Media Trajectories of the Anglican Church in Nigeria from 1853 – 2020

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Abstract

This article applies the theory of mediatisation of religion and public pedagogy to explore three related historical issues of the Anglican Church media activities in Nigeria. Firstly, it briefly examines the media activities of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in Nigeria. The aim is to understand how Anglican missionaries established and engaged with the media. Secondly, it examines the media establishments of the Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion (CoN). The objective is to outline the media outlets of the Church of Nigeria and to produce a thick description of the background of the Advent Cable Network Nigeria (ACNN), a television station of the CoN and to identify the link between the media activities of the CMS and the Church of Nigeria. Thirdly, this article presents an analysis of the theology of media for the Church of Nigeria. The aim is to understand the biblical and theological assumptions that underpin the media endeavours of the Church of Nigeria and how it relates with the concept of public pedagogy.

Keywords: Anglican Communion, Nigeria, religion, mediatisation, public pedagogy, colonial and ACNN

Introduction

Both religion and media are recognised as global forces that are pervasive and entrenched in society. They influence and shape how human beings under-stand, interpret, negotiate and relate to themselves, others, and the social environment (Coleman 2008; Stead & Elliott 2019). Nigeria, a multi-cultural nation with an estimated population of about two hundred million people, is a vibrant marketplace for religion and media (Ukah 2011). In terms of ownership, the religious media landscape is dominated by Pentecostal Christianity. On this, Walter Ihejirika affirms that religious broadcasting in Nigeria 'is almost synonymous with Pentecostalism' (2008:81). Therefore, most of the research on religious media in Nigerian tends to focus on the Pentecostal Churches (Asamoah-Gyadu 2012; Chiluwa 2012; Ihejirika 2009; 2012; Katrien 2015; Rotimi 2015; Ukah 2008).

However, the historical foundation of the Nigerian media landscape was laid by the Presbyterian and Anglican missionaries' enterprise. For instance, the first printing press in the country was established by Reverend Hope Wadell in 1846. Also, the first Nigerian newspaper press was established and published by Henry Townsend, an Anglican Priest, in 1853 (Bassey 1991; Mohammed & Mohammed 2004; Omu 1967). Focusing on the Anglican Church, this article uses the theory of mediatisation of religion and public pedagogy to explore the Anglican media activities in Nigeria from 1853–2020. The aim is to contribute to a more nuanced and diverse understanding of the religious media landscape in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications

The concept of mediatisation deals with fundamental questions about the relationships, functions and influences of the media in culture and society. Stig Hjarvard, a leading exponent of the mediatisation of religion, argues that mediatisation refers to the 'social and cultural process through which a field or institution to some extent becomes dependent on the logic of the media' (2011:120). Thus, mediatisation designates a process in the human history of communication and the consequences of those changes.

Scholars within religious studies and anthropology have critically engaged with the mediatisation of religion as advanced by Hjarvard. Lynch (2011:204) argues that the mediatisation of religion does not take cognisance of 'wider social structures and the processes that shape both media and

religion'. From a Christian historical perspective, David Morgan (2011:141) argues that to see the mediatisation of religion as a modern phenomenon of the 'autonomy of media separate from the institutions of church and state that once dominated the press and the patronage of the arts is problematic'. Furthermore, Hjarvard's (2011) notion that the media in contemporary society has become more autonomous, independent institution in society; and integrated into the workings of other social institutions is labelled by Morgan (2011) as a 'unilateral process' of the dissemination of media logic into other societal institutions. This criticism is based on the conception that the mediatisation of religion does not take place independently of other processes of social and cultural change. Recently, Lövheim and Hjarvard acknowledge this point by stating that 'we cannot study the interplay between media and religion in isolation' (2019:221).

Mediatisation of religion, as posited by Hjarvard, is not a universal process. Depending on the specific religious and media context, it can take numerous directions and produce different results. For example, the confessional orientation of religious media in Nigeria may illustrate how religious institutions rely on the logic of media to reaffirm, reposition and restrengthen their religious principles, practices and authority. It may also portray religious media as additional platforms for religious organisations to create communities and performing social functions. This argument is built on the historical understanding that religious organisations in Nigeria use the media to propagate their beliefs and values. While doing so, they actively contribute to growth in the advertising industry, training and education, employment generation and promotion of the media subsector (Oni, Oloyede & Ifeduba 2014). With this point, Hjarvard's contribution to the theory of mediatisation of religion provides theoretical and analytical tools to article the role and workings of media in society and its public pedagogical functions. However, it also advances a call for scholars to construct and circulate theories of mediatisation and religion that reflect the specificities of the historical, political, cultural, social and religious contexts within which they work.

Public Pedagogy involves learning in various forms, processes and sites of educational activities beyond formal schooling (Sandlin, O'Malley & Burdick 2011; Stead & Elliott 2019). Roger Simon (1995:108) argues that pedagogy indicates the multiplicity and connections between everyday life and social sites as platforms for knowledge reproduction, representation and redistribution with an overall learning objective. Henry Giroux, a leading scholar of

critical public pedagogy that focuses on the media, affirms that the media as a pedagogical site shapes, reflects and (re)produce norms, identities and social values (Giroux 2004a; 2004b). Giroux locates the media and popular culture as a potential site for social justice, cultural critique and a platform to re-imagine possibilities for democratic living. Stead and Elliott affirm that 'popular culture and everyday life as public pedagogy offered cultural studies a lens through which to link culture and media artefacts to processes of social activities' (2019:176). This understanding underpins Giroux's idea that 'the larger culture has more significant influence than formal education' (2004b: 498).

Through the more prominent or popular culture and everyday life, dominant discourses, public intellectualism and social activism are (re)produced, contested, and resisted within various pedagogical sites (Sandlin *et al.* 2011). For media studies, such views of public pedagogy do not assume a simple movement of social norms and values from the media to individual, but recognise that such norms and values provide room for contestation and negotiation. In the words of Stead and Elliott, 'the media have the potential to act as platforms for contestation' (2019:176). This signifies that although powerful, the media is not entirely hegemonic, nor is the relationship between media and audiences completely one-sided. While this is more evident in studies of digital media, even in relation to broadcast media, users have agency and can resist, contest or accept the messages by media outlets.

