

Collaborative Leadership in Christian Mission: The Apostolic Church Nigeria and the Fulfilment of Matthew 28:19-20

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Abstract

The complex nature of bringing into fulfilment the Great Commission as expounded in Matthew 28:19-20 in various cultural contexts requires a model. This article argues that the history of The Apostolic Church Nigeria (TACN) provides a compelling case study of a model known as collaborative leadership. Through a historical analysis of the partnership between British missionaries and Nigerian Church leaders in TACN's formative years (1930s), this study shows that while this intercultural cooperation was essential for the success of the missionary effort, it was also filled with cultural, religious, psychological and administrative tensions. Using archival documents, church records, historical accounts, and oral interviews, the article shows how Pastor George Perfect, Pastor Idris Vaughan, and Pastor David O. Odubanjo, through a joint effort, were successful in setting up the church, even though there were significant conflicts on the principle of financial management and the issue of divine healing. These findings reveal the complications of intercultural leadership and underline the important requirement of mutual respect, transparent administrative protocols, and intensive cultural humility in contemporary global propagation of the Christian faith. The TACN story today offers important lessons to navigate challenges and feel the ability of the collaborative Christian mission.

Key Words: Collaborative Leadership, Christian Mission, Global Evangelisation, Nigeria, Africa

Introduction

When Jesus commissioned his disciples in Matthew 28:19-20 to “go and make disciples of all nations”, he was not just giving out a task - he was inviting them to a lifetime mission of relationship, humility and shared responsibility. Today, the same mission challenges Christians in the world over to find new ways to work together in order to bring the gospel into diverse and often complex contexts. One of the most powerful and effective models to address this global task is collaborative leadership, that is, an approach that gives importance to the combination of spiritual and cultural gifts for mutual respect, shared vision, and common good (Randee, 2017; Ang’ana & Ongeti, 2023).

In the history of Christianity in Nigeria, especially during the early years of The Apostolic Church Nigeria (TACN), we find a compelling example of this model at work. British missionaries like Pastor George Perfect and Pastor Idris J. Vaughan did not work in isolation. Instead, they both worked closely with the Nigerian leaders, including Pastors D. O. Odubanjo,¹ J. A. Babatope, and E. E. Okon, people who were believed not only to be deeply passionate about the Christian faith but also profoundly rooted in their communities and cultures. Their partnership, while not without its challenges, gave birth to a difference, a form of mutual leadership, which advanced both the messages of the gospel and the development of the church across the country (Adeleye, 2010; Adegboyega, 1978).

This article examines how collaborative leadership shaped the trajectory of the Christian mission in Nigeria, especially through TACN’s experiences and contributions. It analyses the major historical moments, religious tensions and leadership

¹ Pastor D. O. Odubanjo later to be referred to as Pastor Odubanjo

practices, stating how the interaction of Western and African voices produced a unique and spirit-led movement. In doing so, it reflects what the TACN story tells about the nature of the mission leadership today, especially in a world where global evangelisation still demands cooperation in cultural, denominational, and ideological lines (Spencer, 2022; Abdul & Naeem, 2022). In the end, this study argues that the collaborative leadership that has its roots in the values of the Bible and is expressed through real human relations is not only effective but highly important in completing the global Christian mission as described in Matthew 28:19-20.

Collaborative Leadership

The concept of collaborative leadership is a people-centric method that shares a shared decision-making, mutual accountability and inclusive participation in organisational life. Unlike traditional hierarchical models, which rely on positional authority, collaborative leadership encourages and promotes the co-creation of goals, visions, and strategies through the pooling of relationships and diverse gifts and approaches (Randee, 2017; Banashree, 2020). It is particularly valuable in complex and dynamic contexts where changes, cultural diversity and resource limitations require flexibility and shared responsibility. As a leadership style, it cultivates belief, promotes open communication, and creates a sense of ownership among members, leading to organisational harmony and performance (Maalouf, 2019). This leadership style assumes that the best solution to complex problems is developed through cooperative procedures rather than top-down instructions. Banashree (2020) argues that this kind of leadership style is the most effective in settings where adaptability and creativity are required, such as education, non-profit, public administration and religious institutions. In these contexts, leaders serve more as facilitators or coordinators, rather than being authoritative, guiding their teams towards consent and alignment.

In church settings, the collaborative leadership style finds deep resonance with the principles of the Bible. The sacred scripture continuously shows leadership in the form of a shared and servant-oriented calling. For example, the relationship of Jesus with his disciples followed a participatory model, in which he equipped, included, and eventually assigned them with the work of the ministry (Mark 3:14; Matthew 28:19-20). The early church continued this pattern, handing over the responsibilities between the apostles, elders, and deacons (Acts 6:1-7), emphasising that spiritual gifts are distributed among the body (Romans 12:4-8; Ephesians 4:11-13). According to Spencer (2022), this kind of model reflects a theology of leadership that is communal, not autocratic, that is, reflecting value on shared discernment, accountability and unity under the lordship of Christ. Consequently, this collaborative leadership not only enhance institutional efficiency, but also aligns as an interdependent body of believers, leading a Spirit-led nature of the church.

One of the most essential features of the collaborative leadership model is the purposeful engagement of stakeholders at all levels. In the opinion of Howatt (2023), this model typically improves the performance of an organisation and creates strong communities that is able to promote and encourage ownership and commitment between members. It is believed that when people feel heard and valued, they are more likely to invest emotionally and intellectually in the success of the organisation (Roos, Postmes & Koudenburg, 2023). It is particularly relevant in contexts of diversity, either cultural, generational, or professional, where top-down leadership can struggle to accommodate different ideas or needs. Besides, collaborative leadership aligns with the concept of emotional intelligence. Leaders should have high self-awareness, sympathy and communication skills, effectively consenting, managing conflict and maintaining the dynamics of a healthy team (Maalouf, 2019). This is not only a structural approach to collaborative leadership, but also a deep individual approach, which requires

the desire to abandon humility, active listening, and to abandon control.

