiate our points on issues of social concern and commentaries on economic and political situations.

One must first observe that one of the influences is a shift towards financial gains by the gospel musicians. Recent developments in the Nigerian gospel music scene reveal that the claim to spirituality and emphasis on gospel music as purely ministration cannot be justified by the tilting towards entertainment by many acclaimed gospel musicians today who sing solely for financial gains. This is seen in their style of composition and the fusion of popular secular styles in their performance. This is one of the influences of the economic realities of the nation on the gospel musicians. Whereas in the past and early stage of gospel music in Nigeria, the main concern was the propagation of the gospel, today, financial gain is a major factor and influence in gospel music performance. It is therefore correct to say that not all the gospel musicians emphasize spirituality in their music both in

conception and realization as gospel musicians will generally want their audience to believe.

The social, economic and political realities in the country have also influenced the creativity of the gospel musicians. The Nigerian music scene which does not exclude the gospel musicians has been proliferated with so many musicians who intend to survive through the art and therefore competition becomes inevitable. So gospel musicians venture into various styles in their composition and performance. As we have observed in another work, (Adeola 2011 23) Christians began to have their own version of socio-religious music types that were previously associated to Islam such as Senwele, Fuji, Waka and others. Gospel musicians engage in cross religious currents in their creativity in a bid to appeal to their audience. Examples are Rachael Olubukola Akinade popularly called "Senwele Jesu" who is known for her style of presenting gospel songs using the popular "Senwele" and "Waka" styles. Another artist in this category is Dekunle Fuji who has "fuji" as an acronym to his name because he sings gospel Fuji.

Prayer features prominently in the song texts of gospel music. Prayer is said both on personal level by the musician as well as on behalf of other people like praying for the nation, praying for other groups of people like the sick, the jobless, and little children. The content of prayers rendered in songs also include praying for personal, communal or societal healing, deliverance, break through, turnaround of the nation's economy, and the political situation in the country especially for peace to reign, wisdom for the leadership and good governance. Songs of prayer comes in form of petition or positive confessions. Hope of the oppressed people is raised through these prayer songs, trusting that someday they will be released from the power of oppression against their lives. An example is given in this excerpt:

Èmi Yóò Borí Ìsòrò –

Èmi yó ò borí ìsòrò,
Èmi yó ò borí ìsòrò dandan
Bó tí wù kógun kó le tó
Ó rí somo olókúú bèè ni

A kò ní sin ín pèlú òkú rẹ
Èmi yó borí ìsòrò dandan

Translation

*I will overcome my problems
I will surely overcome problems
no matter how tough the battle is
the child of the dead feels like being buried
with the dead
He will not be buried with the dead
I will surely overcome the problems*

Solo: Békún bá pé tíí dalé kan
 Ayò ní bò lówùúrò lólúwa wí
 Èyí ló mú mí gbàgbó wí pé
 Ogun èsù kò ní borí mi,
 Èmi ní yó ò borí ogun èsù
 Òrò mí ní láti dayò dandan
 Solo: Ìjì ayé tó ní jà yíká o
 Mo mò wí pé kò ní gbé mí lo
 Òwón gógó èyí tó gbòde kan,
 Mo mò wí pé kò ní ségun mí
 Ìsòro èyí tó ní fejú mó mí
 Mo mò wí pé kò ní gbé mí lo
 Ó kàn ní somo olókùú bèè ní
 A kò ní sín ín pèlù òkú rẹ
 Èmi yó ò borí ìsòro dandan

*If weeping endure for a night
 The Lord says joy comes in the morning
 This is why I believe that
 The attack of the devil will not defeat me
 I will overcome the devil's attack
 my case will surely turn to joy
 The storm of life raging around
 I know will not carry me away
 Scarcity that is prevalent around
 I know will not overcome me
 The problem that scares me
 I know will not carry me away
 The mourner just feels like it
 He will not be buried with the dead
 I will certainly overcome problems*

"Emi yo bori isoro" by Sola Rotimi is a song of positive confession, hope and encouragement to anyone who is going through difficult times that there is assurance with God that they will overcome. This song can be situated in the context of the prevailing economic situation in Nigeria during which there was so much hardship in the country. A time when people find it difficult to make ends meet, joblessness was prevalent, and people feel insecure and are generally fearful.

