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## THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

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### Abstract

*The doctrine of the Blessed Trinity is perhaps one of the most savagely attacked Christian doctrines of faith. The perplexing reason for these attacks is that this central doctrine of the Christian religion has no practical relevance to human life and community. This study carries out an experimental survey to ascertain the truth value of this claim. The approach is multidisciplinary, using a carefully constructed questionnaire designed to meet the purpose of the study for data collection. The findings show that the doctrine of the Trinity, contrary to the assertions of Immanuel Kant and those who share sentiments with his school of thought, influences social behaviour. The Nike people of Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State is mused as a sample case.*

**Key Words:** Behaviour change, relationship, social problem, sociology of religion, trinity

### INTRODUCTION

It is common place, in these contemporary times, to pour aspersions on religion and to denigrate its power of influencing behaviour change. Alongside with that is the denial of any practical relevance or contribution to human life and well-being on the part of the central element of the Christian religion, the Blessed Trinity. These denials precipitate the further denial of some articles of this doctrine as essential components of the revealed religion, and engender the trepidation in contemporary scholarship over investigations into this Christian doctrine of faith, and finally, a loss of the Trinitarian experience in life. The first, though the preoccupation of Christian apologetics and the concern of the teaching office of the Church (the Magisterium), induces systematic investigations into the foundations of faith. The second belongs more to the history of dogma and theological language, a primary concern of theology. The third belongs to the field of sociology of religion which measures the import or role of a people's

belief systems in human societies. The concern of this paper revolves round the third, without losing sight of information from the other two. In this multi-disciplinary discussion, a theme in Christian theology is subjected to the searchlight of the social sciences. Understood in this light, an experimental survey approach is adopted in the effort towards ascertaining whether, in reaction to the accusation that this doctrine of God has no practical relevance at all, belief in the Trinity has made or ever makes any influence on social behaviour. Questionnaire is constructed for data collection. The research questions revolve around the following research questions:

- 1) Does the doctrine of the Trinity influence people's views towards relationship with friends and families?
- 2) Does the Trinity influence social behaviour?
- 3) Do different denominations have different views on the Trinity's influence on social behaviour?

The aim is to obtain from stakeholders in the faith whether this doctrine of faith affects their behaviour, and in what ways. A number of literatures would be consulted for the purpose of ascertaining the underlined objective of this study.

This study begins with a clarification of the keywords in the body of the paper, from where it would cast a brief look on religion and its elements, and finally, analyse the data collected in the field regarding the relevance of the doctrine of the Trinity on social behaviour.

**Religion:** this paper borrows Christopher Ejizu's explanation for a working definition of religion. He views religion as a worldview which tends to provide "a unified picture of the cosmos usually consisting of a web of interconnected beliefs, ideas and symbols that seek to explain rationally the order in the universe, an order that is believed to undergird human life and the universe as a whole" (Christopher I. Ejizu, 2008). Closest to this is A.W. Green's, which defines religion as "a system of beliefs and symbolic practices and objects, governed by faith rather than knowledge which relates man to an unseen supernatural realm beyond the known and beyond the controllable" (A. W. Green, in Ejizu, 2008).

**The Trinity:** The Trinity is the Christian understanding of God. It is, in point of fact, the central doctrine of the Christian religion. This term is

used here specifically in reference to the central element of the Christian religion, that is, as one of the elements of religion (Christian). Granted this understanding the Trinity, the Trinity would be used interchangeably with religion, where the term refers more specifically to the Christian God.

**Trinitarian Praxis:** This is a theological notion which considers the practical relevance of the Christian doctrine of the Blessed Trinity.

**Social Behaviour:** Social behaviour is a term used to describe the general conduct exhibited by individuals within a society, which is essentially in response to what is deemed acceptable by a person's peer group and avoidance of behaviour that is characterized as unacceptable (Java Pollecar, ). This term is used here in reference to the way/ways each individual assimilates into the crowd or group, and how a group of individuals acts together to achieve set goals (cf. Encyclopedia.com, 2019; Kahn,). The study assumes that trinitarian experience enables social behaviour.

**Social Problem:** is any undesirable condition, situation or behaviour that has negative consequences for large number of people that needs to be changed. It is used in this context as any general behaviour or condition in a particular society, which is feared to leave negative effects on the society beyond the morally and socially justifiable behaviour, while anti-social behaviours indicate often the loss of this relevance. The paper assumes that loss of the Trinitarian experience enhances the chances of such anti-social behaviours, like insurgency, socio-political crises like the so-called "Arab Wind", corruption, restiveness, rape, drug abuse, violence etc that rend the air across the globe, particularly in the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century AD.