However, this kind of leadership is not without its challenges. One of these challenges is the fact that it can be time-consuming, especially in situations where it is difficult to achieve consensus. This also requires a strong sense of shared values to avoid misunderstanding and incompetence (Hurley, 2011; Schweiger, Müller & Güttel, 2020). Without deliberate coordination and mutual honour, cooperation can lead to decision paralysis or a hidden power struggle. Therefore, successful collaborative leaders should maintain a balance between openness and direction while maintaining focus and accountability, promoting dialogue (Howatt, 2023). In a rapidly interconnected and complex world, collaborative leadership offers a compelling model for organisations seeking sustainable development, innovation and moral rule. Whether in business, education, healthcare, or ministry, this leadership style not only attains organisations, but also how they get it - through relationships, participation and shared vision.

The Root and Meaning of Christian Mission (CM)

Now, we turn to examine the basis for Christian services, that is, Christian missions. But what is Christian missions? Can we distinguish between ‘emigrant Christianity’ (Turaki, 1997:77-79) or European “cultural” Christianity and evangelical missions? A distinction has to be made here. Schnabel (2004:3) posits that Christian mission is connected to the personality of Jesus, the apostolic preaching, and that it is not without a training, which the disciples of Jesus underwent. In short, Schnabel maintained that in the beginning was Jesus. Without the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the messianic son of Man, there would be no Christians. Also, without the ministry of Jesus, there would be no Christian mission. Without Christian mission, there would have been no Christian Occident. The first Christian missionary was not Paul, but Peter, and Peter would not have preached a ‘missionary’ sermon at Pentecost if he had

not been a student of Jesus for three years. In other words, Jesus is the reason for Christian mission.

Precisely, Knutson (1976:13), while examining the concept of mission, states that mission is the discovery of the possibilities of the gospel where you are. It is what the church does. Mission is living by and for the gospel. Mission is obedience to the Lord. Also, mission is the method of believing in the gospel. It has been noted that the gospel cannot be long tied to a particular world view, a narrow concept of the self, or a set of values culled out of a particular cultural history. It carries its own power and makes its own way. Therefore, Christians have been warned not to be so identified with their society that they cannot criticise it both in content and context. This presupposes the fact that missions and missionary movements arose as an indictment of establishment Christianity, which had neglected the Great Commission. Missions centred on the expression and propagation of the gospel of salvation in Christ to the unreached world, while establishment or cultural Christianity was simply an exportation of emigrant culture, religion and civilisation.

From the foregoing, it has been established that CM is a lifelong enterprise that a Christian believer takes up religiously. It does not matter one's status, profession, nature or ethnicity. What matters is to act out in the form of a drama what Christ has deposited in you in order to showcase the livingness of Christ Jesus in this age. This idea is in consonance with Knutson's idea about CM. The mission of the church should bring us into direct contact with the intellectuals and social forces in our total society. That social forces include the ethnic groupings, cults and religious fanatics that have almost turned our world to a semi Hades; genocide is on the increase, infanticide is widely spread, abortion is common knowledge, fratricide and patricide live with us in Nigeria, dubious characters pervade our system and there is no length that such could not go in order to achieve their characteristically violent aims, not only in Nigeria, all the world over. Thus, Christian mission is threatened from all fronts.

The Inception of Christian Missions in Nigeria

A flood of literature, both scholarly and popular, discusses the beginning and the growth of Christian mission in Nigeria- Ade-Ajayi (1965), Ayandele (1966), Adewale (1978) and Ajani (2004:21). Therefore, here presents an overview of the inception of Christian mission in Nigeria.

It is on record that, between 1472 and 1484, the Portuguese catholic mission made the maiden effort to plant Christianity in Nigeria. Whereas in 1472, the Portuguese missionaries arrived in Warri, at the request of the King of Benin, in 1484, they attempted to evangelise Benin. However, due to divided interest or insincerity on the part of both the evangelists and the Nigerians, the earliest missionary efforts were unsuccessful. Thus, Ayandele describes the first missionary efforts as “futile, feeble and spasmodic” (Ayandele, 1966:3). Precisely, the Portuguese missionary's first attempt to evangelise the Benin proved abortive because the desire of the King of Benin seemed to have been for Portuguese armed help rather than for Christianity. Onwubiko (1985:197) also attributed the failure of the earliest missionaries to a lack of adequate Christian discipleship foundational training. According to Onwuboko, the conversions did not last long because the converts were not sufficiently instructed before baptism. So, they lapsed back to their old pagan religion as easily as they had accepted the Christian faith. Moreover, the hostile climate and scarcity of priests made it impossible for the Portuguese missionaries to exert permanent and strong influence on the masses of the people (Onwubiko, 1985:197).

From another look, Adewale (1978:25) attributes the failure of the earliest missionaries in Nigeria to a lack of traditional approval of the Christian mission. According to him, several attempts that were made to plant Christianity in Nigeria before the 19th century were virtually fruitless, as there was no preparation. Also, it is observed that the commercial interest in gold, ivory and slaves, coupled with the problem of health, made

a firm establishment of Christian faith impossible. But Christian mission became rooted in Abeokuta from the 1840s since the Ifa oracular predictions had prepared the ground for the acceptance of the Christian faith pending the arrival of the foreign evangelists. In other words, subsequent missionary efforts in the 19th century were productive, as evident in the presence of Christian mission stations across the nation, Nigeria. For instance, in 1842, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) arrived in Badagry. In 1845, the first mission of the CMS was established in Badagry, and later in 1864 in Abeokuta. In 1846, the Church of Scotland Mission arrived in Calabar. In 1850, J. T. Bowen of the Southern Baptist from America arrived in Yorubaland, but the Baptist Mission established its first church in 1853 at Ijaye, and later in 1875 it became a strong church.

Whereas the attempt to plant Christianity in Nigeria began in the fifteenth century, the sustainable evangelisation of Nigeria began in the nineteenth century through the activities of ex-slaves from Freetown. In other words, European evangelists worked in collaboration with Africans in order to evangelise Nigeria. For instance, the majority of the ex-slaves who were Yoruba served as agents of Christian mission by the end of the nineteenth century, when Christianity was firmly rooted in Yorubaland and other coastal areas of modern Nigeria. In contrast, whereas Christianity had gained footing in the coastal areas of Nigeria in the 19th century, with the help of CMS, Christian mission work only began in the 1900s in Northern Nigeria. In short, church historians (Ajayi, 1965; Ajani, 2004) have noted that the evangelistic awakening of Europe, the abolition of the slave trade, the growth of the philanthropic spirit and the mission efforts of ex-slaves like Samuel Ajayi Crowther, coupled with the accommodation of the foreigners, contributed to the factors that facilitated the planting and growth of the Christian mission in Nigeria.