Issues of Social Concerns

Issues of social concern feature prominently in the Nigerian Gospel music. The musicians being members of the society express their views and run commentaries on happenings in the society and as such one is able to have insights into the prevailing situations in the society. Peter Martins puts it more succinctly when he wrote that music is a social product, social resources and social practice. As such, it is not autonomous but it is created and performed by real people in particular times and places. In doing so, they reveal much about themselves and their societies. He states further that the form and character of music somehow reflect or echo the nature of the society in which it is produced.

Social concerns expressed in Nigerian gospel music address various societal issues such as the effect of the economic situation on the citizens; moral decadence in the society; lack of basic amenities like water, light, good roads and Shelter. As such, different aspects of the life of the society are referred to in gospel songs as needing the visitation of God to bring the desired healing. Some examples of songs in this category include "Ilú le koko", "Oro aiye nfe adura", "Ranti Nigeria si rere Oluwa" and "Agbara atunse nbe lowo olorun" by late Bayo Adegboyega and Evangelist J.A. Adelokun's "Amona tete mabo"

Commentaries on Economic and Political Situations. Economic hardship is essentially what makes gospel musicians to compose songs with economic themes. The songs usually reflect the sufferings of the masses under a repressed economy. Prayer for God to turn around the economy of the nation, prayer for financial blessings or individuals and a call to the leaders to do what they can to turn around the situation forms the content of the songs with economic themes. Economic hardship is regarded as a form of illness in its description by the gospel musicians in their songs and this is believed to lead to other forms of illnesses such as physical illness because people fall sick when they are unable to eat good food and take proper care of themselves. It ultimately leads to death because in a repressed economy the government is unable to provide adequate health facilities and even when such facilities are provided people are unable to afford the money required for treatment as such many live with their illnesses.

Songs with economic themes by the gospel musicians come in form of prayer for divine intervention to turn around the economic situation of the nation; call to leaders to create jobs; and encouragement for citizens to hope in God who is able to change the situation for the better. A good example is Bayo Adegboyega's song titled "Airina, airilo oluwa je ko dopin" meaning God let poverty and lack come to an end. Excerpts of the song are given below:

Àìríná, Àìrìlò Olúwa Jé Kó Dópín

Chorus: Ipá èsù gbobo kó dópín x 2

Àìríná, àìrìlò tó wà nígboro

Àìrise, àìrije tó gbayé kan

Èmí òkùnkùn tí ní gbéra ga níwájú ìmólè

Translation

*All of Satan's power should cease
 poverty, lack that is prevalent in
 the town
 joblessness, hunger that has
 overtaken the world
 the spirit of darkness that brags*

isè èsù nì, a fé kó dópín

Solo: Látojó òní lo

All: Ipá èsù gbogbo kò dópín

Solo: Nílè gbogbo wa

All: Ipá èsù bogbo kó dópín

All: Repeat Chorus

Solo: Gbogbo agbára láyé àtòrun nì be lówó Jèsù

All: Kí Jèsù yára wá o, bá wa tayé se

Solo: Ilè tò nì sànn fún wàrà àtí fún oyin nì Nàìjíríà

All: Sùgbón àwon jegúdújerá
won ti so'le yi dahoro

Solo: Bóba ayé kò mú won,

Won ò lè bó lówó oba òrun

All: Orí aláìsè tò nì jiyà lówólówó á dá won léjò

All: Kí gbogbo Nàìjíríà, ká tera mósé àgbè

Solo: Ní àsìkò yíí tí owó epo nì se ségesège

All: Kí joba Nàìjíríà kó mú iwúrí bá isé àgbè o...