The media as a form of public pedagogy in Nigeria has chiefly been approached from social, political and educational perspectives within the schooling system (Amusan 2016; Bolaji, Gray & Campbell-Evans 2015; Okosun, Akongbowa & Aihie-Ezomo 2016). Abubakre (2017) argues that a critical function of the media in Nigeria's pluralistic society is to provide citizens with educational skills to engage actively and participate in the nation's socio-political development. In terms of the relationship between religion and media, the Pentecostal dominance of mediascapes has obscured a much longer history of public pedagogy that a historical study of Anglican media reveals.

'Missionary Journalism' Foundation of the Anglican Media Involvement in Nigeria

Since the late 18th century, Anglican missionaries, through the Church Missionary Society (CMS), have adopted and utilised information and commu-

nication technologies in Nigeria. The CMS, an organisation of the Church of England (CoE), came to Nigeria in 1841 (Bassey 1991). Its mission in Nigeria was to propagate the gospel of Jesus Christ and to introduce and establish Anglicanism. As part of its mission's enterprise, the CMS laid the media foundation for the Anglican Church in Nigeria. Generally, before electronic media, particularly radio and television stations, were established in the country in 1939 and 1959, respectively, the print media landscape in Nigeria was built on Christian missionaries' enterprise. For instance, the first printing press in the country was established at Calabar by a Presbyterian clergy of the Church of Scotland Mission (CSM) named Reverend Hope Wadell in 1846 (Moynagh 1952; Omu 1978).

Similarly, the first printing school was established at Abeokuta by an Anglican Priest, the Reverend Henry Townsend in 1853, who laid the foundation for the media activities in Nigeria, particularly for the Anglican Church. Through the printing school, Townsend founded the second printing press in 1854 and published the first Nigerian newspaper in 1859. The newspaper was named *Iwe Irohin fun awon ara Egba ati Yoruba,* meaning; 'the newspaper for the Egba people and Yoruba' (Bassey 1991; Mohammed & Mohammed 2004; Moynagh 1952; Omu 1967).

Townsend's missionary activities in Nigeria are linked to the Anglican Church through the Church Missionary Society in two ways. *Firstly*, Townsend's ties to the church are secured by his status as an Anglican priest. He was sent to Nigeria under the authority of the Church of England (CoE). Therefore, Townsend was accountable to the CoE through the CMS. However, opinions vary on the extent of Townsend's media accountability to the CMS. The article will elaborate on this point in the next section. Secondly, the Townsend media effort paved the way for establishing the CMS press in Lagos, Nigeria in 1913 (Akpobo 2012). The CMS press is one of the media missionary legacies handed over to the Church of Nigeria by the Church Missionary Society.

Townsend's contribution to media development in Nigeria portrayed him as a *missionary journalist* who advocated *literacy* in Nigeria (Omu 1967:37). Dayo Duyile affirms that 'Townsend's motive among others was to excite the intelligence of the people in his area of operation and to get them to read' (1987:6). Townsend promoted and accentuated the importance of good primary education through the press, arguing that future prosperity would be impossible without primary education (Omu 1967:39). However, various perspectives interpret the historical significance and function of the CMS

media establishments in Nigeria differently (Duyile 1987; Mohammed & Mohammed 2004; Omu 1967; 1978). This article briefly explores three of these theoretical arguments.
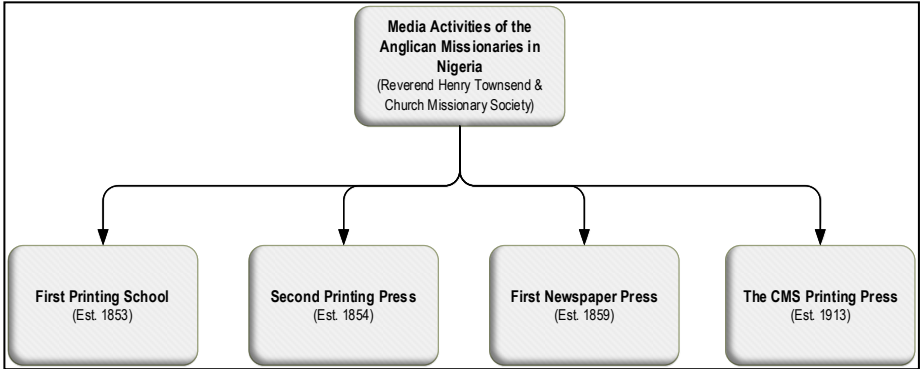
Figure 1: The media activities of the CMS and its missionaries

The first argument is based on a theological concept of *Christian evangelism*. The concept involves the proclamation and teaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the establishment of Churches globally. It sees and uses the gospel of Jesus Christ as a medium for transforming individuals and society. This perspective argues that the media platforms established by Christian missionaries were primarily for evangelism. Using Townsend's newspaper press as an example, Fred Omu affirms that 'the newspaper was an essential instrument for mission work' (1978:6). This idea of Christian evangelism from a public pedagogical perspective illustrates the concept of *pedagogy for the public* (Biesta 2012), a mode of pedagogy that directly or indirectly instructs and teaches the audience what to think, how to act and what to become. In this sense, the missionaries used media contents primarily to mobilise and persuade the audience to embrace Christianity. However, critics of the evangelism theory contend that the concept is not cognisant of the extraordinary relationship between 'the activities of Christian missions and the goal of colonialism'. Therefore, they describe the evangelism perspective as a *narrow ecumenical* theory of the origin and function of the press in Nigeria (Mohammed & Mohammed 2004:231).

X-raying the concept of Christian evangelism through the lens of the

mediatisation of religion, particularly the idea that media shape and transform society (Hjarvard 2011), shows the blind spots of the concept in three ways. Firstly, Christian evangelism does not consider the broader societal structures and processes shaping and reshaping both media and religion. On this, Löveheim & Hjarvard affirm that 'we cannot study the interplay between media and religion in isolation' (2019:221). Secondly, the Christian evangelism concept implies that religion uses media more than media uses religion, thereby over-emphasising and placing religion in power over the media. This understanding does take cognisance of the mutually dependent relationship between religion, media and other social institutions. It also under-estimates the media as a site for agency, synthesis and representations of social institutions. Consequently, it dismisses the politics that critically regulate and influence how religion and media interact and operate within the public domain.