Methodology

This article employs a qualitative, historical case study approach to examine the dynamics of collaborative leadership in the early years of TACN. In order to reconstruct and analyse these events, it makes use of both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary source included the National Archives of Nigeria, the official church documents (such as the council resolutions, autobiography and anniversary brochures) and the published memoirs of the Pastor I. J. Vaughan. It also makes use of oral interviews that were conducted with four (4) purposively selected prominent members of The Apostolic Church (TACN) who are senior church leaders with institutional memory of events in the church. The secondary sources included books, journal articles and the Internet. By synthesising these sources, this study explains the historical story not only as a sequence of events, but also as a series of interactions that reveal the strengths and weaknesses of the model collaborative in a cross-cultural mission context.

The Maiden Visit of the Authority of TAC, Great Britain to Nigeria

Leadership in the formative years of the first classical Pentecostal church in Nigeria, The Apostolic Church Nigeria (TACN), revolved around the efforts of pioneering missionaries of The Apostolic Church (TAC) from Great Britain on one hand and Nigerian leaders of the church on the other. Initially, the great revival campaigns of the 1930s, orchestrated by the widely acclaimed call of Evangelist J. A. Babalola, had brought the leadership activities of some notable Nigerian Pastors like D. O. Odubanjo, I. B. Akinyele, J. A. Babatope and S. G. Adegboyega of the Faith Tabernacle Congregation (FTC) to the limelight. Those leaders, at different levels and localities like Ilesa, Lagos, Ijebu-Ode and Ibadan in Southwestern Nigeria in particular, were duly involved in the great revival that prepared grounds for the rapid growth and expansion of Pentecostal Christianity. Later, on the arrival of missionaries of The Apostolic Church

from Great Britain, the Nigerian leaders of the church were made to learn a lot of things about the principles and practices of TAC (Adeleye, 2010). To this end, Turnbull rightly attributes the extensive missionary work of Pentecostal Christianity in Nigeria to the revivals in which the work was born, nursed and fed into vigorous growth. The revival did not begin with the advent of The Apostolic missionaries, but the Holy Spirit had already commenced the work in some parts of the country a few years before through the instrumentalities of others. In those early years, literally thousands of people were converted, hundreds of people healed, and a work was established. When TAC's missionaries arrived, they found many churches already open (1959:72). Indeed, those Pentecostal movements' previous teaching had been of a strong fundamental character, and they were outstandingly evangelical, believing strongly in divine healing. Thus, the revival in Nigeria readily prepared ground for the evangelistic ministry of TAC's missionaries (Turnbull, 1959:72).

The foregoing presupposed that leadership in the formative years of TACN had much to do with the interactions of TAC's missionaries from Great Britain and Nigerian leaders of the church. Such interactions helped the pioneering missionaries of TAC from Great Britain to engage the Nigerian leaders in the teachings and practices of TAC. It also afforded the missionaries the opportunity to be abreast with the cultural differences of Nigeria in contrast to those of Great Britain.

In the formative years of TACN, the missionaries from TAC, Great Britain, played an active role. Firstly, acceding to the passionate call of the leaders of Faith Tabernacle Congregation (FTC) in Nigeria, the authorities of TAC from Britain, including Pastors Daniel Powel Williams, T. N. Turnbull, and W. Jones Williams, visited the church in Nigeria in September 1931 (Adegboyega, 1978:45). The duration of the maiden visit of those three clergymen to Nigeria was six months (National Archive 1931, 665:1). That visit enhanced the affiliation (1981) of the FTC to TAC. The leaders of the FTC entered into an

agreement of cooperation with the leaders of TAC from Great Britain in order to formalise the union. Also, on 15 November 1931, the British delegates of TAC ordained the first seven Nigerian leaders of TACN into the pastorate (Odubanjo, 1981:4). While the ordination of those seven Nigerian Pastors authenticated the union of TAC and FTC, the mission work of leadership formation in TACN only commenced with the arrival of two missionaries from TAC, Great Britain, in 1932 (Adeleye, 2010).

In response to the request of the authorities of TACN for resident missionaries, the International Council of TAC in Great Britain sent two missionaries, Pastor George Perfect of Bradford, England and Pastor Idris J. Vaughan of Wales, to Nigeria (Adegboyega, 1978:63-64). It should be noted that those missionaries came to Nigeria in order to team up with those who were previously leading the FTC in Nigeria. On 2 June 1932, they arrived in Lagos and were lodged at Spencer Street, Yaba. Pastor G. Perfect was an Apostle, while Pastor Idris J. Vaughan was a Prophet. That team, according to the conventional belief of the church, conforms to the doctrinal emphasis of TAC on the essential complementary role of an Apostle and a Prophet. The tenet of TACN number 9 establishes the fact that the government of the church is vested in the ministry of the apostle and the prophet (Adeleye, 2010). Thus, those two missionaries stayed together in Lagos for a whole year.

However, in June 1933, on request, Pastor Idris J. Vaughan and Evangelist Joseph Babalola were sent to Calabar for missionary activities, which led to the planting of TAC in Calabar and some adjoining towns like Creek Town, Mary Slessor Town, Ugep and Ukim (Okon, 1981:10-11). In each of their missionary enterprises, the white missionaries and indigenous Christian ministers collaborated to fulfil their mission mandate. For instance, among many other African ministers, Brother E. E. Okon, who later became the first indigenous National President of TACN, served as an outstanding interpreter to Pastor I. J. Vaughan, Wellings and

others in Calabar for a period of time (Duke, 1992). Therefore, separate accounts are given here on the missionary activities of Pastor G. Perfect at the national headquarters of the church in Lagos, and Pastor I. J. Vaughan in Calabar centre.

Missionary Activities of Pastor George Perfect in TACN

Pastor George Perfect was born about 1881 (Figure 1).² His co-missionary to Nigeria, Pastor Vaughan, claimed that Pastor Perfect was twenty years older than he. In June 1932, at the instance of the International Missionary Council of TAC, Bradford, England, Pastor Perfect came to Nigeria as one of the first two resident missionaries to TACN. Initially, the two missionaries, Pastors Perfect and Vaughan, visited some parts of the country. Thus, the District Officer of Ibadan Division asserts:

The Faith Tabernacle in Nigeria appealed for help from the Apostolic Church in England, a sect which believes in faith healing. Two missionaries - Pastors Perfect and Vaughan - came to Nigeria and have visited Ibadan and Ilesa, and the Faith Tabernacle has now become The Apostolic Church. Pastor Perfect, who has his headquarters in Lagos, is a reasonable missionary who is anxious to work with peace and order. While he dissociated his mission from the Aladura movement, he naturally does look then (*sic*) to increase his sect (National Archive 1933, File 1146:3).