#### **The Problem of Definition of Religion**

The problem with religion starts from the very word religion itself. No single definition has been offered that encapsulates all the elements or phenomena of religion. The very experts and owners of the language, religion, leave scholars in a dilemma as to which one to cling to, since they themselves do not have just one etymological root for the word "religion". Where Cicero (106 – 43BC) traced "religion" to the Latin verb, *re-ligio*, *-ere*, (to execute painstakingly and by repeated efforts"

(Ejizu, 2008), Lactantius (250 - 325AD) rather drew his definition from another Latin verb, *religio*, meaning to bind back to (that which is taught to be the ultimate source). Both etymological definitions and the numerous definitions of religion by such experts like Maclaver, Durkheim, Ogburn, J.M. Frazer, A.W. Green, H.M. Johnson, Malinowski, Ejizu, and a host of others, remind us of the complexity and difficulty in compressing the phenomenon of religion into one measurable single mould. These make all efforts to find one comprehensive definition of religion widely accepted difficult like a wild goose chase. Ejizu compares it to the analogy of the seven blind men describing an elephant. As for its inadequacies, the countless definitions often portray the various perspectives and biases of the definer. Many definitions reveal more about the one giving the definition than about religion itself (see, Sundermeier, 1999, Beyers, 2010). Beyers, for example, adds that "the majority of definitions of and theories of religion have originated from a Western background. Even the whole existence of the term 'religion' is seen as a 'eurozentrischen' (Eurocentric) term" (Figl 2003 in Beyers, 2010). This opinion finds support in Sundermeier (1999), Magesa (2002), and many African scholars who have chosen to define religion as a worldview. These scholars agitate over the bid to paint African religion in Western concepts. Instead, they opine that religion is a worldview of which Western conceptual schemes would be far from capturing the African world and religious experience (see Megassa, 2002; Ejizu, 2008; Beyers, 2010).

Attempts to define religion are more often than not trapped in the dilemma of maximization or minimization. The definer may end up with a "definition that is too broad (a maximum definition)", which would "include elements not usually associated with religion" or "One that is too narrow (a minimal definition)", which would "exclude those elements that are normally accepted as religion. On the possibility of defining religion, there are those who would suggest abandoning the term religion ... and those who feel that religion is ideology per se" (Beyers, 2010). This constitutes a major challenge in the study of religion.

The challenges notwithstanding, the phenomenon of religion is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the *homo sapiens*. Humankind is not only a *homo rationalis* (rational animal), but also a *homo religiosus* (religious animal). Aside from the more widely acclamation of the characteristic of the human being from the rest of class *mammalia*. Anthropologists, for example, have identified the use of tools and language; social philosophers and scientists see this being, above all, as "*ens socialis*" (a social being), so many other disciplines have their specialized visions of the human person. While each addresses with expertise, an angle of the many constituents of this complex reality called man (*homo*), none captures the philosophical conception of man as a composite of body, mind and spirit. Whereas these have their focus on the empirical, observable components of his being, yet each person encounters religion everyday (Cnaan *et al.*, 1991), religion alone seems to capture the holistic picture of man, the *homo religious*. This alone, gives consideration to those webs of interactions that undergird the human life and his universe. It becomes therefore inadequate the conclusions of the sciences that accept as relevant only those empirically based and observable components of human behaviour. This aspect of the human reality contains components that provide answers to the great puzzles of life, components like the unseen supernatural realm that lies far beyond the known and the controllable grasp of any empirical science and its scientific method. The Trinity, says Varghese, is "the breath-taking Truth that makes sense of all truths, the Luminous Mystery that illumines all other mysteries, the dazzling sun that allows us to see all things except itself ... It is the revelation that makes sense of everything in our experience" (Varghese, 2010). This is one of the elements of the Christian religion.

### **Elements of Religion**

Despite the difficulty in arriving at any one generally accepted definition of religion, scholars are agreed on certain elements are associated with religion. While these may vary according to the views of many authors, and more importantly, according to the various religions in the world, certain fundamental elements run parallel in all these religions. An example of such is the idea of the "holy" and the existence of the supernatural. This "holy" is often identified as

God/Gods/Spirit-beings or Divinities, among theistic faiths like Christianity, Islam and Judaism, amidst other elements of religion. Among non-theistic religions like Buddhism and other Eastern religions, there is belief in an impersonal force or power (an impersonal empowering process, ultimate enlightenment, Nirvana) to which is tied the idea of the “holy”. Accordingly, Ejizu (2008) notes that religion is belief in the “holy”.

Central to the many definitions given by the above mentioned authors is the idea that religion is tied to this “Holy” as to an ultimate source, or to that reality upon whose laws the entire cosmos rests, a reality that “transcends” all others. Jaco Beyers calls it “Transcendence”; and this could mean a personal God or Nirvana. Christians conceive this Transcendence as God, and more specifically, as the Trinity. Regarding religious experience, Ejizu remarks that “the experience of the holy evokes a feeling of reverence and awe (*mysterium et fascinosum*) in most known religious traditions of humankind” (Ejizu, 2010). Under this aegis, salvation would mean either right relation to this God or transformative enlightenment. Thus, in religion, as Ejizu opines, the human being experiences the holy and ultimate reality, and the expression of that awareness in concrete life.