Finally, using Christopher Helland's (2000) concept of *religion-online* and *online religion*, the idea of Christian evangelism only emphasises *religion on the media* to the detriment of *media religion*. 'Religion on the media' describes the use of media platforms by religious institutions for evangelism. At the same time, 'media religion' recognises how media context and content are used as locations of religion and spirituality. The former is within the control of religious institutions, while the latter is outside of its control.

The second theory uses the concept of *humanitarianism* to argue that Christian missions are a humanitarian movement. The Church Missionary Society and its missionaries were concerned and involved in promoting education, healthcare, societal welfare and human flourishing (Amadi 1977; Omu 1967). According to Omu (1978), the CMS used the media to mobilise support for humanitarian programmes. Using Townsend's newspaper as an example, Suburi Biobaku argues that the essence of establishing and using the media was to create a peaceful environment in which 'missionary and other civilising influences might flourish and overcome the great obstacle of foreign salve trade' (cited in Duyile 1987:23). Additionally, the missionaries used the press to advocate for a ceasefire and peaceful co-existence during the tribal war (Omu 1967). However, it would be an oversimplification and misleading to exclusively interpret the missionary's media establishments on humanitarian and philanthropic grounds. Therefore, emphasis will be laid on the educational and political dimensions of the concept of humanitarianism.

The humanitarian concept describes Biesta's notion of *a pedagogy of the public* (2012), a pedagogy that focuses on stimulating critical global

awareness learning. Within this framework, the media content of the missionaries was used to create contextual political awareness on local and international issues, particularly the slave trade. Omu (1967) affirms that the overall interest in society conditioned Townsend's media attitude to domestic and foreign affairs. In other words, the media complement the educational efforts of the missionaries to advocate for widespread enlightenment by stimulating and encouraging reading culture and literacy development in Nigeria (Omu 1966). For instance, articles published in the *Iwe Irohin* newspaper on 3 March 1866 and 5 May 1865 describe how Townsend promoted education and elementary literacy via the media:

> A year is the measure of one revolution of the earth around the sun; this revolution takes place in 365 days, 6 hours. A century is 100 years. We count our lives by years, but we reckon the world's history by centuries. Proper names should either be spelt the same as they are in the language they are taken or altered according to the rule. An instance of spelling ran wild to write Tamahana for Thompson, Wiremu for Williams, Piripi for Philip (Omu 1967:39).

The emphasis on education and literacy development in the humanitarian concept stimulated indigenous appreciation for the political dimension of the Townsend newspaper. It created a platform for a *pedagogy of the public* that introduced and enabled indigenous political action in Nigeria. However, Townsend's racial prejudices blinded him from appreciating and promoting indigenous political efforts.

For example, he posits that Whiteman should critically scrutinise notions of freedom and republicanism advocated by free blacks. Therefore a political 'movement can only occur by the countenance and pecuniary aid of white men; white men should become answerable for it and regulate it' (cited in Omu 1967:41). Townsend racial bias is partly rooted in the fear that educated Africans might challenge his influence and threaten his media enterprise (Omu 1967).

Theoretically, the pitfalls of both the evangelism and humanitarianism concepts were the inability to situate and encapsulate the grip of colonialism and the radical establishment of the capitalist mode of production in Nigeria (Mohammed & Mohammed 2004). Put differently, the humanitarian view regarding media ownership is a subtle defence of British interest and a pro-

jection of colonial propaganda in Nigeria.

The third perspective is anchored on a tripartite economic and political system of production in Nigeria by the British government, namely *colonialism, capitalism and imperialism* (Ibrahim 1981; Mohammed & Mohammed 2004; Ónimode 1983). According to a renowned Black and African theologian, Tinyiko Maluleke, colonization is not purely about the acquisition of 'lands and commodities; it is the takeover of bodies, minds, souls, spirits, religions and spiritualities' (2021:309). The media played a major role in the takeover and colonisation of Africa and Africans. For instance, critics have argued that the CMS media activity was 'to mobilise the minds and ideas of people [Nigerians], over time to accept and adopt capitalist values and practice' (Ibrahim 1981:6). Thus, it became 'part of the process of establishing the structures of Colonialism' (Mohammed & Mohammed 2004:232). To elucidate, Thomas Fowell Buxton, a former Vice-President of the Church Missionary Society and a member of the British Parliament, advocates the collaboration between the British government and the missionary societies in Africa's civilisation, a kind of civilisation that propagates British culture, practices and control. Buxton (1839: 511) argues that,

> Through the pursuit of Christianity, commerce, and civilisation in Africa by the British empire … England would acquire cheaper raw materials, new markets, and increased productivity, employment, and profit.

On this, Bade Onimode asserts that 'Christian missionaries were cultural agents of mercantilist imperialism (1983:25).

Proponents of the concepts of colonialism, capitalism and imperialism related to religious media development conclude that the CMS missionaries' media endeavours, significantly Reverend Henry Townsend, promoted and advocated 'British ideology and economic prosperity' (Mohammed & Mohammed 2004:234). This economic prosperity allowed Britons to gain and enjoy in Nigeria a level of material comfort they would never attain in their home country (Siollun 2021:299). However, if the Townsend media activity was mainly to promote colonialism as claimed, why was the newspaper accused by a colonial administrator Alen Burns of causing 'many injuries to British prestige'? (1948:254).