They also visited Evangelist Babalola, who was then serving a jail term in Benin prison. Thus, Vaughan notes that they prayed and talked with Evangelist Babalola, who relayed to them that their coming to Nigeria only confirmed his religious experience about TAC ministry in the country (Vaughan, 1991:34). In contrast, it should be noted that the earlier delegates, Pastors

² Henceforth, Pastor George Perfect will be referred to as Pastor Perfect.

D. P. Williams, A. Turnbull, and W. J. Williams, were disallowed to see Evangelist Babalola (Adegboyega, 1978:40).



Figure 1. Pastor George Perfect

As part of the means of fulfilling ministerial assignments, the missionaries, including Pastor Perfect, established an evening Bible School at their residence at Spencer Street, Yaba, Lagos. Pastor Perfect was the instructor. Some of the first students were Pastor I. G. Sakpo, Overseer A. O. Ogunsanya, Brothers A. O. Awonuga, E. O. Onabajo, A. O. Pitan, J. A. Okunuga and J. L. Hanson. Later, these people were called into the pastoral and part-time ministerial work. Also, tarrying meetings were regularly held, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit was received with evidence of speaking in tongues and interpretation of tongues.

Also, with Pastor Perfect as the leading Pastor, on their arrival, the missionaries had personal contacts with the authorities of the British Government in Nigeria. They showed them their credentials, including a letter of authority from the Secretary of State to the Colonies in London, authorising them to be allowed to establish the TAC ministry in Nigeria without any hindrance (Adegboyega, 1978:40). This facilitated the establishment of new assemblies of TAC, schools, revival meetings, open-air gospel campaigns and freedom of worship in the country (Adegboyega, 1978:67). It should be noted that, in order to fulfil those assignments, Pastor Perfect collaborated with some founding members and leaders of TACN. For instance, of all the founding fathers of TACN, the closest associates to the missionaries included Pastors D. O. Odubanjo and J. A. Babatope from the Southwestern, and Pastor E. E. Okon from Eastern Nigeria. They used to accompany the White missionaries on their missionary tours in order to serve as interpreters and, at times, culture brokers (Adegboyega, 1978:48; Church Document, 1993). Through that act, leadership skills were being imparted to the Nigerian leaders of TAC then.

Moreover, a look at the church historical sketch reveals that Pastor Perfect also ensured that TACN was properly nurtured in the rule of divine government in the church, the proper use of spiritual gifts, correct method of tarrying for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, regular prayer meetings, owning of housing and landed properties by individual members of the church on freehold basis, opening and keeping of savings account in the bank, life insurance policies, personal and public evangelism other than the use of print media evangelism, divine guidance through prophetic ministry and singing of joyful choruses (Adegboyega, 1978:69-70). Those factors, such as the proper use of spiritual gifts and sound biblical teaching, had contributed in no small measure to the growth of TACN. For instance, through the leading of the Holy Spirit via prophetic ministry, church planting was initiated, established and developed in TACN.

Looking at the trend of growth of TACN in its formative age, it has been noted that following the arrival of the resident missionaries in 1932, TACN witnessed a phenomenal growth. Several churches were planted and schools opened in order to cater for the basic education of the children of members of TAC and members of the communities in Nigeria. For instance, in 1933 and 1937, Apostolic Primary Schools were established at Oke-Ooye, Ilesa, and Odo-Okun, Modakeke, Osun State, Nigeria, respectively. Through that initiative, there was no more pressure or harassment from the Government. Then, TACN had also attracted much recognition from the authority, such that at the founding of Ilesa Grammar School in 1934, both Pastors Perfect and J. A. Babatope were among the dignitaries (Peel, 1968:168). That was in addition to the release of Evangelist Babalola from imprisonment at Benin City, a thing that enhanced the gospel (Adegboyega, 1967).

Through the effort of Pastor Perfect and other African leaders, the authorities of the church established a council known as the Nigerian General Council of TAC for governmental and administrative purposes, having its headquarters in Lagos. The first appointed President of the Council was Pastor George Perfect, who was then permanently resident in Lagos. Pastor J. O. Sanya was the first General Secretary to the Council, and Pastor S. A. Sole was appointed the Council's Treasurer, all resident in Lagos (Adegboyega, 1978:71). In the absence of Pastor Perfect, Pastor D. O. Odubanjo was the Acting Chairman, being the leading African Apostle at that time. Having completed a three-year tenure of missionary activities, Pastor Perfect left Nigeria for his country on 18 May 1935 (Adeleye, 2010:80-86).

A keen look at the history of TACN shows that the ordination of church officers formed one of the main activities that enhanced the ministry of Pastor Perfect in Nigeria. As the principles and practices of TAC were being taught and were assimilated by the Nigerian members of the church, the leaders were instructed through prophetic ministry to ordain into offices of Pastors,

Overseers, Presiding Elders, Elders, Deacons, and Deaconesses as well as local Evangelists. The callings were in each case critically examined by the Apostleship before they were ordained into the respective offices. In this wise, in 1933, following a prophetic message, Pastors Perfect and Vaughan ordained Pastor I. G. Sakpo as a Pastor and the first Prophet in Nigeria at 51 Moloney, Great Bridge Street, Lagos (Church Document 1993; Biography of Pastor Sakpo). Conforming to the practices of TACN, only those who are called into spiritual offices, such as offices of Apostleship, Pastorate, and Eldership, are ordained with consecrated oil and laying-on of hands of the Apostleship. Other church officers, like Deacon and Deaconess, are ordained only with the laying-on of hands because their calls have to do with the temporal duties in TACN. Temporal duties in the context of TACN refer to being in charge of social ministry, such as church properties and the maintenance of order during church programmes. Thus, deacons and deaconesses are not duly involved in the administration of ritual performance in TACN (Adeleye, 2010:80-86).