### **Religion and Social Behaviour**

Religion is as old as the human society itself and has played enormous roles in the history of any people in all land and clime. According to Nahid Eva (2015), “religion is an important part of life for many people. Even for people who are not all that religious by nature consider it to be important.” The belief that the rules of what is acceptable for society are largely based on religion is beyond dispute. What could be debated is whether religion is required to make humanity good. Eva (2015) enumerates as much as 12 principal roles religion plays in the life of a people, foremost among which is regulation of behaviour.

Many scholars have attested that the interaction with religion makes enormous impacts that bear on both private lives and social behaviour in both theistic and non-theistic religious circles. Doetzel (2001) in Baloch, *et al.* (2014) points out that religion “binds us together as people or community”. This underscores the importance and relevance of religion to social behaviour. As a general frame that underscores the

importance of religion in the society, Ikenga-Metu holds that "...people's worldview is defined as the complex of their beliefs and attitudes concerning nature, structure and interaction of beings in the universe with particular reference to man" (Ikenga-Metu, 1972). This worldview shapes behaviour and sets the standards for acceptable conduct. The experience of the holy, for example, impacts conduct since it provides a moral compass for members of the given society. With its overriding presence in all religions and serving as "the binding wire" behind exclusivity in religious memberships and gatherings, religion becomes the force and thrust behind behaviour change, though susceptible to one form of extremism or the other. Belief in the gods or in the Supreme Being is held to be "the fountain of justice". It is "the glue that keeps members of larger groups from turning on each other or freeloading" (Nicole Greenfield, 2008). Greenfield's analysis of 186 societies shows that cultures with large populations tend to subscribe to religions that enforce human morality. The conclusion reached shows that religion can stabilize large human societies, otherwise destined for collapse. Greenfield instantiated this hypothesizing that religious beliefs, by signaling a person's willingness to sacrifice for others, help people to get along better (Nicole Greenfield, 2008). This has been corroborated by Okeke, Ibenwa, and Okeke (2017), where these authors assert that religion "colours" people's consciousness.

Researches in the sociology of religion, and psychology of religion alike, attest that religion shapes social behaviour (Pablo Branas-Garza, *et al.*, 2013; Kathleen R. Speeth, 1993; Baloch, *et al.*, 2014; Einolf C.J., 2011; Saroglou, *et al.*, 2005; Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991), enhances social cohesion (Hervieu-Leger, 2006), influences personal life (Baloch, *et al.*, 2014), impacts cultures and civilization, and even spousal relationships and sex (Farmer, *et al.*, 2009; Wong, 2009). Interestingly, all these affirm the power of religion in shaping human life and social behaviour. These agree with the conclusions of Beyers, Opoku, Sundermeier, Hervieu-leger and Nahid Eva. All these scholarly works assert in unison that religion "encapsulates the whole human being, as this being stands in a holistic relationship with reality" (Beyers, 2010) and pervades all spheres of human life and the human environment. There is no aspect or sphere of human life that remains impervious to



religious influence. Hence Hervieu-Leger affirms that it has “implications that extend far beyond the realm of religion itself” (Hervieu-Leger, 2006), while Sundermeier calls it the foundation of all life (Sundermeier, 1999). This becomes possible because humans, says Beyers, stand in a holistic relationship with all reality. He makes bold to say that all life has to do with religion, while Opoku defines it as “the source of life and meaning” (Opoku, 1993). Eva notes the following: Religion is “the central element in the life of civilization. Throughout the ages it is a proof of its values. It has been the propagator of basic values and ethical code which provide cohesion to society and integration to personality” (Eva, 2015).

The import of religion on life covers both conducts of individual persons and social relationships, as well as the shaping of civilizations and cultures. To show its role in shaping the culture and civilization of any society, Eva lists as much as twelve of such functions whereas Hervieu-Leger makes the following observation:

*If we truly wish to take the measure of the presence of religion in European societies, we must dig deeper, and look into the political, cultural, ethical, and symbolic structures that make up the framework for collective life in the societies concerned. At this level, one can gauge the extent to which both institutions and mentalities are imbued with and shaped by religion, even in the absence of any explicit reference to the religious traditions involved in the development of the civilization's values. Civilized values have developed, broadly speaking, within a Judeo-Christian cultural context (Hervieu-Leger, 2006).*