In conclusion, whatever the theoretical interpretation alluded to Angli-

can missionaries' media activities in Nigeria, it is good to acknowledge its fluidity.
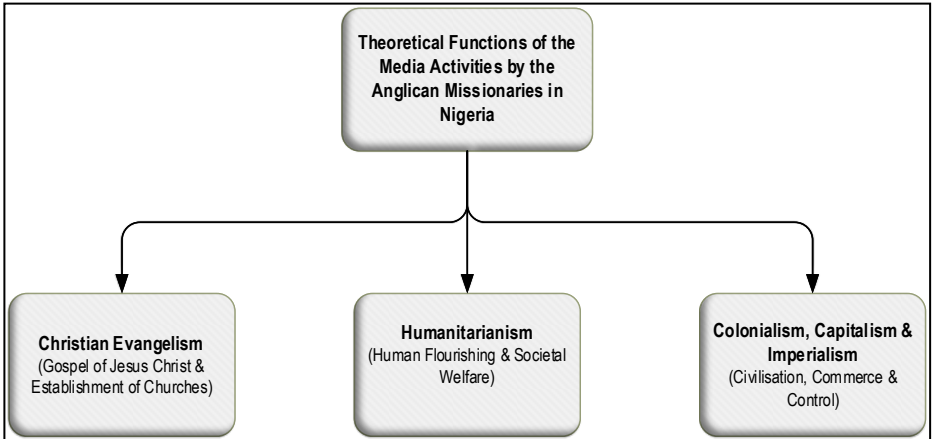
Figure 2: Functions and interpretation of the CMS media activities

The media were used concurrently as a medium to promote and advocate for evangelism, humanitarianism and colonialism. Nevertheless, most importantly, Christian missionary organisations, notably the Church Missionary Society and its missionaries, laid the media foundation and introduced indigenous converts to the power and relationship of the media, religion and society (Ajilore, Ojomo & Ige 2012; Omu 1967). Therefore, the following section explores how the Church of Nigeria builds on CMS's media foundation, leading to the formation of the Advent Cable Network Nigeria television.

'Not to be in the media is not have any voice': Media Outlets of the Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion

One of the legacies handed over to the Church of Nigeria by the Church Missionary Society was to introduce early converts directly or indirectly to the workings of information and communications technologies, particularly the print media. For example, some of the early indigenous staffs of the CMS were a product of this historical media heritage. Omu (1967) affirms that the

Anglican missionaries introduced printing skills in Nigeria, and most of its apprentice-printers printed some of the early nationalists' newspapers in the country. Examples are the *Egba National Harper*, established by A. Folarin in 1926, and *Abeokuta Weekly News*, founded by D.O Oke in 1934 (Omu 1966; 1967; 1978). The Anglican Church in Nigeria builds and continues on the media foundation of the CMS. However, its archive documents suggest that Nigeria's Anglican province established in 1979, became actively involved with the media in 2000. It shows about twenty-one years (1979 – 2000) gap in the media activities of the CoN. Implicitly, the gap attributed to a lack of proper documentation and missing documents due to the CoN administrative headquarters' movement from Lagos to Abuja, as represented in Figure 3.

To understand and outline the Church of Nigeria's media outlets and produce a thick description of the establishment of the ACNN television, it is good to briefly explore the history, dynamics, and relationship of the Church of Nigeria within the Anglican Communion. The Anglican Church of Nigeria became an independent province in 1979. The province is named the Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion (Church of Nigeria or CoN). It has about fourteen internal provinces and one hundred and fifteen nine dioceses within and outside Nigeria (Onovirakpo 2009). Globally, the Church of Nigeria is the largest province in the Anglican Communion.

In 2005, the CoN reworded its constitution to reject, redefine, and broaden its usage of *Anglican Communion*. In its view, being part of the Anglican Communion is not about being a 'province in communion with the See of Canterbury'. Instead, it is about teaching, practising, and maintaining the 'historic faith, doctrine, sacrament and discipline of the one holy Catholic, and Apostolic Church'. The Church of Nigeria's position as indicated in the constitution signifies its unique, complex and dynamic relationship within global Anglicanism in three ways.

Firstly, the Church of Nigeria is not dutiful and subjected to the episcopal leadership of the Archbishop of Canterbury as the head of the Anglican Communion worldwide. Secondly, The Church of Nigeria has 'withdrawn' its participation from the Lambeth Conference. The conference serves as the highest decision-making body of the Anglican Church globally. It meets every decade in England. The participants are Anglican represent-tatives from across the globe. Thirdly, the Church of Nigeria does not 'belong nor participate' in the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC). The ACC deli-berated on the communion's challenges, facilitates and coordinates joint act-

ion, and exchanges information with the communion. It advises on the organisation and structures of the communion and seeks to formulate a standard policy[1]. The Church of Nigeria relationship in the Anglican communion became more complicated because the Secretary-General of the communion is an archbishop from Nigeria, Josiah Idowu-Fearon. Idowu-Fearon heads the communion secretariat. He is responsible for meetings of the Anglican Consultative Council and serves as secretary of the Lambeth Conference. However, the Church of Nigeria does not participate in the ACC and the Lambeth Conference. Based on the complex relationship, the Church of Nigeria became very intentional to establish and own media facilities that enable the church to express and make its brand of Christianity and Anglicanism visible worldwide.

The media initiative of the CoN is encapsulated in Vision 2010 of the Church. According to this vision, 'to expand mission work media facilities such as cable television, radio and print media should be established and existing once fully utilised'[2]. The vision is connected to individual, dioceses and groups. However, emphasis will be on the province of Nigeria rather than individual or diocesan efforts.

The year 2000 was historic and memorable in the Church of Nigeria. During this period, the church witnessed three significant events. First, Archbishop Peter Jesper Akinola succeeded Archbishop Adetiliyo as the Primate (Head of the Anglican Church in Nigeria). Through this leadership change, the Church of Nigeria became very visible and vocal in Anglicanism's policy and spirituality worldwide. The new primate, Peter Akinola, was regularly on national and international media platforms to speak about the position of the Church of Nigeria on the authority and interpretation of Christian scripture (Bible) concerning human sexuality, marriage, corruption and other societal issues. The media presence and activity of Peter Akinola were affirmed and re-echoed in the words of Archbishop Benjamin Kwashi, 'not to be in the media today is not to be in the minds of the people, not to be of any consequence and therefore it is not to have any voice' (2011:1).

Secondly, the administrative headquarters of the church were relocated

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[1] http://www.anglicancommunion.org/structures/instruments-of-communion/acc.aspx (Accessed on 5 May 2021.)