before the light

it is the work of the Satan, we want
it to cease

As from today

all Satan's power should cease

In our homes

all Satan's power should cease

all power on earth and in heaven is
in the hand of Jesus

Let Jesus come quickly and restore
the world

Nigeria is a country flowing with
milk and honey

but the destroyers

have made the rich house to be
desolate

If the earthly king does not catch
them

they can-not escape the king of
heaven

the head of the sinless who is
suffering will Judge them

Let all Nigerians work hard in
farming

This time that crude oil price is
unstable

Nigerian government should
encourage farming

Nigerian gospel musicians serve as the mouth piece of the citizens and the conscience of the society during political eras. Political songs are presented in form of satires, commentaries and outright expressions of the minds of the citizens. A peculiarity is the declaration by some of the musicians that God has given them the message they are proclaiming to the nation through their music. Gospel musicians like evangelist Niyi Adedokun and Evangelist

Ojo Ade are known for their use of satire in passing their messages across to the people while musicians like Bayo Adegboyega (late) and Pastor J.A Adedokun stand out in the use of commentaries and expression of the citizen's mind presented in form of appeal, complain, warning or criticism. Matthews Ojo opines that most of Adedokun's records have been satires or criticisms of the socio-economic and political milieu. Adedokun who became popular in 1988 with his release titled 'Mr Awaye malo' (the man who imagines that he will not die) which was targeted at the corruption in the police force in Nigeria has remained popular on the Nigerian gospel music scene with his style of storytelling in a manner that his audience can relate the characters in his story to the Nigerian situation. Pastor Adedokun's song "B'aye bayeni" (When life is good for one) is a good example of gospel song in this category. In this song Adedokun emphasizes the transience of power and authority with particular reference to the political situation of Nigeria. He challenges the holders of political office to be careful of what they do and how they do it when they are in power because a time will come when they will no longer be in power. With the use of figurative expressions, Yoruba proverbs, images and biblical examples, Adedokun warned the politicians against sycophants and political opportunists and to be careful of extravagant living because "no one knows tomorrow". He also challenged all citizens to work very hard to make Nigeria a great country. Some excerpts from the song are given below:

Báyé Bá Yenì

Solo Báyé bá ye nì ká rora jayé

Òní la rí, kò sédàá tó mola

Tó bá nì dara tó nì dùn yùngbà

E jéká máa wèyìn wò

Alágbára òní, ó tún le di aláìlágbara

All- Repeat

Solo-

Oba tó joyè tìlùú fì dàrú o

Ó dá mi lójú, orúko rè ò ní paré

Translation

when life is good for one, care must be
taken

we only see today, no one knows
tomorrow

when things are good and rosy

let us always look back

the powerful today may lose the power

the king that reigns and brings
instability in the town

I am sure his name will not be forgotten

Èyí tó wá gorí oyè tìlúú fì tòrò

Ó dá mi lójú, orúko rè ò ní paré

Ìpòkípò tí a wà, olúwa má jé n sùwà hù

Èmí Júdasí má jé kó wonú m

Mo ní báyé bá n yè ni o, ká rora jayé

Òní la rí, kò sèdáá tó mòla

Tó bá n dara tó n dùn yùngbà

E jé ká máa wèyìn wò

òní, ó tún lè di aláìlágbara

All – Repeat Chorus

Solo -

E jé ká rántí Nebukadinésàrí nínú ìwé mímó

Oba-ń-lá ló jé, oba alágbára ni

O dori oye tan o gberaga s'oluwa

O deni ile, o b'eranko gbenu igbo

Jésúrúmi nínú ìwé mímó

Ó jeun yó tán, ó gbàgbé olúwa

Ó gbàgbé ibi tó ti bèrè, ó gbàgbé àtíjò

Ó deni nílá tán ó ní kò sèni tó rí bí òun

Ìpò rere tí mo bá wà olúwa má jé n siwà hù

Emi Judasi ma je ko wonu mi

Chorus

the one that is enthroned and brings peace

I am sure his name will not be forgotten

Whatever position I am in, God help me not to misbehave

do not let the spirit of Judas enter into me

I say when life is good for one, care must be taken

we see today, no one knows tomorrow

when things are good and rosy

let us always look back

the powerful today may loose their power

let us remember Nebuchadnezzar in the holy book

he was a big king, a powerful king

when he came to power he was proud to God

he was abased, he lived in the bush with animals

Jesurum in the holy book

when he became satisfied, he forgot God

he forgot where he started from, he forgot the past

he became a big person, he said there was none like him

in the good position that I am, God let me not misbehave

the spirit of Judas, let it not enter into me

It is worthy of note that all gospel songs are regarded by the gospel musicians as spiritual whether they address political, economic or social issues. This is because the musicians believe that they are spiritually inspired to write the songs in the context of their religious affiliation. This is why there is always a spiritual dimension to even songs that treat other themes apart from spiritual. Like the Old Testament prophets such as Nathan, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, and Ezekiel who constantly challenged the political powers of their days and relating the mind of God to the people, gospel musicians claim that they are called by God to correct evil in the society. Talking about this role played by the gospel musicians Evangelist Joseph Adelakun said 'Alore ni wa a sigbodo kigbe' meaning we are watchmen and we must warn. It is therefore not strange to find gospel songs with themes warning a corrupt or wicked leader or warning the people against evil.

Faith and Hope. One of the things that keep Nigerians going is the hope that is raised in the citizens about a better tomorrow that will come if they have faith. Faith as a theological concept dominates the Christian religion and is preached through gospel music. Positive confession is an aspect of the faith theology that is common with gospel musicians. The difficult situations in which most of the Nigerian citizens find themselves as a result of the economic crises leading to other problems is the reason why the theme of faith and hope feature prominently in Nigerian gospel music. Faith carries with it the message of hope and hope is anchored on unshaken faith in God.

Pastor J.A Adelakun's "Jesu yo se yanu" (Jesus will perform a miracle) and "Nigeria yi, o nbo wa toro" (Nigeria will be peaceful) are examples. The call on God to step in and turn around difficult situation in Bisi Alawiye – Aluko's song illustrates hope, faith and expectation in God. Particular reference is made to hope and waiting on God for the fulfillment of God's promises in the life of the singer.

Gbeja Mi Ja

Translation

Prelude:

Olúwa tètè wá gbějọ ara re rò x4

God, quickly come and defend your self

Sóo rí básiwèrè èniyàn ti n gàn é lójoojúmó

Can you see how daily the ungodly mock you

Solo: Abiamo ò dide o

Mother in heaven

All: Olúwa tètè wá gbějọ ara re rò

God, quickly come and defend your self

Solo: Baba mi ò, mò dide è

All: Olúwa tètè wá gbéjò ara re rò

Solo: Abiamo kí gbékún omo rè.

Kó má tatí were
Sóo rí basiwèrè èniyàn ti n gan é lójoojúmó

Solo: Baba yáa rántí èyí wí pé òtá n kégàn,

Èniyàn búburú n sòrò òdì sí orúko re

Bèniyàn bá pé nínú iya o, á régbìn

Bèniyàn bá pé nínú òsì, á kan àbùkù

Bí àkò tàbí alápaàndèdè bèè ni mo dúró'

Mo káàánú bí òrìrì,

Áárè mú ojú mi fún iwòkè

Olúwa dide kó o sàánú fún mi

Mé má réni nbá fòrò lè o o,

Mé mo réni nbá tún fèyìn tì ràn o e

Igi nbá fèyìn tì ó fi gbogbo ara sègún

Òré nbá gbójú lé, ó tún see tanná-án deni

B'irètí bá p'e ó lè mókàn mi sáko lo

Oba tó n gbékún aláduúrà mo ti de x 2

Gbéjà mi jà o, gbòrò mi rò o

Má jé n gbàgbànù àdúrà o

All: Repeat 'Oba tó n gbé.kún aláduúrà...