He illustrates this with the French experience where the programme of public institutions (everything from schools to hospitals, courts, universities, etc.) is entirely based on, and has continued to operate (though, obviously, not explicitly) with reference to the Catholic model. “It is impossible to appreciate the discussion of many questions in French public life which have nothing strictly to do with religion (from food quality to the ethical regulation of science, the management of hierarchical relationships in business, the future of rural society,

societal expectations of the State, and demands for workers' rights) without being aware of the extent to which French culture is impregnated with Catholic values" (Danièle Hervieu-Léger, 2006). These authors could reach such conclusions since they all agree that religion is a subject we encounter everyday (Cnaan *et al.*, 1991), even when we claim we are a-religious. Religion's influencing power lies in the fact that it adds meaning and purpose to the lives of the followers, helping them to appreciate the past, understand the present and hope for the future as well as giving psychological stability (Smith *et al.*, 2004 in Baloch *et al.*, 2014). This position affirms the assumption of this paper that the Trinity, the central element of the Christian religion, contributes crucially to the production of norms and values that Christians to govern their collective lives. The reference to Europe's religious (or spiritual) heritage in Hervieu-Léger illustrates how religion contributes to the emergence of a shared worldview. This brings one to the question; how does the belief in the Trinity impact social behaviour?

#### **The Trinity and Social Behaviour**

If for theistic faiths, religion means belief in God and activities related to it (Lim *et al.*, 2010), it would mean belief in the Triune God in Christianity. Secondly, if religion could influence social behaviour, then, Christianity, and its major element, the Trinity, do as well influence social behaviour. Thus, Christians find in this doctrine the Christian conception of God, around which all phenomena of religious experience revolves, and go on to profess faith in the Triune God. Hence, Christians "believe in One God (Credo in Unum Deum) the Father... Son... the Holy Spirit." And put in the Trinitarian formula, the Christian worships God who is Triune: "We worship One God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity (the *Quicumque Vult* of St. Athanasius, see Nwachukwu, A.U. 2018). They believe and confess that there are Three Persons in One God – the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Thus, belief in the Trinity is central among the elements of the Christian religion. This requires a little flashlight.

#### **The Trinity as the Central Element of the Christian Religion**

Christianity shares the same monotheistic faith tradition with Judaism and Islam. As one of the Abrahamic religions, it professes belief in one God, against the polytheism of the Asian mystery religions. But it

distinguishes itself from Judaism and Islam by its confession of a form of plurality within the inner being of this One God. While agreeing with Tertullian's assertion that God, if He is not One, then He is not God, Walter Kasper explains that in Christianity, God is not simply *Unus* but at the same time, *Uniquus*. His Unity is Unique, this uniqueness lies in the mystery of His essence (ousios/substantia), which is One, and the Three hypostases or Persons. This is summed in the concept of "Trinity" (Walter, 1984). This understanding of the being of God stems from the teachings of the Sacred Writ, liturgical worship and experience of faith of the apostles who, Christians believe, are the foundation stones of the Christian religion (cf. Varghese, 2010). This faith, says there are Three Persons in One God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

It belongs to the history of dogma to narrate the evolution or development of this doctrine of the Christian faith, as one can find in O'Collins (1999), Kasper (1984); Edmund J. Fortmann (1981); Nwachukwu (2018), and many others. Suffice here to have this doctrine interpreted as the central element of the Christian religion, to whom humans relate in their religious experiences.

#### **The Christian Doctrine of the Trinity: A Retrieval**

The word "Trinity" is the English Equivalent of the Latin: "*Trinitas*", an abstract noun that evokes the idea of "three-ness". It is perhaps on this note that Kaushik employs it for his ecommerce business (Avinash Kaushik,). "Three-ness" is in consonance with the Christian experience of God as witnessed in Sacred Scripture and the experience of faith and worship in the early Church. In articulation of their faith, the second and third generation theologians (in the post-Apostolic era) provided this term in explanation for the Christian experience of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Nwachukwu, A.U., 2008) in both scripture and tradition. It became a dogma of faith, first at Nicaea I (325AD), complemented in Constantinople I (381AD), and clarified in the later Ecumenical Councils of Lyons II (1274) and Florence (1431-1442). The Trinitarian promulgation of Lyons II Council reads:

*We believe in the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one omnipotent God and deity entire in the Trinity; co-essential, consubstantial, co-eternal and co-*

*omnipotent, one of will, power, and majesty, ... We believe that each single person in the Trinity is the one true God complete and perfect (Roger E. Olson & Christopher A. Hall, 2002).*

This Christian understanding of God stands on three types of biblical testimonies and experience of faith in the early Church:

- i. The use of the plural concepts for God, especially in the Yahweist (J) and Elohist (E) Sources of the Pentateuch;
- ii. The pervading use of concepts denoting interpersonal relationship, such as Fatherhood, Sonship and Holy Spirit in the N.T., and
- iii. The biblical definition of God as love (cf. 1 John 4:8, 16; Martin Davis, 2013; D.L. Migliore, 2004; and Nwachukwu, 2008).