[2] Church-of-Nigeria-to-launch-tv-channel.aspx (Accessed on 10 October 2019.)

from Lagos to Abuja. At this point, Abuja was and still is the Capital of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The need by the Church of Nigeria to influence and be close to power and government orchestrated the relocation. The proximity to power and government strengthens the resolution of the Church of Nigeria to be self-governing and self-supporting. It further provides the Church of Nigeria access to strategic landed properties by highly placed government officials, for instance, the national secretariat of the Church of Nigeria that housed the ACNN's headquarters was built in Abuja on land donated to the church by a former Chief of Army Staff, Lt Gen. Theophilus Danjuma (rtd). Thirdly, the first media outlet of the Church of Nigeria was established. The platform was named; *Information and Communication Technology outfit*. This media outfit coordinated and solicited donations to purchase computers, printers, phones and internet for diocesan offices across the province.

In 2001, Peter Akinola approved a proposal to establish the *Anglican Media Resource Centre* (AMRC). The function of this centre was to record and preserve events of the Church of Nigeria. Although the AMRC never functioned, it is unclear if the centre was owned by the Church of Nigeria or the Anglican Diocese of Abuja. In 2004, the Church of Nigeria established a terrestrial radio station called *Crowther Radio*. According to Peter Akinola, having a radio station will cover a wider audience than the pulpit. The land-based radio station was located in Abuja. Two years after its establishment, Crowther Radio station struggled financially. Its programmes were not appealing to the audience, and its types of equipment were obsolete. Therefore, in 2007, the Church of Nigeria signed an agreement to hand over Crowther radio to Multimesh Broadcasting Company Limited.

Additionally, section 10a of the National Broadcasting Commission regulations may have contributed to the agreement. The NBC policy prohibits granting broadcasting license to a religious organisation, mainly to own a terrestrial radio or television section (Ukah 2011). With the NBC law in place, how did the CoN register and operate the Crowther Radio station? Nevertheless, Crowther Radio is still the property of the CoN, but its operation and management are by Multimesh Broadcasting Company Limited. The broadcasting company added another name to the station called 104.5 Family Love FM, Abuja.

The Church of Nigeria also engaged in film production. The idea is enshrined in a philosophical concept that what we see and hear has a crucial

effect on our lives and conducts. Films produced by the CoN form part of its *National Rebirth Project* (NRB). The project was part of the moral mandate of the church. It aimed to create awareness on social issues, to encourage moral ethics in family, church and society. The first film, titled *The Cloak*, was produced in 2009. The movie focuses on corruption and the abuse of public office. Its calls for national repentance and advocates for godliness in the nation. The lucidity for the movie is anchored on Proverbs14:34 'Godliness makes a nation great, but sin is a disgrace to any people' (NLT). The second film, *Identity*, was produced in 2010 by the Anglican students of the Obafemi Awolowo University of Ile Ife and was sponsored by the CoN. The movie portrayed the need for young people to discover, maintain and express a Christian identity rooted and fashioned in Jesus Christ.

Similarly, Ajayi Crowther University (ACU), an institution of the Church of Nigeria, owns and operates a radio station. The radio station is named *ACU 88.5. FM* and is located in Oyo State, Nigeria. Its operating licence was issued by the National Broadcasting Commission in August 2020. Moreover, dioceses in the Church of Nigeria are gradually taking advantage of the internet to establish their online presence. Examples are *Lagoon Radio* by the diocese of Lagos and *Adon TV* by the diocese of Nnewi. In addition to these outlets, the media activities of the Church of Nigeria are broadcasted on other private and public media platforms like the Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) and the Sunday column of the *Guardian* Newspaper.

Finally, the diagrammatic description below, represents the establishment of the Church of Nigeria as an independent province in the Anglican communion and its media institutions. The vertical axes illustrate the institutional media progress of the Church of Nigeria, while the horizontal represents the media institutional size and establishment date. Considering the date that the Church of Nigeria was established, its media platforms and progress, it is good to acknowledge that some of the media presence and practices of the Church of Nigeria from 1979 to 2009 could not be accounted for due to lack of properly documented and the relocation of its administrative headquarters from Lagos to Abuja. On the institutional side, the ACNN represents the primary media establishment of the Church of Nigeria because of its broader coverage, patronage and founding policy. Unlike Lagoon radio station, ADOV television, and Ajayi Crowther University radio that are owned and control by dioceses and educational institution of the Church of Nigeria. In conclusion, the media trajectories of the Church of Nigeria, as outlined, laid

the foundation for establishing the Advent Cable Network Nigeria television which is now one of its most important and far-reaching media endeavours.
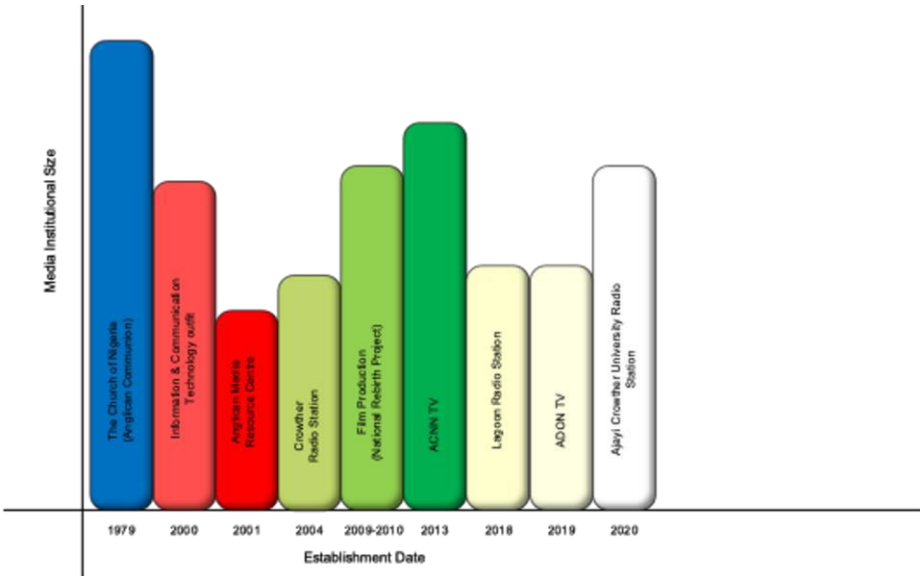
Figure 3: Media establishments of the Church of Nigeria

'Telling our story in our own way': The Establishment of the Advent Cable Network Nigeria

The Advent Cable Network Nigeria is a satellite television station established in 2013. It is owned and managed by the Church of Nigeria, with its headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria. Establishing the ACNN and adopting media technologies and platforms forms part of the Church of Nigeria's mission to propagate the gospel of Jesus Christ and encourage Christian's participation in society's governance, development, and flourishing.

