

# THE ABSENCE OF HYGIENE IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP: A STUDY OF EZEH'S *YOUR CHURCH, MY SHRINE*

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## Abstract

This research presents a Postcolonial study that examined the absence of hygiene in Christian worship as depicted by Ezeh in his novel *Your Church, My Shrine*. Hygiene is cleanliness and cleanliness can be said to be purity and virtue. Christian worship is expected to be conducted according to the dictates of the Bible. Christians are expected to be clean, pure and virtuous in their daily conduct and worship of God. Christian worship in the post-colonial Nigeria however has shifted focus to materialism and seeking of miracles. This pushes the religious leaders to seek the powers needed for such miracles as exposed by Ezeh in the book in study. Many critics and authors have criticised this new trend in Christianity. The research discovered that many evils are perpetrated in the name of Christian worship to achieve personal gains as exposed in *Your Church My Shrine*. The results are devastations which result in untold hardship, pain and death. The study came to the conclusion that true motif of worship of God has benefits; therefore, Christian devotees should adhere to the true worship of God to avoid the negative consequences as depicted by the literary work studied.

**Key words:** Absence, Hygiene, Christian Worship, *Your Worship, My Shrine*

## Introduction

Christianity in Post-colonial Nigeria is plagued with miracle seekers and miracle doers. The worship of God has been relegated to materialism and the works of miracles. Rational thinking, worship of God and hard work are gradually disappearing. Many Christians prefer the easy way of solving their problems, which is through prayers

and miracles. This study explores how Law Ikay Ezeh exposes the activities of some leaders and followers of the Christian faith that has resulted to the absence of hygiene in Christian worship in his novel *Your Church, My Shrine*. Hygiene, according to *Webster Dictionary* is 'The science of health and its maintenance; system of principles for the preservation of health and prevention of disease'. Synonyms of Hygiene give words like cleanness, neatness, purity, tidiness, spotlessness, whiteness, and virtue while antonyms give words like dirtiness, messiness, and filths. In the context of this study, Hygiene refers to purity, virtue and all forms of cleanness in the service of God. The activities of Christians should reflect virtues that are dictated in the Biblical status.

## Background

Religion, according to *Merriam Webster*, "is a belief in god or gods and it is also an organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, and rules used to worship a god or group of gods." Worship is the act of showing respect for a god or gods. Therefore, religion is the rules that define how a faith is practised and worship is the act, part of the service of that god or gods. Cooper et al., in the book *Ismael My Brother*, say: "Religion is a human activity, an effort to reach out to and know God, which at best leads us to find and to worship Him. But at worst, however, it can go horribly wrong and can be influenced by evil and demonic powers" (13).

Everywhere there is man on earth, there is religion and a form of worship. For example, in countries where Hinduism is practised, you will often see people doing Puja. This ceremony may include making offerings to their gods in the form of coconuts, flowers, and apples. A priest applies a spot of red or yellow pigment, the tilak to the foreheads of the believers. Millions of people flock each year to the River Ganges to be purified by its waters.

In Catholic countries, people pray in churches and cathedrals while holding a crucifix or a rosary. The beads of the rosary are used for counting prayers offered in devotion to Mary. And it is also not

difficult to identify nuns and priests, distinctive in their black garb. In protestant lands, chapels and churches abound, and on Sunday, parishioners usually put on their best clothes and congregate to sing hymns and hear sermons. Often, their clergy wear black suits and different clerical collars. In Islamic countries, you can listen to the voices of Muezzins, the Muslim criers, who make the call from minarets five times a day; summoning the faithful to the salat, or ritual prayer. Traditionalists go to shrines where they carry out rituals to evoke the spirits of their ancestors to bless their farms, children, or heal them of sicknesses and diseases, etc. In 1890, a Scottish expert in ancient folklore, James Frazer (1854 - 1941), published the influential book, *The Golden Bough*, in which he argued that religion grew out of magic.