In spite of those all-important contributions of Pastor Perfect to the planting of the TAC ministry in Nigeria, he was confronted with some challenges. Those challenges stemmed from misinformation about socio-cultural ethos and inadequate theological training on the part of the leaders of TACN in its formative stage. One of the first leading pastors in TACN, Pastor Odubanjo, challenged the authority of Pastor Perfect, who raised a dust over a suspected mismanagement of missionary funds. The misappropriation of funds was connected with the expenses on the missionary tour of Pastors Perfect and Odubanjo to Ikare under TAC, Ilesa Area. According to Olutola, Pastors Perfect and Odubanjo travelled by road, for which Pastor Perfect paid two pounds and five shillings as their transport fare (Olutola, 2011). However, the statutory monthly statement of accounts that the General Treasurer of the Nigeria General Council of TAC, Elder A. Sole, presented to Pastor Perfect revealed that Pastor Odubanjo had also claimed one pound two shillings for his transport fare to Ikare two times.

Consequent upon this, Pastor Perfect queried Pastor Odubanjo for the suspected financial impropriety, a thing that did not go down well with Pastor Odubanjo. Later, the case was discussed at the joint fellowship of the presbytery of TAC, Lagos and Ebute-Metta but remained partially resolved (Olutola, 2020).

Eventually, the matter precipitated bad blood between Pastors Perfect and Odubanjo. Therefore, since then, Pastor Odubanjo has determined to relieve the European missionaries of their authority over TACN. As part of the steps taken to disengage the European missionaries from TACN, Pastor Odubanjo demanded that the General Secretary, Pastor J. O. Sanya, provide a compilation of the total offerings collected towards the missionary fund for the past five years during which TAC's missionaries had been in Nigeria. He was supplied with the figure, which amounted to over five thousand pounds (Adegboyega, 1978:55). On seeing the figure, Pastor Odubanjo determined to attend the council meeting scheduled to hold in the United Kingdom in order to plead with the mother church to establish educational institutions in Nigeria and to desist from interfering with missionary funds. In addition, Pastor Odubanjo was of the opinion that the missionary committee in Bradford should be solely responsible for the European missionaries in Nigeria henceforth, and that the missionary fund should be directed and utilised for the maintenance of African ministers and the education of their children (Adeloye & Adeloye, 34-36). Such a step could be attributed to the spirit of nationalistic feelings that had pervaded the religious landscape in Nigeria then (Ayegboyin & Ishola 2013:12-13; Adeloye & Adeloye 34-36). Eventually, in the year 1937, the authorities of the General Headquarters of TAC in the United Kingdom invited the leaders of TACN in order to tour some of the principal assemblies in the United Kingdom as well as to attend their International Council meetings. The leaders of TACN nominated Pastors Odubanjo, Babatope and Udom to represent the church. However, probably, since Pastor Odubanjo's requests received serious objection from the leaders

of TACN, he declined to go to the United Kingdom for those International Council meetings (Adeleye, 2010).

In 1936, TAC's administrative set-up, known as Area, was established in Lagos, Ilesa, Zaria, and Calabar (Adegboyega, 1978:86). Consequently, the Nigerian leaders of TACN requested the services of Missionary Area Superintendents, among whom Pastor Perfect was one. In 1937, while Pastor Perfect was appointed the superintendent, TACN, Lagos Area, as well as President of the Nigerian General Council, Pastor S. G. Elton became the superintendent of Ilesa Area, and Pastor Wellings, the superintendent of Calabar Area (Church Document 2003; Adegboyega, 1978:86). Then, Pastor A. Taylor was appointed as the Resident Missionary to TACN, Zaria Area. It should be noted here that the headquarters of the then Zaria Area was situated in Kaduna. The appointment of Pastor Perfect as superintendent, TACN, Lagos Area and pioneering president of the National Council of the church in Nigeria was to establish the order of TAC as being practised in the United Kingdom (Adeleye 2010; 2022).

Notably, from 1937, the use of medicine for healing constituted another major challenge for the missionary enterprises of Pastor Perfect in TACN. Sometimes, Pastor Odubanjo queried the stance of the European missionaries on the issue of healing without the use of medicine. It should be noted that Pastor Odubanjo learnt from certain individuals in TACN, Lagos Assembly, that Pastor Perfect made certain statements in response to questions on divine healing, such that can make people misconstrue the concept of faith healing (Adegboyega, 1978:95-98). The matter was tabled and discussed extensively at an emergency meeting of the presbytery of TACN in Lagos. As Pastor Perfect did not regard the use of quinine as medication, he explained to the Nigerian leaders of the church that doctors and medicines are good, but it depends on how people make use of them. Therefore, he appealed that the European missionaries be given free hand to use quinine for prophylactic reasons, considering the reaction of their body system to

climatic change. About the same time, in the TAC Calabar Area, the controversy over the use of quinine to procure healing also threatened the growth of the church. Pastor Perfect also played the role of a peacemaker as he met some dignitaries and explained the stand of the church on faith healing. For instance, he attended TAC Oron Town's convention where he met with all Apostles, Pastors, and Elders, and explained the biblical truth on faith healing as stipulated in Romans chapter 14 of the New Testament of the Bible (Church Document, 1993:157-158). Some of the council members and Elders of the church sympathised with him after his explanation. However, those who were not sympathetic with Pastor Perfect moved a motion that the European missionaries be asked to leave Nigeria for their country.

From the foregoing, it has been established that leadership is first and foremost cultural and that church leadership is intercultural in view of the different positions of the two topmost leaders, European and African of TACN, on the use or non-use of medicine for healing. On one hand, Pastor Perfect maintained that TAC never teaches that doctors and medicines are wicked and evil in themselves. Thus, it would be wrong for any member of TACN to condemn those who use medicine for healing as unbelievers. On the other hand, in spite of other people's cultural orientation and different climate, on 28 July 1938, Nigerian leaders of TACN passed a resolution in a leadership meeting that the use of medicine for healing should be discouraged in the church. The policy statement asserts that any European missionary of TAC should be able to adapt himself or herself to the standard of teaching of divine healing as taught and practiced in the church, without the use of medicines like quinine, either for protection or healing under any circumstances, whatsoever (An extract cited in Adegboyega, 1978:114).

Therefore, leadership disagreement on the use of medicine for healing and financial misappropriation led to the breakdown of order among the rank and file in the formative years of TACN.