The numerical strength of the CoN has contributed to the formation of ACNN. According to Effa (2013:214), 'the Church of Nigeria alone, number-ing about 19 million, accounts for 25% of all Anglicans in the world'. It implies that the Church of Nigeria is becoming a front runner in the growth and development of Anglicanism worldwide. Arguably, a church of this size in the 21st century may not adequately fulfil its mission and be relevant in society without using and appropriating media technologies. To illustrate, former

Primate of the Church of Nigeria and visionary of ACNN, Nicholas Okoh, in an interview conducted during a pilot for this research project, maintained that,

> going by the size of our church, we need to be relevant to our environment, our church and the world at large …. We looked at the whole media landscape in the religious circle we discovered that the new generational churches dominated it …. The ACNN was established as an appropriate instrument for achieving this[3].

It indicates that the numerical strength of the CoN, its quest to be relevant in society, the subtle need to retain and increase its members, and the gap in the religious media landscape paved the way for the formation of ACNN. Moreover, the 1992 deregulation of the broadcast industry in Nigeria has immensely contributed to the growth and establishment of media outlets such as ACNN (Mohammed & Mohammed 2004; Ukah 2011).

The initial proposal to establish and own a television station by the Church of Nigeria was present by Nicholas Okoh at the 10th Session of the General Synod of the Church. This high-profile annual meeting is the highest decision- and policy-making assembly of the CoN. It is constituted by the house of bishops, clergy and laity. The synod was hosted at Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral (AVMCC) Ikeja, Diocese of Lagos, from 19–25 September 2011. To support the proposal, Benjamin Kwashi, the Bishop of Jos, stated that it would tell our story when the television is established. It would be a suitable means for evangelism, fostering mutual understanding, communion, and create job opportunities. Additionally, the station would boost independent, top-quality educational programmes (Kwashi 2011:1–4). The proposal was accepted. However, the necessary finance to establish the project was of great concern to the participants. According to Primate Okoh, 'the first obstacle was finance; where can we get the money?' Okoh's question was necessitated by the first quotation, which was above one billion Nigeria Naira.

After the 2011, general synod, the leadership of the Church of Nigeria, became very dedicated to navigating the financial obstacle for establishing the television station. Two fundraising strategies were suggested and used. The first idea was to loan the money. Elaborating, Nicholas Okoh, stated, 'There was an idea that we should loan money from the endowment fund. The

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[3] Nicholas Okoh, 24 July 2019, Abuja Nigeria.

television station, when established, is going to generate some money, then we will be paying the loan bit by bit'. That suggestion was not fully supported by Nicholas Okoh because 'we were warned not to touch that money. The endowment fund is not for things like that, it is a kind of insurance for the Church of Nigeria' (24 July 2019). However, despite these reservations, about 50–100 million Nigerian Naira was loaned from the endowment fund.

The second idea was to solicit donations. A benefactor was introduced to Nicholas Okoh by Akinpelu Johnson, the former Provost, Cathedral Church of Christ, Mariana Lagos. The benefactor graciously and generously supported the project with about 250 million Nigerian Naira. From this amount, the leadership of the Church of Nigeria paid back the loan taken from the endowment fund. Moreover, individuals, groups, churches and dioceses supported the media project financially.

Needless to say, before and after the general synod, two very significant decisions were taken by the Church of Nigeria. The first was to source a media consultant to coordinate the proposal to build the television station. Amatu Onudu Christian-Iwuagwu, an Anglican clergy based in the United Kingdom (UK), was sourced as the media consultant. Secondly, a committee was established. Its duty was to recommend the legal, technical, production and administrative requirement for establishing and sustaining a suitable television station for the Church of Nigeria. Both the committee and the media consultant were to work independently and collaboratively towards achieving the goal to establish the television station. Through the effort of the media consultant, a UK company, Play Technology, was awarded the contract to set up the satellite television for the Church of Nigeria.

Officially, the television station was commissioned by Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, the former president of Nigeria (2010 – 2015) on 12 September 2013. However, the test transmission started in March 2013, broadcasting on Channel 91 of MyTV. Initially, the television content was streamed through satellite and cable television systems. However, it has integrated/migrated to the Internet Protocol Television (IPTV) formats. Oliver Werner describes IPTV 'as a system through which a digital television service is delivered over Internet Protocol network' (2007:1). IPTV services may be classified into three main groups: 'live television, time-shifted programming, and video on demand' (Punchihewa, De Silva & Diao 2010:4). The use of the IPTV method means that the ACNN server is hosted outside Nigeria.

According to the General Manager of ACNN, Engineer Korede

Akintunde, streaming through an IPTV, does not require broadcasting from the country. Korede gave three reasons to elaborate on the use of IPTV by the Advent Cable Network Nigeria. The first was anchored on finance. 'The CoN complained of lack funds to run the television station'[4]. Affirming this financial difficulty, Nicholas Okoh states that 'every month we pay about ten thousand American dollars. But through the effort of the GM, Korede Akintunde, it has reduced to around seven thousand dollars'. It means that the IPTV is cost-effective. Secondly, the IPTV requires less workforce than the analogue system because the transmitting signals are 100% digital.

The third is the constant interruption of the electricity supply in Nigeria. On this, Korede posits that 'the power holding company can decide to switch off the light. For five days there can be power supply interruption'. In a situation like this, the station needs more alternative electricity supply. However, it may increase the operating cost. Korede concluded that the initiative of operating the station on IPTV broadcasting is 'easier and flexible. I can have access to my server anywhere in the world, and I can stream from anywhere. I do not have to be in the studio to stream like the normal one we used before'. It signifies that ACNN programmes are stored on a server and ready to watch by pressing a button on an IPTV remote.