Indeed, the practice of religion in post-colonial era has gone horribly wrong and influenced by evil and demonic powers. As religion garnered more followers and church branches increased, immorality, sexual promiscuity, violence, anarchy, corruption, bad leadership, crime and atheism also increased at an alarming proportion. In this era, many Christian faithfuls have strong faith in the abilities of their pastors, and the pastors hold them spellbound with the miracles they perform. The pastors engaged in the unhealthy worship of God. The pastors also capitalize on the poverty, want, sickness, and psychological weaknesses of the people to milk their congregations dry. They heal the sick, give babies to barren women and are believed to expand the businesses of members among many other miracles. People go to church not because they want salvation, but because it is traditional to go to church every Sunday where they display their newest shoes and clothes and to seek miracles to achieve their goals. People pay heavily for miracles to acquire what their money cannot buy for them. The above reasons and many more form the basis for the study of the absence of hygiene in Christian worship as depicted by Ezech in the book in study.

## Theoretical Framework

The Post-Colonial theory has been adopted as the preferred theoretical orientation of this paper. Postcolonial Criticism deals with the literature of post-colonial states especially as it relates to colonial legacy. Lois Tyson in *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Manual*, holds that as a domain within literary studies, postcolonial criticism is both a subject matter and a theoretical framework. As a subject matter, postcolonial criticism analyses literature produced by cultures that developed in response to colonial domination from the first point of colonial contact to the present. To this extend the discussion on contemporary issues within the postcolonial state especially as it affects colonial legacy (of the Christian religion) is the concern of this research.

Postcolonial theory is a body of thought primarily concerned with accounting for the political, aesthetic, economic, historical, and social impact of European colonial rule around the world, especially in Africa from the 18<sup>th</sup> century through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Palestinian American cultural critic Edward Said was a significant figure of postcolonial thought, and his book *Orientalism* is often credited or cited as a foundational text of postcolonial theory or criticism. Other influential postcolonial critics include Homi K-Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Frantz Fanon, Nadine Gordimer, Wole Soyinka, and salmon Rushdie.

Post colonialism is also the academic study of the cultural legacy of colonialism and imperialism, focusing on the human consequences of the control and exploitation of colonized people and their land. It is a critical theory analysis of the history, culture, literature, and discourse of European imperial power. It represents an ideological response to colonialist thought, rather than merely described as a system that comes after colonialism.

On the other hand, post colonialism examines the social, political, and cultural narratives surrounding the colonizer and the colonized. In the wretched of the earth, the psychiatrist and

philosopher Frantz Fanon analysed and medically described the nature of colonialism as fundamentally destructive – its societal effects, the imposition of a subjugating colonial identity are harmful to the mental health of the native peoples, who were subjugated into colonies.

Thus, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), epitomizes the early epistemologies- post-colonial as a counter-narrative to Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* (1902) and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902). J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986), in the same light, represents a revision of Daniel Defoes *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). These are western writers' Texts, which portray distorted images of Africa and its people.

Postcolonial criticism, therefore, takes as part of the objectives the critique of “colonial ethos” reflected in “colonial texts” beyond the claims of counterbalancing the dominant discursive ethos of the west. Post-colonial African writers also foreground the political tensions in their emergent independents.

Edward Ako, focusing on the thematic preoccupations of postcolonial literature, observes that post-colonial writers and critics deal with the problems of slavery, suppression, caste, race, representation, place, and responses to the influential master discourse of imperial Europe. Such include history, philosophy, literature and linguistics, and the fundamental experience of speaking and writing by which all these come into being.

According to Wilfred Cartey in *Modern African Poetry and The African Predicament?* Post colonialism, therefore, is a literary approach that gives a kind of psychological relief to the people (the colonized) for whom it is born. The focus of the postcolonial critic is the capitalistic and exploitative method of a “superior” nation (colonizer) by Lording itself over a less privileged country (colonized), which leads to the impoverishment of the later. The concept of colonialism has political, economic, and cultural implications. Also, religion is one of the legacies left behind by the colonial masters and it is a subject that is still practiced and as a matter of fact takes a central page in the emergent African post-colonial nations. This is the focus of this study. Cartey says:

The whites who came from Europe to Africa filled different positions in colonial societies. They were governors, administrators, and road builders, ministers of God, merchants or landowners. The natives turned alternately to one group and then to another, but soon he discovered that with none of them could he escape brutality or find relief from exploitation. The material exploitation of the colonial administration was no harsher than the spiritual domination exercise by the missionaries. (8-9)

The Africans lamented the attitudes of the post-colonial leaders, especially the Christian missionaries, is portrayed by Chinua Achebe in his novel, *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer at Ease*. Things were no longer at ease in Africa as a result of the coming of the white man who put his knife and put asunder what held them together by his new religion.