The implication of this confession is that God is pluriform, though only One God. Dr. I.P. Wheeler (2018) and Anthony Maas attest to that. These two authors attest that *Elohim*, a plural form of *El*, is very often used for God in the Pentateuch. This reason is confirmed in an online article, "Trinity: Plural References to God in the Old Testament: Plural Nouns, Pronouns, Verbs, Adverbs", posted by an unidentified author. This article points out that there are eloquent indications that God is One in unity, but Three in Persons. Their truth value derives from the testimony of sacred scripture (cf., [www.bible.ca/trinity-ones-unit-plurality...retr.9/July/2019](http://www.bible.ca/trinity-ones-unit-plurality...retr.9/July/2019)).

The above is itself a near reiteration of the Athanasian Creed which says:

*... we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity; neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance. For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is all one, the glory equal, the majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit. The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Spirit uncreated. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Spirit incomprehensible. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Spirit*

*eternal. And yet they are not three eternals but one eternal. As also there are not three uncreated nor three incomprehensible, but one uncreated and one incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Spirit almighty. And yet they are not three almighties, but one almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God; And yet they are not three Gods, but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Spirit Lord; And yet they are not three Lords but one Lord (St Athanasius' Creed).*

One of its clearest summaries comes from the 7th Century AD Council of Toledo (675AD). The synopsis of the Trinitarian teachings of this Synod reads: Although we profess three persons we do not profess three substances but one substance and three persons ... If we are asked about the individual Person, we must answer that he is God. Therefore, we may say God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit; but they are not three Gods, he is One God ... Each single Person is wholly God in himself and ... all three persons together are one God".

All these Symbols of the Christian faith suggest that

- i. There is only One Divine Nature
- ii. There are Personal distinctions in God
- iii. There is unity in God
- iv. There is multiplicity within this One Godhead
- v. There is asymmetrical relationship among the Three Divine Persons
- vi. The Trinity is the doctrine on the nature of God

It is within this purview that possible systematic interpretation would identify innumerable theopraxist implications of this doctrine of faith on human social behaviour.

### **Trinity and Social Behaviour: The Kantian Criticism**

Since the centre of every theistic religious faith is belief in God, the relevance of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity therefore underscores how much the Christian God must have impacted social behaviour and the shaping of civilization since two thousand years, still counting. On the contrary, the relevance of this doctrine to contemporary society has

been hotly contested in the more recent times. It is threatened with *reductio ad absurdum*. The German Enlightenment philosopher, Immanuel Kant, slung the first mud when he declared it the most absurd of all the Christian doctrines: "The doctrine of the Trinity, taken literally, has absolutely nothing worthwhile for the practical life can be made out of the doctrine of the Trinity" (Immanuel Kant, *De Streit der Fakultten*, PhB 252, in Freenstra and Platinga, Jr, 1989; also Roennfeldt, 2014; Petersen & Melver, 2014). Aside from granting it the benefit of distinguishing one faith from another, the Kantian hypothesis numbered God among the noumenal realities, and therefore regarded the doctrine of the Trinity as a meaningless inconsequential doctrine whose usefulness has a mere utilitarian motif, that is, where we read a moral meaning into it. By this criticism, Kant asserts that the most central element of the Christian religion is pointless, hence, it could be denied that this Christian doctrine of faith has or will ever have any benefits to human beings. By this, he has therefore launched a deadly attack on the foundation stone upon which the edifice of the Christian faith is constructed. Ironically, this same doctrine laid the foundation to the civilization on which Kant developed his thought. Nevertheless, it does not just suffice to wave the Kantian criticism, neither is it sufficient to argue alongside with Danièle Hervieu-Léger (2006) that the Christian religion has influenced the shaping of Western culture and civilization without a proper investigation into the claims of Kant.

Kant is not alone in his perception of the practical import of this doctrine of God. Many later scholars and authors have attested, for instance, to the loss of the Trinitarian experience, even in the church itself. Thaddeus Williams, taking a historiographical approach, supposes, perhaps, that Kant's assessment would have been informed by a failure of 18th century European churches to intentionally live out Trinitarian realities (Williams, 2013). This is in agreement with the view expressed in J. Scott Horrell (2008) which says: "We have done little to consciously express Trinitarian belief in our daily lives and in the community and mission of the church" (Horrell, 2008). Karl Rahner's "Trinity", notes that from the way Christians have lived hitherto, it appears we all are strictly monotheists (Karl Rahner, 1970) while Collin E. Gunton expresses the same view as Rahner's in "The

Promise of Trinitarian Theology” (2003), citing the near absence of this Trinitarian nuance in the Book of Common Prayers of the Anglican Communion.

Nevertheless, it would be distraught to suppose that the central teaching of a religious body that wields such a demographic power of 2.1 billion members, two thousand years of history, and active involvement in the emergence of world civilization, would be tagged “irrelevant” and “absurd”. Reactions to this could be the reasons behind the reawakening of interest in Trinitarian theology and the adoption of new hermeneutics in theological research on the Trinity and the barrage of literatures on the Trinity. Even these scholars, Rahner, Gunton, and even Horrell are rather arguing for acknowledgement of this doctrine than its denial. Gunton would argue, for instance, for more reflection of this doctrine in the composition of liturgical prayers as a proper manifestation of this article of faith in Christian worship, devotion and consciousness. This paper turns to an experimental survey to ascertain whether or not this doctrine of God makes any practical contribution to humankind.