My father please rise up

God, quickly come and defend your self

A mother will not hear the cry of her child

and not Respond

Can you see how daily the ungodly mock you

Father, remember that the enemy is mocking you

the wicked say negative things to your name

When a man suffers long he will be humiliated

When a man is in poverty for long, he will be disgraced

I stand before you like lizard

I am sorrowful

My eyes are weary for looking up

God rise up and have mercy on me

I have no one to share my problem with

I have no one to rely on

The tree that I should have rested on is full of thorns

The friend that I should have trusted betrayed me

When hope is delayed, the heart may wane away

the king who hears the cry of one who prays, iam here

Fight for me, plead my case

Let my prayer not be wasted

In the above song, Bisi Alawiye –Aluko paints the picture of a person under pressure as a result of many problems she is facing and the hope that she has in God which makes her call on God to help her. The early part of the song contains petition to God, a call for mercy and the intervention of God referred to as "Olori Ogun" (The Lord of host). Hope is expressed in the latter part of the song in the declaration that she has reached the shores of solution.

Ye Ipile Mi Wo

Bágbàdo bá pé kó tó yomo olóko á wíjò

Bí ègè bá pé kó tó tasu olóko á rọyà

Bòrò mi bá pé kó tó yorí sí rere aye á rí wí

Olórun mi sàánú fún mi, dide kó o se mí lógo

Solo:

Bólóko bá rọyà tó je kó tó gbàgbàdo ara á mi olóko

Mo ló ti tó o baba ká máa sisé bí erin
á máa jẹje èlírí

Olórun òrun baba o, oba tó ní kókóró orò lódò

Ó yá síjù àánú wò mí olórí ogun

Bágbàdo bá pé kó tó yomo, olóko á wíjò

Bí ègè bá pé kó tó tasu, olóko á rọyà

Ilórò mi bá pé. kó tó yorí sí rere, ayé á rí wí

Olórun mi sàánú fún mi dide kó o se mí lógo

Translation

If the maize delay in growing the farmer will complain

If the cassava delays in production the farmer will think of his suffering

If my case is delayed people will talk

My God have mercy on me and bring glory to me

If the farmer considers his effort before planting

Working like an elephant

and eating like an ant is enough my father

God the father who has the keys of prosperity

Look down on me with mercy

If the maize delay in growing the farmer will complain

If the cassava delay in production the farmer will think of his suffering

If my case is delayed people will talk

My God have mercy on me and bring glory to me

All: Repeat omo Olórun

Solo: Baba o, ó yá ro ó débi ìpilè o

Ìké. Olólà o Baba o

Ó yá ro ó débi isèdà kó o se mí lógo

Ohun ayé so mí dà, wón á fi bú mi bó yá

Omo Olórun dákun ye ìpilè mi wò

Father, consider the issue of my foundation

Father, the most merciful consider my foundation and glorify me

whatever men make of me will be used against me later

Son of God please examine my foundation

In this song, 'Ipilè' which literally means foundation can also refer to 'beginning' or 'Source'. This is what the song writer calls on God to examine in her life because it is assumed that when a problem is tackled from the source it will be solved.

In another song, Bisi Alawiye – Aluko calls on God and his angels to step into her case and bring about the needed liberation. Suffering, endless waiting for fulfillment of promises are the reasons for the call on angels to step in and facilitate liberation. These problems are presented in this song as a battle being fought for which angelic assistance is needed. An excerpt of the song is given below:

Mi O Jagun Mo

E dide èyin ogun òrun

E dide èyin àngéì

Ogun tí mo jà yí tó, e dide

Ogun àdájà, mo ní mi ò fé e mó olórí ogun

Ó yá bojú àánú wò mí o baba o

Ìyá yí tó gé é, òsì yí tó gé.