At this juncture, it is vital to explore the name of the television station briefly. Before choosing and accepting the name Advent Cable Network Nigeria, different names were suggested, such as; CoN TV (Church of Nigeria Television), Anglicana TV, Epiphany TV, Gloria TV, and Anglican Cable Network Nigeria (ACNN). At inception, the station started as Anglican Cable Nigeria. According to Nicholas Okoh, 'we (CoN) insisted that the television station must carry an Anglican identity. That is how we came to that name'. However, using the name Anglican may limit public interest and patronage of the television station. Also, the Church of Nigeria is 'becoming more conscious of unity'. In this sense, the Church of Nigeria is becoming more proactive in participating and advocating ecumenism, interreligious dialogue and peaceful coexistence in Nigeria. Therefore, a change of name was suggested for the television station.

On 12 December 2019, three symbolic events happened in the television station. First was the relocation to its headquarters and the dedication of a new studio. The studio was named after Modupe and Folorunsho Alakija,

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[4] Korede Akintunde, 27 January 2021, Abuja Nigeria.

major benefactor of the ACNN, in 2013. The second was the unveiling of a new logo. The third was the change of name from *Anglican* to *Advent*. According to an online publication signed by Korede Akintunde, dated 17 December 2019, and titled *Why we Rebranded Anglican Cable Network Nigeria to Advent Cable Network Nigeria*, among the twenty names, suggested, only Advent TV and Unity TV were available at the search engine of the Cooperate Affairs Commission (CAC). The question is, if the Church of Nigeria is 'becoming more conscious of unity', why not chose the name Unity TV? Part of the answer is because the station needs to 'retain the acronym, ACNN'[5]. The change of name is about positioning the ACNN for future engagement with other media platforms. Currently, there is an ongoing conversation for the ACNN to migrate from MyTV to DSTV. Beyond this, exploring the theological justification for the name change is necessary since the ACNN is a religious media outlet.

Advent is a significant season in the Anglican Church. Even the Cathedral of the CoN is called the Cathedral Church of the Advent. Advent comes from the Latin word *advnire*, meaning 'to come to' (Fritz 2012; Hardiman 2010). Theologically, Jesus Christ is the one to come, and he is coming to humans. Advent as the coming of Jesus Christ carries a tripeptide dimension of celebrating and remembering the past, presence and future. The past speaks about the Nativity of Christ at Christmas. The future speaks about the second coming of Christ. At the same time, the present focuses on Christian devotion and joyful expectation. The theology of Advent, according to Korede Akintunde, is the core of the Christian gospel. Therefore, the name Advent positioned the television station 'to win, nurture and prepare souls for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ'[6]. The theological justification forms the primary objective for establishing the Advent Cable Network Nigeria.

The ACNN mission statement depicts the religious, social, and financial dimension of its activities. Religiously, ACNN focused on the growth of Christianity by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and projecting Christian values and viewpoint from a Nigerian Anglican perspective. Also, the ACNN can be described as a platform for subtle theological objection by the Church of Nigeria to Christian liberal interpretations and applications of scriptural authority, human sexuality, and marriage within the Anglican

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[5] https://www.acnntv.com/ (Accessed 15 March 2021.)
[6] Korede Akintunde, 2021, Abuja Nigeria.

Communion worldwide. Socially, the ACNN is concerned about education, leadership, integrity, peace, national development, and politics. Financially, the ACNN strive to be self-sustaining and a profit-making media platform[7].

The ACNN programmes are structured and guided by the ideas and principles from its mission statement. The programmes are designed to focus on spiritual enrichment, public enlightenment, and entertainment. Examples of these programmes are Daily Fountain, Prayer Hour, Day of Right Believing, Bible Study, News, Current Affairs, Christians in politics, Crossfire. Christian movies and music. Most of these programmes are sponsored by dioceses, church organisations, families and individuals. Through these programmes, 'the ACNN tells its own story in its way, establishing facts that other stations may hide or distort and raise its issues that others may wish to ignore' (Kwashi 2011:3). The ACNN claims to be an alternative to Pentecostal media practices in Nigeria. The ACNN holds that it reports, interprets, analyses, and critiques social, religious, and political happenings in Nigeria. Although, some Pentecostal media outlets, such as DOVE TV also broadcast social religious issues in Nigeria (Ukah 2008; 2016). The ACNN programmes can be followed on its website and social media handles such as Facebook, YouTube, Whats-App, Instagram and Twitter.

The ACNN has about four departments: business and marketing, human resources, programme production and engineering. In terms of leadership, the ACNN is governed by the primate as the Chief Executive Manager; the board of trustees; the Management Board, General Manager; hands of Departments; and the chaplain. According to the General Manager, the ACNN organises workshops and training for churches and interested organisations on topics related to religious broadcasting. Finally, the media activity of the Church of Nigeria and the training offered by the ACNN may have a theological foundation. Therefore, the following section examines the theology of the media theology the church of Nigeria.

'Reaching the World with the Undiluted Word of God' Theology of Media for the Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion

The ACNN is a media platform that subscribes, emphasises and expresses

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[7] The ACNN mission statement; Church of Nigeria Archives, Abuja Nigeria (Accessed 23 January 2019.)

Christianity as portrayed by the Anglican church in Nigeria. One of its distinctive features is to embody the theological ideologies that underpin its formation. Theology, in this sense, refers to the interaction between sacred text, traditional heritage, human context and reasoning as channels for exploring the knowledge of God and how God interacts with God's creation. When applied to media, theology describes the fundamental scriptural principles utilised to establish, engage, and guide religious institutions' media presence and practice. It justifies and portrays the centrality of God's word in the media practices of the Church of Nigeria. Therefore, this section explores the scriptural and theological justification for establishing the ACNN.

According to Vision 2010 of the CoN, media facilities are established and utilised primarily for mission work. The motto of the ACNN, 'reaching the world with the undiluted word of God', signifies two ideas. One, the core of mission work is to proclaim the word of God (Bible). The Bible is an essential source of Christian mission and theology because it is the Bible that defines what Christianity is and what it can become. Therefore, anything that claims to be a Christian mission must be able to demonstrate that it stands in recognisable continuity with the documents that define what Christianity is (Frame 2013:9; McQuarrie 1986:29). Two, the interpretation and application of the Bible can be 'diluted'.