As earlier stated, the Africans plight in the colonial era was organized by the material gods of the white man, as embodied in the trinity of imperialism, capitalistic exploitation, and militarism. Besides these forces, there were the cultural ones that were spiritually and psychologically exploitative in the sense that they tried to remould the Africans anew. It was against this that J.H Oldham warned in *Modern African Poetry and African Predicament* that:

No more fatal mistake could be made than to suppose that the west alone has something to give, and the Africans have nothing to do but to receive. The Africans is not clay to be cast into western moulds but a living type which must develop in accordance with its own Ezech and express it native genius. (6)

Despite this warning, however, colonial forces, especially the Christian religion with its education, not only impose cultural self-anew on the Africans but also undermined his own indigenous culture as P. C. Lloyd correctly put it in *Modern African Poetry and African predicament* that “The missionaries introduced to the rural areas of west Africa a faith with a new cosmology, in which ancestors and native deities had no place.” (6).

## Synopsis

In the novel, Ezeh portrays and exposes the absence of hygiene in Christian worship occasioned by the teachings and the practices of post-colonial spiritual leaders. *Your Church, My Shrine* is a fictitious novel written in 2017. The exciting story in the novel is set in a dual world: a barbarian land called Mbabama and a modern country called Nigara, with its capital city known as Sogal. The protagonist of the novel is Pastor Jeremiah Isaac, a charismatic pastor who dominates the social and religious sphere in Sogal city.

He was formerly one Moubundu Odoukpa, a young illiterate priest of a heathen deity called Odoukpa, before he got fed up with the idolatry ridden village life. With the help of his childhood friend, Anthony, he goes to the city, gets educated and converts to Christianity. Pastor Jeremiah, due to his zeal for the new found faith, becomes an assistant pastor to pastor John and not long after, agitations starts over materialism and privileges: "How come Pastor John owns four cars, and you don't have even a bicycle? Asks Deborah, Pastor Jeremiah's wife." (Provide the page) This is the beginning of pastor Jeremiah's epochal Odyssey as he later breaks away to form his own church, named "Miracle Makers church of God," in Sogal city.

Life becomes good for pastor Jeremiah and his wife, but miracles which people are looking for are not happening. And worshippers begin to stay away from Miracle Maker's church of God. Again, Deborah, his wife, pressures him into finding the secrets of acquiring powers to perform miracles by all means. That is how Pastor Jeremiah finds himself in faraway Mbabama forest, claiming to go to America on missionary training, leaving his wife, church and everything behind in Nigara to seek magical powers to perform miracles.

The journey to Mbabama is not as easy as the natives are not friendly to strangers- the natives are even cannibals. Pastor Jeremiah arrives Mbabama as a Christian missionary, but his real mission is to meet Ngabamu, a dreaded powerful native doctor. Pastor Jeremiah

endears himself to the natives of Mbabama, learning to speak their language, organizing a church fellowship and teaching them the Bible while plotting on how to get to see the native doctor Ngabamu somewhere in a deeply secluded forest. In the course of grafting himself into Mbabama community, Jeremiah also engages in sexual affairs with Biwaki and Tumaki, two alluring native women.

Eventually, through the help of Takuma, the son of the native doctor (who has become pastor Jeremiah's convert), he gets to see the legendary Ngabamu in his fearsome dark enclave called Zaza. This is where the pastor encounters the most outlandish experiences of his life in his quest to acquire powers to perform miracles. As part of the rituals, he butchers a new-born baby, lays on a decayed corpse, gouges out the eyes of a blind child, destroys the legs of a lame man and drinks blood.

His empowerment demands that he must sacrifice a human being every year to renew his new powers and it must be someone he loves most and he gives his wife, Deborah. He must also call certain names of gods during service in church for miracles to happen. Pastor Jeremiah discovers that the names of the various gods he must call on to perform miracles sound like the language of speaking in tongues routinely performed by Pentecostal pastors. His own version goes like this:

Agazzama - grabba - matta - patta - aramako - sakama - magama! He wonders if names of dark powers are what some pastor use as "speaking in tongues" back in Sogal city to bewitch people.