#### **METHOD AND ANALYSIS OF DATA**

To ascertain the Trinity’s influence on social behaviour, the quantitative experimental approach was adopted. The data was collected by a carefully constructed questionnaire which was administered to 150 randomly selected populations from three communities around Enugu East Local Government Area Headquarters. This location is carefully chosen because its strategic location as the centre of Nike clan, the housing of the political headquarters of Nikeland, as well as the strong presence of Christianity in the land. More areas could not be covered, partly because the population of the study and partly because of the semi-urban nature of the communities with a population mix with indigenes of other parts of Nikeland and other dwellers from other lands sufficed for the aim and objectives of the study.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Table 1: Demographic Profile, Respondents' Data**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<b>1. GENDER</b>		
Female	80	53.3
Male	70	46.7
<b>2. Age Group</b>		
18 – 25 years	55	36.7
From 26 years above	95	63.3
<b>3. Marital Status</b>		
Single	55	36.7
Married	95	63.3
<b>4. Education Level</b>		
Secondary	60	40
University	90	60
<b>5. Job/Work</b>		
Student	40	26.7
Working part time	75	50
Unemployed	45	30
<b>6. Religious affiliations</b>		
Catholic	86	57.3
Protestants	42	28
Others	22	14.7

The table 1 (demographic profile) shows the gender of the respondents (53.3% female and 46.7% male), their age (from 18 years above), educational statuses (21% secondary, 77% tertiary) and employment status with 40% (students), 45% unemployed and 75% employed and their religious affiliation.

**Table 2: Roman Catholic Respondents**

Variables	Frequency	%
<b>RELIGIOUS LIFE</b>		
Frequency of participation in religious programmes and worship		
2/3 times a month	57	66.3
Once a month	13	15.1
Once a year	10	11.6
<b>BELIEFS: THE TRIUNE GOD</b>		
Belief in One God	86	100



Belief that the One God is Trinity (Three Persons in One God)	86	100
Each divine Person is God, yet there is only One God	86	100
The Divine Persons live in perfect harmony and communion	62	72.1
As God's image, man is called to live in love and communion as God does	86	100
<b>THE TRINITY AND HUMAN LIFE</b>		
This doctrine of God reminds you about mutual support as in a family?		
Yes	73	84.9
No	12	14
Not sure	1	1.1
It helps one to learn how to live in communion with other persons as in the Trinity?		
Yes	86	100
No	0	0
Not sure	0	0
This can help you develop a more acceptable behaviour in the community		
Yes	70	81.4
No	11	12.8
Not sure	5	5.8
<b>TRINITY/RELIGION AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR</b>		
Religious beliefs influence your daily activities		
Yes	64	74.4
No	6	7
Not	16	18.6
Religion and its elements influence relationships within the family and community		
Yes	72	83.7
No	6	7
Not sure	8	9.3
Religion often impacts dating/sexual relationship		
Yes	65	75.6
No	17	19.8
Not sure	4	4.6
Religion influences volunteering/altruistic services		

Yes	55	64
No	11	12.8
Not sure	20	23.3

Variables	Frequency	%
<b>RELIGIOUS LIFE</b>		
Frequency of participation in religious programmes and worship		
2/3 times a month	23	54.8
Once a month	9	21.4
Once a year	10	23.8
<b>BELIEFS: THE TRICUNE GOD</b>		
Belief in One God	42	100
Belief that the One God is Trinity (Three Persons in One God)	42	100
Each divine Person is God, yet there is only One God	42	100
The Divine Persons live in perfect harmony and communion	40	95.2
As God's image, man is called to live in love and communion as God does	42	100
<b>THE TRINITY AND HUMAN LIFE</b>		
This doctrine of God reminds you of mutual support as in a family?		
Yes	26	61.9
No	5	11.9
Not sure	11	26.2
It helps one to learn how to live in peace with other persons as in the Trinity?		
Yes	42	100
No	00	00
Not sure	00	00
This can help you develop a more acceptable behaviour in the community		
Yes	33	78.6
No	7	16.7
Not sure	2	4.8
<b>TRINITY/RELIGION AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR</b>		
Religious beliefs influence your daily activities		

Yes	29	69
No	7	16.7
Not sure	6	14.3
Religion and its elements influence relationships within the family and community		
Yes	35	83.3
No	3	7.1
Not sure	6	14.3
Religion often impacts dating/sexual relationship		
Yes	42	100
No	0	0
Not sure	0	0
Religion influences volunteering/altruistic services		
Yes	42	100
No	0	0
Not sure	0	0