The Bishop Theologian of the CoN, Prof Dapo Asaju, affirms that Anglican Churches, theological institutions, and seminaries are 'suffering terribly in the West' because their 'Christian spirituality and foundation has been neglected'. This happened because the West 'allowed liberal theology and theologians who do not believe in God. Do not believe in the Bible nor its authority. They do not even recognise the lordship of Jesus and have respect for Christian biblical ethics'.[8] In this case, the Bishop Theologian did not take cognisance of complex factors influencing the decline of Western Christianity, factors such as culture, globalisation, Islam and the media (Patrick 2017). This Bishop Theologian's comment denotes that the Church of Nigeria media activities subtly served as 'spiritual police and biblical compass' that strives to defend, correct and proclaim, 'the undiluted word of God to the nations'. He implies that Nigerian Christianity, particularly its Anglican iteration, is more Bible-based, orthodox and evangelical than that of other contexts.

The Church of Nigeria maintains that media is an effective and efficient

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[8] Dapo Asaju, 18 February 2021.

way to communicate the gospel in this generation. According to the Bishop Theologian, the media presence and practice of the Church of Nigeria is,

> to ensure that this gospel is taking to all nations of the world. Our theology of the media is a theology of missions, global mission (18 February 2021).

Scripturally, the concept of global mission or taking the gospel to all nations comes from the words of Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:19, 'therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit' (NLT). Thus, the Church of Nigeria theology of media is a theology of mission. The mission is anchored on the idea that Christianity sees 'all generations of the earth as objects of God's salvific will and plan for salvation' (Bosch 2014:9). However, limiting the theology of media to one theological approach or discipline is simplistic and problematic because the media interact and influence every aspect of Christian theologies. Therefore, a robust approach to a theology of media should emanate from a public theological perspective deeply rooted in the Bible, and stand in recognition and historical continuity of contextual theologies. The proposal is anchored on three reasons.

Firstly, a public theological approach is inclusive and pluralistic by nature, because it draws and interacts with all theological and non-theological disciplines. It argues that Christian theology is a theology of the kingdom of God that reflects the love and lordship of Jesus Christ over all of creation. Dion Forster, a public theologian, affirms that such theological engagement 'has a public presence, public influence, and public consequences. because it engages with the political, cultural, educational, economic and ecological spheres of life, not just with the private and ecclesial spheres' (Foster 2020:16).

Secondly, a public theological approach to the theology of media provides and emphasizes a complexity framework, an approach that explores how Christians are equipped to access, analyse, evaluate and create media content across various contexts (Gee 2010; Livingstone & Van der Graaf 2010; Stout 2012). The focus is on how people give and get meanings from various media. It goes beyond a simplistic theological approach of using the media for Christian evangelism.

Thirdly, based on the public and diverse nature of public theology, it can acknowledge and maintain the tension in the diverse role of technology in

the production and broadcasting of social, political, economic and religious activities. Therefore, a public theological approach to the theology of the media describes a technological process that harnesses and engage theological resources, relates with other disciplines, is rooted in scripture and express in context. This perspective goes beyond the Church of Nigeria theology of media as a theology of mission. It broadens and sees the Christian mission as a witness to people of other living faith, as inculturation, as a quest for justice, liberation, and as active in hope (Bosch 2014).

The above description of the media theology from a public theological perspective embraces the concept of multiliteracies and public pedagogy through the media. It relates to *multiliteracies* because it recognises the multiple interactions and social practices within a given context that contributes to literacy development. For instance, through a media literacy perspective, a public theological approach will focus on media technologies, context, content, production and consumption. It supports the concept of media literacy as having the logical and critical skills to navigate, actively participate and positively contribute to the flourishing of one's social context.

Similarly, a public theological conceptualisation of media theology connects to public pedagogy through the media. It indicates and links everyday life and the multiplicity of social sites as educational platforms for knowledge re-production, re-presentation, and redistribution with an overall learning objective. In this context, the learning objective transcends the Christian missiological conversation on *salvation* to a more inclusive discourse of human flourishing, responsibility, social justice, good governance and stewardship of creation. Specifically, it speaks to Biesta's concept of *pedagogy that enacts a concern for publicness* (Biesta 2012). The concept is concern with 'the public quality of human togetherness. It is a form of human togetherness characterised by plurality' (2012:693).

Therefore, conceptualising the theology of media from a public theology perspective provides an academic and sociological lens to engage and examine learning in the public sphere and for the benefit of the public good. It stands in continuity of contextual theologies and may also serve as a form of agency and interruption that keeps the opportunities for *becoming public* open (Biesta 2012:685). This notion in the Christian mission recognises that media are gifts from God (Bimbo & Rahab 2020); a powerful gift that breaks churches' walls and provides unrestricted and continued access to re-presentation and re-interpretation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

This article presents a more nuanced understanding of the diversity of the Nigeria-religious media landscape. It affirms and contributes to the multi-denominational and multifaceted dimension of the media presence and practices in Christianity. Specifically, it provided a theoretical link between the historical and theological approaches in the media trajectories of the Anglican in Nigeria and situated the Advent Cable Network Nigeria, in an academic conversation. It started with a historical survey of the media endeavours of the Church Missionary Society, a mission arm of the Church of England that introduced and established Anglicanism in Nigeria. It was followed by analysing some theoretical arguments of the reason the CMS established media outlets in Nigeria. It augured that the CMS media outlets were established to promote and advance Christianisation, Civilization and Colonisation in Nigeria. The article concludes with an argument that a more robust approach to media theology of religious institutions, particularly the Church of Nigeria, should emanate from a public theological perspective that stands in continuation of contextual theologies. Firstly, a public theological approach is inclusive and pluralistic. It acknowledges the symbiosis relationship between theology and the media and other disciplines. It may embrace and promote a culture of peaceful coexistence, religious tolerance and social cohesion in Nigeria. Secondly, a public theological approach goes beyond a simplistic theological concept of using the media for Christian evangelism, and it provides and emphasises a complexity framework. Thirdly, based on the public and diverse nature of public theology, it can acknowledge and maintain the tension in the diverse role of technology in the production and broadcasting of social, political, economic and religious activities. By and large, this article developed a narrative aimed at contributing to African media historiography that may bridge the gap of the dearth in the academic literature of the Anglican media activities in Nigeria.

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Anglican Media Trajectories in Nigeria 1853 - 2020

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