By the time the newly empowered pastor Jeremiah eventually leaves Mbabama, he has impregnated Biwaki, the native woman and is taking her with him back to Nigara. He wonders how to explain to his wife, church leaders and other people in Sogal who know him as a popular pastor. The fact that his marriage to Deborah has been childless does not help the matter. Meanwhile, back in Sogal, Deborah has been sleeping with pastor Satin, an assistant pastor to her husband.



When pastor Jeremiah lands in Nigara, he performs his first miracle of healing a paralyzed woman at the airport and the news spread like wildfire. The miracle hungry people in Nigara rush back to Miracle Makers Church of God as pastor Jeremiah resumes church service with diverse miracles. Stories of miracles happening with the explosion of miracles comes a torrential flow of fortune in offerings, tithes and gifts. Pastor Jeremiah becomes a billionaire, living large with his wife Deborah, who is not initially happy with Biwaki, a strange woman that her husband brings back from the demonic kingdom as a second wife, but accepts it as part of the sacrifice she has to make to attain fame and wealth.

### **Craving for Power and dominance**

The most paramount and remote causes of the absence of hygiene in the novel are power and material wealth as well as the seeking of miracles and instant solutions to the many problems faced by the populace. Things have indeed gone horribly wrong in our religious system and have been influenced by evil and demonic powers as Ezeh paints the picture of Pastor Jeremiah Isaac who is influenced by pressure from his wife Deborah to go and acquire power from the demonic kingdom to perform miracles to get fame and wealth like other pastors. Power tussle is a common struggle among pastors, as they try to rise to the place of prominence in society. They try to outsmart and outshine one another. According to Munroe:

Every person on earth ultimately is searching for two things in life, power and purpose. We seek these purpose and power in many ways; religion, politics, money, fame, notoriety, recognition, influence. Our pursuit of purpose and power is the primary source and motivation for development of religion. (13-14)

### **Miracle Seekers**

Knowing that the people need miracles, pastors used diverse means to ask for money and more money, promising miracles that are not there. The citizenry in urgent need of solutions, pile pressure on them, persistently demanding miracles. It degrades to a “no miracle, no church” situation. Consequently, the charlatans, in attempts to

save their false images and continue to perpetuate their heinous acts, turn to native doctors to acquire macabre and sinister powers, just to perform miracles.

In the novel, Ezeh states that some Nigerians do not blame the pastors because they do exactly what the society wants. The society does not seek salvation from the church. It wants to satisfy its immediate needs. People pay heavily for miracles to achieve their goals. People pray and beg for miracles to acquire what their money cannot buy for them. Ezeh in the novel states that:

Pastors smile to the bank as they receive money for miracles yet to be performed and for miracles perceived to have been performed. In Nigara, Miracles are for sale. Miracles are sold for millions of Nigara shillings. Pastors, therefore, seek miracles at all costs because possessing the power to perform miracles was the only way to achieve their mission in religion, and their mission was clearly money-making. (164)

### **Insatiable wealth**

In the novel, Insatiable wealth is another cause of the absence of hygiene explored by Ezeh. He explained how “every Sunday, messages of prosperity pour from the pulpit. The congregation was seldom taught to eschew evil, to shy away from sin and corruption. Prosperity and materialism were aspects of the present life that accentuated aesthetics and the pleasures of the flesh” (P.157). As the pastors preached prosperity, materialism and beautification of the body, they invariably encouraged earthly and bodily pleasures.

Kitause asserts that “The Nigerian prosperity preachers took advantage of the economic crises and the pauperization ...They fascinate the rich who seek security and protection as well as the poor in quest of breakthroughs and miracles of success with their acrobatic style of preaching.” (117) Also, Elue and Dim stipulate that “since people are always in the jeopardy of lack, being constantly anxious about their lives, their future, insecurity and poverty, they are easily brainwashed, duped and exploited by prosperity preachers owing to the allurements of these prosperity promises” (80). Ezeh states that;

The Pastors advised people to take goods for the less privileged in the society. The goods indeed were taken to the church as advised by the pastors, but the money never went to the poor. Even the poor were asked to give the little they had, and the pastors enriched themselves, at the expense of the poor. (158)