Table 2 surveys the results of the catholic population of the respondents on involvement in religious activities, understanding of the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity and the import of such understandings on their personal lives and that of life in their communities. The data obtained show that 63.% of the respondents participate in religious programmes and worship up to 2 to 3 times in a month while 15.1% visit in a month and 11.1% of the respondents visit in a year. All (100%) of the respondents believe that there is only One God, who is Trinitarian. Regarding religious beliefs and personal life, 84.9% of the respondents attest that the doctrine reminds them of supporting one another as members of one family or of a community, just as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit do within the Trinitarian family. 100% says they can emulate the Trinity by living in peace with one another as members of a family. 81.4% agree that knowledge of the Trinity helps them to develop socially acceptable lifestyles. Religion and religious beliefs like the Trinity influences people's daily activities (74.4%); relationship within the family and the community (83.7%); and altruistic services/sexual relationship (75.6%); while 64% affirmed that it influences their involvement in altruistic services/volunteering.

Summarily, the result in Table 2 shows beyond any doubt the conviction of Catholics in Nike, Enugu on the influence of the Christian religion in shaping social behaviour. It would be the concern of another test to measure the extent of this influence. Of this, belief in the Trinity plays an outstanding role as a model of life and as an enhancer of the human tendency to live in communion and peace with others.

**Table 3: Protestant Respondents**

Table 3 displays the responses from respondents who identified themselves as protestants. Membership to this group comprises Christians from all other denominations other than Catholic.

The result shows that 54.8% of the respondents participate in religious programmes and worship up to 2-3 times in month while 21.4% of the respondents said once a month, and 23.8% once a year. 100% confess that there are Three Persons in One God, while 95.2% and yet, 100% of the respondents affirm that the Three Divine Persons live in perfect harmony and communion. On the Trinity and the human person, 61.9% accept faith that this doctrine of God helps one to understand better how to live a life of sharing with others as in a family, all (100%) says this understanding of God helps them to live in peace with others, while 78.6% affirm it helps them to develop a more wholesome behaviour in the community. Furthermore, the data revealed too that religion and religious beliefs, such as the Blessed Trinity, influence social behaviour in a variety of ways. The areas of inquiry covered personal life, family life, human community, social activities like dating and sexual relationships, and pro-social activities (altruism and volunteering). To the first, 69% confirmed that knowledge of the Trinitarian image of God influences their daily activities. 83.3% agrees too that it impacts on family and community life, 100% affirmations are made on the influence of religion and its elements on sexual relationship and altruistic/voluntary services. Summarily, this data from the Protestant respondents is not quite difference from what is obtained among Catholics. Any difference is only in the population of study, which had been chosen randomly.

**Table 4: Un-Indicated Denomination**

VARIABLES	Frequency	%
<b>RELIGIOUS LIFE</b>		
Frequency of participation in religious programmes and worship		
2/3 times a month	8	36.7
Once a month	5	22.7
Once a year	9	40.9
<b>BELIEFS: THE TRIUNE GOD</b>		
Believe in One God	22	100
Believe that the One God is Trinity (Three Persons in One God)	17	77.3
Each divine Person is God, yet there is only One God	17	77.3
The Divine Persons live in perfect relationship and communion	13	59.1
As God's image, man is called to live in love and communion as God does	13	59.1
<b>THE TRINITY AND HUMAN LIFE</b>		
This doctrine of God reminds you about mutual support as in a family?		
Yes	18	81.8
No	1	4.5
Not sure	3	13.6
It helps one to learn how to live in peace with other persons as in the Trinity?		
Yes	22	100
No	0	0
Not sure	0	0
This can help you develop a more wholesome behaviour in the community		
Yes	9	40.9
No	6	27.3
Not sure	7	31.8
<b>TRINITY/RELIGION AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR</b>		
Religious beliefs influence your daily activities		
Yes	17	77.3
No	0	0
Not	5	22.7

Does religion and its elements influence relationships with family and friends		
Yes	11	50
No	4	18.1
Not sure	7	31.8
Religion impacts dating/sexual relationship		
Yes	12	54.6
No	8	36.4
Not sure	2	4.7
Religion influences volunteering/altruistic services		
Yes	8	36.4
No	7	31.8
Not sure	7	31.8

The data in Table 4 is from those respondents who did not indicate their religious group. Since they constituted a significant number, they are used here to counterbalance the data from both Catholic and Protestant respondents. Surprisingly still, the majority indicated they are Christians, with depth knowledge of the Christian notion of God (the Trinity) and affirmed strongly that religion and religious beliefs and tenets impact social behavior. Their data reads thus: 36% attend or participate in religious programmes and attend religious worship for about 2-3 times a month. 27% do so once a month, while 40.9% do so at least once a year. 100% profess belief in God; 77.3% said God is Triune; the same frequency affirmed that the Three Divine Persons live in perfect relationship and communion, while 59.1% attest that the human person is called to live in love and communion with others like the Trinitarian Persons.