Also, the disagreement between the European missionaries and Nigerian leaders lingered over a policy statement on divine healing, with little or no consideration for the different cultural values of those people who constituted the church polity then. Consequent upon this, the meeting ended in a stalemate.

Missionary Activities of Pastor Idris John Vaughan in TACN

Idris John Vaughan was born on 13 March 1901 at Abertridwr, a township in the tiny Aber valley, about 5 miles (8.05km) from Cardiff (Figure 2). A few weeks later, on Wednesday, 24 May 1901, his father, David Vaughan, at the age of 39, died alongside 81 other miners in the explosion at the nearby Universal Colliery at Senghenydd, Wales (Vaughan, 1981:2). At age twelve years, in 1913, under the influence of a powerful preaching Welsh Pentecostal evangelist, Stephen Jeffrey, Idris J. Vaughan made a commitment to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Between 1913 and 1919, he served as a preacher in the local churches and mission halls, particularly during weekends off from the coal mine industry. In 1919, at the age of eighteen, he also enlisted in the Royal Navy for a period of twelve years, an opportunity he availed to have contact with West African cities such as Accra, Lagos, and Victoria Cameroon. However, he later realised God's calling upon him to be an evangelist. It was also said that some prophetic messages during the church convention in 1921 attested to his dramatic call into the ministry (Vaughan, 1991: i-ii; Adeleye, 2022:46).

In August 1921, Pastor Idris J. Vaughan started his evangelistic ministry by joining the ministry of TAC, Wales. Thereafter, on 20 December, 1921, at the age of 20 years 9 months, Pastor Vaughan claimed that he had a day-trip to No. 10 The Parade, Pontypridd, South Wales, the home of Pastor D. P. Williams where in the sitting room, the Pastor with another brother prayed and laid hands on him, a mark of spiritual impartation (Vaughan, 1981:2). Though married and blessed with two sons, he was widowed when he was finally called to serve as a

missionary of The Apostolic Church in Lagos, West Africa (Adeleye, 2022).



Figure 2. Pastor Idris J. Vaughan

One of the first two resident missionaries to TACN, Pastor Vaughan, arrived in Nigeria on 2 June 1932. He was a prophet and evangelist, while his partner, Pastor George Perfect, was an Apostle. In conformity with the doctrinal practices of TACN, Pastor Vaughan played a complementary role to the missionary activities of Pastor Perfect in the first year, i.e. between June 1932 and June 1933 of their stay in Nigeria. However, the major missionary activities of Pastor Vaughan took place in Eastern Nigeria.

Prior to his visit to Calabar and later other parts of Eastern Nigeria, in the company of Pastor Perfect, Pastor Vaughan had toured many places in southwestern Nigeria, including Abeokuta, Ibadan and Ilesa. He recalled his pleasant visit to the University of Ibadan. He fellowshipped with the members of TACN, Ibadan, under the leadership of Pastor I. B. Akinyele, one of the seven who had been ordained during the visit of the British delegation in 1931. Pastor Vaughan claimed that he occasionally stayed at Pastor Oba I. B. Akinyele's house as a friend (Vaughan, 1991:29).

In honour of a passionate request for the urgent need of the ministry of a powerful evangelist and prophet from brethren in Eastern Nigeria, the authority of TACN sent Pastor Vaughan and Evangelist Babalola, who was widely known and called Prophet Babalola, to Creek Town, Calabar, in order to conduct gospel revival activities.³ The ministry of the duo of Pastors Vaughan and Babalola was characterised by cases of spectacular healings, deliverance and miracles. Also, that revival programme was said to have led to the conversion of Pastor E.O. Ene and some others, including Brother E. E. Okon, who eventually became the first president of TACN in 1981 (Inyang & Adebisi, 2009:29). In this wise, Okon gives a dramatic account of his conversion thus:

There was a gathering here in Nigeria where people from Europe came, and the power of God was seen in action. Then, I was a member of the Presbyterian Church, but through the programme conducted by some missionaries... I began to experience a new revelation of God. They preached the gospel, and many wonders and healings were performed. It was an outpouring of the latter rain; there I came to embrace the Lord and became a member of The

³ The invitation of Pastor Vaughan to Calabar in Eastern Nigeria was occasioned by the meeting of the fellow inmates of Evangelist Babalola while serving a jail term in Benin City prison.

Apostolic Church (Church Document, TACN 2005:7).

As a result of the first gospel revival, in June 1933, Pastor Vaughan, a year after he arrived in the country, was sent to Calabar by the General Council of the church in response to the invitation from TAC's members in Calabar, where he conducted successful gospel revival meetings. A proof of an effective ministry, the revival meetings were reputed to have been instrumental to the conversion of hundreds of souls, healing of many people, deliverance from demon possession, and several others received the baptism of the Holy Ghost with speaking in tongues and prophesying. His mission to Calabar this time was a follow-up of the revival fire already kindled by his earlier missionary tour to Calabar with Pastor George Perfect. He returned to Lagos after completing the revival programme as scheduled.

On 8 September 1933, on the approval of the General Council of TACN, Pastor Vaughan was sent as the first resident missionary to TAC, Calabar centre. That mission work was supported by the Nigerian General Council of TACN. Also, during the tenure of Pastor V. Wellings, under the jurisdiction of Ife, TAC, Amumara became a District. As a result, the Amala of Amumara offered a large portion of land to the church and demanded that a European come and live with them. In 1940, Pastor Vaughan was sent to live in Amumara as the superintendent for TAC, Igbo Area (Anyanchor, 1981:18). However, in 1940, Pastor A. Anyahuru, one of the founding members and ministers of TACN in Igbo Field, who was reputed to have worked tirelessly for the progress of the work of the gospel between the 1930s and 1940s seceded from TACN in Igbo Field, Nigeria. Anyanchor notes that Pastor Anyahuru went away with 115 Assemblies, 60 church officers and 6 ministerial staff (Anyanchor, 1981:8-9). This is an indication of the existence of a leadership tussle within the rank and file of TACN, Igbo Field in its nascent stage (Adeleye, 2010).