Mo ní mi o jagun mó o baba o

Ìlérí ojó pipé bàbá ó tì tó nínú ayé mí o

Ó yá mú mi wo yàrá imúse lo olórí ogun

E dide èyin ogun òrun,

E dide èyin àngéì,

Ogun tí mo jà yí tó o, e dide

Translation

Rise up heavenly hosts

Rise us you angels

The battle I'm fighting is enough, rise up

I don't want to fight my battle alone

Look to me with mercy father

Suffering is enough, poverty is enough

I say I don't want to fight battle again

delayed promises is enough in my life

take me to the place of fulfillment

Rise up heavenly hosts

Rise us you angels

The battle I'm fighting is enough, rise up

Call: Ogun tí mo jà yí tó o e dide

Resp: Repeat

Mi ò jagun mó o, mée serú mó o

Mo ti dódò Olórun mi ó, mée serú mó

The battle I'm fighting is enough, rise up

I am no longer fighting battles, I am no more a slave

I have come to my God, I am no more a slave

Conclusion

In the discussions above, we have tried to bring to fore the social, political and economic realities of Nigeria since the 1970s to date and how these realities have influenced the creative works of the Nigerian gospel musicians especially in their song texts. It is observed that the prevailing situations in the country at any point in time forms the themes of the songs reflected in the titles of their albums and the content of the music either as satires or direct commentaries on the social, political and economic situations. Analysis of the song texts of Nigerian gospel music reflects the personal views of the musicians or the views of the society that the musicians serve as their mouth piece. The economic realities have also influenced the creativity of the gospel musicians as they create styles of performances in order to appeal to their listeners and make for more financial gains. Gospel music in Nigeria continues to be relevant for national development, mass mobilization, conscience of the society and offer suggestions on how to overcome some of the challenges posed by the social, economic and political situations in the country. For as long as political, economic and social situations in the country are real and pose challenges, the Nigerian gospel music will continue to be influenced as it has always responded to real situations.

Notes

¹ Interview with Gbemi Olaleye

² Evangelist Florence Babalola is a popular gospel musician domiciled in Ilorin Kwara State. She has produced many albums.

³ Femi Adediji, "Classification of Nigerian Gospel Music Styles", Nigerian Music Review Vo.5 2004 pp.62 - 80

- ⁴ Femi Adedeji, "Pitch and Tonality in Contemporary African Music: Nigerian Gospel Music as a Case Study", *Research Review* NS 21.1 (2005) pp.1- 10
- ⁵ Omibiyi-Obidike Mosunmola, "New Horizons in Nigerian Popular Music", Paper presented at International Centre for African Music and Dance 'PANAFEST' Conference, University of Ghana. 1994. pp1-10
- ⁶ Matthews A Ojo, "Indigenous Gospel Music and Social Reconstruction in Modern Nigeria" *Missionalia: The Southern African Missiological Society Journal* 26:2 (August 1998) Pp 210 - 231
- ⁷ Richard C. Okafor, "Music Education and Socio - Political Issues in Nigeria". Unpublished lead paper presented to the 3rd National Conference of the Conference of Music Educators in Nigeria, Federal College of Education Okene, Kogi State, Nigeria. 22pp.

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Discography

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- Interview with Evangelist Joseph A. Adelakun. This view is also shared by other gospel musicians.
- Bisi Alawiye – Aluko and her Angelic Voices of Shiloh "Gbeja mi ja" in *Alasepe (God of Perfection) Remdel Optimal Communications Ltd*
- Bisi Alawiye – Aluko and her Angelic Voices of Shiloh "Ye Ipile mi wo" in *Alasepe (God of Perfection) Remdel Optimal Communications Ltd*
- Sola Rotimi and the Triple 'S' "Emi o Bori Isoro" in *Idariji ko si Lorun* Lagos: Ibukun Orisun Iye Records NRLP 021, 1985.