That this Christian notion of God (as Trinity) impacts human life is attested to by the responses obtained. 81.8% affirmed that this doctrine of God reminds them about mutual support with others as in a family. 100% (that is all the respondents) affirm that knowledge of God as Three Persons having One Divine nature helps them to live in peace with one another, while 40.9% said that this knowledge can help them develop a more wholesome lifestyle in the community. This group of respondents also affirmed that religion and its elements (like belief in the undivided unity in Trinity) influences and shapes social behaviour.

On this note, 77.3% said it influences their daily activities; 50% responded affirmatively that it has strong influence on their relationships in the family and friends; 54% stated that it affects dating and sexual (interpersonal) relationships, 46.4% said it does not. 36% wrote that it influences their engagement in altruistic services and volunteering, while 31.8% said it does not really, and another 31.8% said they are not sure.

### **RESULT SUMMARY**

There is no clear difference between the data displayed in the different Tables above. All show a high frequency of participation in religious activities, a 100% belief in God and an overwhelming acceptance of the Christian confession of the Blessed Trinity. This high frequency may be attributed to Biblical testimony, strong presence of Christian religious bodies in Nike land and doctrinal catechesis. Approximately 95% of the respondents agree that religion is important in life as its doctrines shape personal lifestyles and social behaviour. One can infer from the findings displayed in the tables:

- i. There is a strong Christian presence in Nike land (available data at Enugu Diocesan secretariat shows, for instance, shows that there are 46 parishes under two Catholic deaneries [*Nkwo Nike and Emene*], an Anglican Communion diocese [the Diocese of Nike], a strong presence of other Protestant and Pentecostal denominations of different sizes notwithstanding) in Nike land today.
- ii. There a strong belief in the Trinity and high frequency of participation in religious activities.
- iii. There is a corresponding change in behaviour as indicated in the high level of hospitality, good neighbourliness, and generosity of the present generation of Nike people, a people who in yester years were known as a dreaded warrior race, and a nightmare to neighbours.
- iv. Good neighbourliness, hospitality, and generosity are qualities inherent in inner Trinitarian life. This high percentage of these virtues in a Christian community deserves the interpretation as expressions of the influence of Trinitarian faith, the fruit of conversion, in a people and a culture.

These altogether give proof to the hypothesis which says that religion impacts on a person's lifestyle and social relationships. Much the same is the Christian doctrine of the Trinity which promotes harmony and teaches how to live in community and communion with others. It is left for further studies to ascertain to what extent this belief in the trinity impacts behaviour change among the Nike people.

### **CONCLUSION**

This evaluation made above falls into consonance with the conceptual frame of more recent Trinitarian theologians. Vented in Gunton (2005),

Theological teaching is not an end in itself, but a means of ensuring that it is the real God we worship, the real God before whom we live. That is the point of the doctrine of the Trinity above all ....

This expresses this conviction that measurable faith convictions find expression in worship and good neighbourliness. Thus, this new theo-praxist hermeneutics conceives God as an essentially relational being, and the Trinity as a model of life in its perfection than an impenetrable mystery of mysteries, and a window for assessing the in-depth understanding of the human person and his social relationships. Thus, God is no longer viewed as a *Deus absconditus*, who withdrew to a hidden state after creation, or an ever imposing supra-deity whose interference in human affairs only amounts to the stifling of human freedom as seen in the Greek mythologies. He is the active, involved God who is ever engaged in the process of history and human salvation. The revelation of His being as Trinity, according to Rahner, is purposeful; and that purpose makes the Trinity a mystery of salvation, whereby God's various interventions in history are designed for the sake of human salvation. This salvation is interlocked in the one purposive establishment of the kingdom of God, which begins here in the transformation of culture, but which would be perfected in glory. This makes the revelation of this mystery an invitation, and at the same time, a call into the inner mystery of man, since in this mystery lies the key to unfolding the inner mystery of the human person and his relationships.

Drawing some inferences from the titles and issues treated in many recent publications on the Trinity, we conclude with the statements that



in contrast to the Kantian “absurdity thesis”, the Christian doctrine of the Trinity presents us with a model of life which presents human political systems, social behaviour, and communitarian life with a model of life. God’s perichoretic life is therefore revealed as a coaching in divine choreographic dance styles and steps to enable humans move towards the actualization of their vocation as “*imago dei*” (images of God who subsists in relationship). whose destinies would be ultimately accomplished upon admission into the eternal *koinonia* in glory.

In response to Kant’s “song of absurdity”, therefore, the conclusion of this study says: the revelation of the one God as three inter-loving Persons has everything to do with the practical life. With Williams (2013), this study opines that “the Trinity is a precious and practical doctrine, one that touches all of life – how we break anti-loving cycles in our hearts, how we pray, how we worship, how we do church, how we build relationships, *etc*” (Thaddeus Williams, 2013).

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