After three years of missionary activities in Nigeria, Pastor Vaughan left Nigeria for his country earlier than his colleague, Pastor Perfect, who left Nigeria in May 1935. In 1935, Pastor Vaughan was called and ordained an Apostle during the Easter Bradford Convention, England. He was actually ordained during the Welcome Service held in honour of Pastor Perfect at Bradford, England. On 18 July 1935, Pastor Vaughan returned to Nigeria from his furlough in the United Kingdom this time as an Apostle (Adegboyega, 1978:74-75). It should be noted that prior to his ordination into the office of an Apostle, Pastor Vaughan had been recognised as a Prophet. In this regard, Adegboyega asserts that the three major ordained Prophets that TACN had in its early stage were Pastors Vaughan, Sakpo, and Noah Evans (Adegboyega, 1978:73). In other words, Pastor Vaughan was mainly engaged in the ministry of a Prophet and an Evangelist in his first missionary journey to Nigeria, but came back to function as an Apostle and a prophet. From here, it has been established that a single person could assume the position and perform the dual role of an Apostle and a Prophet simultaneously in TAC. In this wise, Pastor Vaughan returned to Nigeria and performed the role of a Prophet, and eventually became a superintendent, the statutory role of an Apostle in TACN (Adeleye, 2022:60-71).

The Nature of Leadership in the Formative Years of TACN

In the church, authority must be viewed in a different way from what it is in the world of government and business. The Lord Jesus did not say that it was wrong to lead, but that leaders should serve others rather than expecting others to serve them. They are to be motivated by love, not selfishness. They are to be humble, rather than giving themselves important-sounding titles. Those who seek authority more than they seek to serve, no matter whether they are men or women, are not viewing church leadership in the right way. Church leadership is not a place to exert the importance of a particular person, ethnic group, personality type or gender. Leadership roles are a means of service, not a means of venerating the leaders or the groups

to which they belong. Leaders in the church do have authority, and Christians are told to obey them, but that authority does not rest in themselves. Their authority is authentic only as it reflects God as he has revealed himself in Jesus Christ, as described in Scripture (Hebrews 13:17).

Bestowed with authority, leaders are expected to build up the church, edify the believers, and help them grow spiritually. A reminiscence of the early church, in TACN, the primary objectives of church leadership are to build up the community of believers. This finds expression in the way Pastor J. A. Babatope built certain members of TAC to maturity, most of whom later joined the full-time ministry of the church. According to Olutola, the earliest products of the ministry of Pastor J. A. Babatope included Samuel Ogunkunle Akindiya, Gabriel B. Oladele, David Obadare, Olowe and others, most of them ended up in church ministry in TACN, old Ilesa Area (Olutola, 2020).

At the inception of TAC in Nigeria, leadership succession did not pose a serious challenge to the system. Perhaps, one of the reasons was the non-full-time ministerial assignment that TAC leadership enjoyed at the teething age. Indeed, apart from Pastor Babatope, the pioneers of the church were part-time ministers (Oshun, 2000:153). Yet, they had little or no leadership-related problems. For instance, everyone recognised either Pastor Sadare (Esinsinade) or Pastor Odubanjo as their leader at the formative age of the church. Consequent upon this, Pastor John Aluko Babatope used to refer to the church leadership in Lagos for any administrative or doctrinal intricacy. In relation to this, Adegboyega asserts:

... in this time of trouble and hour of need, especially when we remembered the great sufferings of late Pastor J. A. Babatope when he was only the itinerant full-time minister in our midst at that time. It was his general practice to run from Ilesha to Ijebu-Ode from Ijebu to Lagos from Lagos to Offa, from Offa to

Benin City, etc. Wherever brethren were, he would go and visit them; but when trouble came, he sought for help from us and we could not help him (Adegboyega, 1978:155).

Following the above, there is a strong indication that, in its formative stage, none of the founding fathers of TACN struggled for a leadership position. Rather, they were all committed to fulfilling the great commission of preaching the gospel to all nations. The gospel activities were carried out in humility as reflected in the habit of church leaders like Pastors J. B. Sadare and J. A. Babatope, who, though they were independent church planters, did not vie for a church leadership post (Adeleye, 2022:75-76).

Humility as a *sine qua non* in the role of church leadership was clearly expressed in the company of the early pioneers of Pentecostal Christianity in Nigeria. Oshun (2000:153) notes that lesson in humility to be learnt from these early pioneers of Pentecostal type of fellowship in Nigeria was that when in December 1929, the Faith Tabernacle first came in contact with a new budding prophet from the hinterland Joseph Ayo Babalola, a man of about 25 years, they saw in him an answer to the group's prayer for a prophet through whom the apostolic realities would once again be demonstrated in their generation. Besides, on the part of D. O. Odubanjo, in spite of the all-important role of go-between for Ijebu-Ode and Lagos groups that he played for their affiliation with FTC Philadelphia, D. O. Odubanjo naturally considered his uncle, Pastor Sadare who sponsored him to St. Andrews College, Oyo, as the leader of the Church. To this end, Oshun asserts that the leadership of the group was in the first two years alternated between Pa Sadare (later Pastor Esinsinade) and Brother (later Pastor) Odubanjo. In subsequent years, however, Odubanjo conceded leadership to Pastor Esinsinade until around 1939, when the latter declined on personal and doctrinal grounds (Oshun, 2000:153).

In the second decade of the 20th century, the praying group, Precious Stone Society, which culminated into TAC, was established by some members of St Saviour's Church, Italupe, Ijebu-Ode (now in Ogun State). Within a decade of its operation, that group drew the attention of other fervent Christians from every nook and cranny of the nation. Among other things, the outbreak of influenza brought the activities of the Precious Stone Society (PSS), Ijebu-Ode, to the limelight. Indeed, the influenza epidemic, an aftermath of the First World War (1914-1918) that struck so hard in the Southwestern part of Nigeria, defied every orthodox as well as traditional medications. Hence, the praying people resorted to fervent praying, fasting and holy living as a panacea to the critical communal situation of bewildering pestilence (Adegboyega, 1978).

Teaching is one of the main responsibilities of church leaders who are identified as pastors and teachers. Pastors serve by preparing believers for service and helping them work together, so that the church grows. This involves active doctrinal instruction. On the other hand, teachers are committed to teaching the biblical doctrine with a view to leading church members to the right way. A deficient church leader in the area of teaching ministry may lose his integrity among church members. Such a deficiency has been identified as a factor that was responsible for the decline in the number of church members in some District centres in TACN. According to Adeyeye (2014), the last decade of the 20th and the first decade of the 21st centuries, year 1990 to 2010, witnessed a series of drift of the youth members of TACN to some other Charismatic/Pentecostal churches such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) and Winners Chapel. Those incidents occasioned the formation of Youth Convocation in 1995 in order to curb the mass drifting of the young elites from the church (Adeyeye, 2014).

Staffing, the managerial function of filling and keeping filled positions in the organisational structure, constitutes another major factor in TACN's leadership discourse. According to

Wehrich (2008:242), staffing is done by identifying workforce requirements, taking of inventory of the people available, and recruiting, selecting, placing, promoting, appraising, planning the careers of, compensating, and training or otherwise developing both candidates and current job holders so that they can accomplish their tasks effectively and efficiently. It is clear that staffing must be closely linked to organising, that is, the setting up of intentional structures of roles and positions. In TACN, positions, vacancies and new posts are filled based on certain criteria. Administratively, this is done by the resolution of the apostleship, that is, the council of the Apostles and Prophets. This council represents the government of TACN. On the other hand, the up-grading of a particular church unit or Assembly to a District status may automatically confer on the minister of the central Assembly the post of a District Pastor.

More often than not, church leadership is intercultural. This leadership style enables church leaders to feel at home with their church members. For instance, Pastor Olutola adopts intercultural leadership ideologies as he sometimes speaks some of his church members' major languages and or dialects. While in Benin-City, Pastor Olutola interacted fluently with church members in the indigenous languages or dialects such as Esan and Urhobo (Offor, 2021). Thus, it follows that the cultural knowledge has to do with church leadership since the church would not do without the culture of its host(s). The adherents of Christianity only give in to the newfound faith for the benefits therein. Therefore, Pobee asserts that both African culture and the Africans are not about to turn their backs on their inherited cultures and replace them with Christian culture. Those who finally embraced Christianity did so as well out of mixed motives: the educational, medical, social and other benefits that the Churches provided or serviced (Pobee, 1991).

Dialogue has also been noted as an essential factor for effective leadership in TACN in the twenty-first century. However, this could only be achieved by the ability for sociality, the quality of being able to live and grow in communities; the quality or fact

of being able to establish companionship and mutual converse (Akinwowo, 1980:16).⁴ Therefore, the gospel ministers, as the *Atokun* (Guide) of society, are expected to comport themselves in every good manner in order to gain the approval of society. Indeed, the societies look up to church leaders for a specific appropriate guide that will usher in harmonious relationships and tranquillity in Nigeria. However, there is evidence of an ever-rising current of *aimowahu* (loss of the sense of good comportment) in our society, church inclusive (Akinwowo, 1980:31, 46). The case of loss of the sense of good comportment manifests in various aspects of life, including sexual and financial scams, even among church leaders. This calls for the revival and maintenance of pastoral etiquette among church leaders (Adeleye, 2022).

Discussion for Collaborative Leadership in the TACN

The case of The Apostolic Church Nigeria provides an insightful look into the nature of collaborative leadership in mission. From the findings, it was revealed that while a shared vision is an essential starting point, it is inadequate to maintain a healthy intercultural partnership. The success story of the TACN mission has to do with the collaboration that existed between the organisational structure of the British missionaries and the revivalist fervour of Nigerian leaders and local connections. Nevertheless, the way the partnership almost disintegrated has shown that true collaboration necessitates more than the goals being shared by the parties involved; it demands a strong, mutually accepted procedures for governance, financial transparency and conflict resolution.

The two conflicts that took place on finance and divine healing were not just disagreements; they were symptoms of a deep clash between cultures and leadership paradigms. The British missionaries worked with a Western spirit of administrative

⁴ Akinwowo reiterates that two very significant matrices of interpersonal relationships are concord and conflict. If you cannot learn to be in harmony with your neighbour, follower or superior, you will continue to be at loggerheads.

accountability, while the Nigerian leaders were navigating the rise of a nationalist spirit and claiming their right to religious and administrative self-determination. Therefore, this case study serves as an important corrective to the look at through rose-coloured glasses perceptions of missionary partnership. It indicates that intercultural cooperation is naturally complex and is prone to discord when issues that border on power, wealth and cultural practice are not handled with intensive knowledge, wisdom, and humility. For contemporary missions, it will be good to note that collaborative leadership is not a model that can just be assumed just like that; it is a model that should be deliberately and intentionally built on the foundation of the mutual trust, cross-cultural training, and governance and resources clearly on the foundation of clear agreements. Without them, even the most spiritually aligned associations can rupture under the weight of vague cultural beliefs and strength imbalance.

Conclusion

The historical discourse surrounding the foundational years of The Apostolic Church Nigeria is one that is laced with compelling demonstrations of capability and perils when it comes to the issue of collaborative leadership, especially in terms of the Christian mission. This kind of leadership model that existed among the British and Nigerian leaders was important in founding one of the most important Pentecostal churches in the country. The efforts they put together in evangelising, planting churches and educating the people have shown what can be accomplished when various gifts are brought together purposefully for the gospel. However, this study has argued that the relationship was also marked by significant struggle, which stems from deeply seated cultural and administrative differences. Disputes over financial accountability and the use of medicine show that in order to achieve a successful collaboration, there is more to just having or sharing a similar vision; it demands somewhat difficult and deliberate efforts geared towards creating trust, aligning

expectations and navigating power dynamics with grace and humility. This TACN's story eventually confirms that the command, as stipulated in Matthew 28:19-20, is a call to relationship. In order to meet the global propagation of the gospel, there is a need to have leaders who cannot only cross geographic boundaries but also be able to bridge cultural divisions. The legacy of Pastors Perfect, Vaughan, Odubanjo, and their contemporaries has not only created a church, but also a continuing lesson that is an authentic, flexible and effective Christian mission, and should always be a collaborative endeavour.

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Notes

This biography is heavily drawn on the introduction of I. J. Vaughan's book:
I. J. Vaughan, *Nigeria: The Origins of Apostolic Church Pentecostalism in Nigeria*, i-ii

The invitation of Pastor Vaughan to Calabar in Eastern Nigeria was occasioned by the meeting of the fellow inmates of Evangelist Babalola while serving a jail term in Benin City prison.

Akinwowo reiterates that two very significant matrices of interpersonal relationships are concord and conflict. If you cannot learn to be in harmony with your neighbour, follower or superior, you will continue to be at loggerheads.