The problem with prosperity preachers is that they never care to know the source of their members' money. In the novel in study, Ezeh gives an example of a pastor of a particular church who does the unbelievable. A certain member of his church regularly pays in large sums of cash as tithe. He blesses the man but never asks for the source of his money. The pastor thanks God all the time for making such a rich and kind man a member of his church. He visits the man's palatial home regularly and always leaves with huge sums of money put in the booth of his car. He makes the man know that the parish door is open to him all the time. One night, as he sleeps, he hears persistent banging on his door, and he goes to know who it is only for a voice to say,

"I am the one, pastor, it is me, Theodore". The pastor did not hesitate. He opened the door and saw blood all over him, and his head was also bloody. Pastor cringed with shock and quickly made the sign of the cross. The man said, "The police are after me", he said anxiously, forcing his way into the pastor's sitting room. The pastor looked over his shoulder to be sure none of his stewards heard the noise and came to check. "What happened to you, to your head? What is in your bag?" The pastor queried, he took the bag and looked into it, his mouth fell at the number of wads of money he saw. "What did you do?" he asked, shock written all over his face. The man kept mute for a while and then whispered, "The police are after me" ... "why are the police after you? Where did you get all this money from; at this time of the night?" the pastor asked... "The police shot at me", the man said... "Why?" the man replied, "Pastor, I am an armed robber", he confessed in desperation.... (161-163)

The pastors does about the source of the money that is brought to their church. This is exemplified by the Ezeh when he uses the character of a pastor who hides a killer in his house and shields him from the police because of the money.

The pastor goes to bed that night thinking about the south wing of his church that needs completion. He thinks it would not be a bad idea to put the money into the project. Though he knows killing is a heinous sin, and the man had inadvertently admitted that he killed, he decides he would pray to God to forgive both of them. He tells the man that he will not die. The police come later, and he tells them that no such person came to his house. He had cleaned all traces of blood and flushed down the toilet drain. (161-163)

This action of the pastors confirms: “Religion is shepherded by wolves in sheep clothing that had taken over the house of God and turned it into a marketplace for making money and spreading falsehood. They stole, cheated, lied, killed and committed all sorts of atrocities in the name of the Lord” (314).

### **Greed**

Lack of contentment is common among the pastors and members of the church. Preachers avoid topics that teach the rewards that await the righteous in heaven and the punishment that awaits evildoers in hell.

The novel shows that churches and Christians no longer believe in hard work but in manner that drops from heaven – if one pays his tithes and is committed to giving an offering. This fascinates them, and they are enthralled by the myriad miracles that apparently take place daily. In the novel, Ezech narrates the story of a businesswoman who gives ten thousand shillings as tithe because she had done some good business. She also gives a huge sum in offering to thank God for his mercies and favour. The congregation rises up and applauds her tithe when it is announced. After the service, the pastor corners her and asks if she is sure she gave ten per cent of her profit. He reminds her of what became of those who cheated God. Also, members are threatened with severe repercussions if they fail to pay tithes and more so if they fail to pay the right percentage. Ezech said; “in many of those churches, members were barred from entering the church because they did not pay tithe” (158). In some other churches,

names of defaulters are announced, and they are asked to borrow from friends to pay tithe and give an offering. One pastor tells his congregation that; “anyone who failed to pay his/her tithe would die”, (158) another one sermonizes that; only those who pay their tithes receive miracles from God” (158) – he explains that paying the tithe shows faith and only faith begets miracles. The churches find every means to tactfully coerce members to part with their hard-earned money. “Offerings were collected several times in the course of one service. If it was not for the church building, it is for the repair of the church borehole” (158). This action of post-colonial preachers is expressed when Wa Thiong’o & Ngugi Wa Mirii in their play, *I will marry when I want* asks through Kiguunda that, “Are we the rubbish heap of religion? Wangeci responded by saying that, “the ones that came from America recently, those ones: their Harambe is not local, they say you take them a tenth of all you earn or harvest. Even if it’s the tenth of the maize or beans, you have grown in your small shamba” ... they conclude by saying that, “all that Harambe, To America” (9-10).

All this shows that the relevant gospel is wrongly interpreted by preachers to suit their purposes. They teach the people not to worry about salvation which is for tomorrow, according to Matt. 6:34. Rather, they encourage people to worry about prosperity and materialism which they can achieve immediately. The most hypocritical thing is that the pastors never stop quoting the Bible saying, “No weapon fashioned against me shall prosper”, yet they surround themselves with bodyguards and with sophisticated weapons. They make sure that the convoy of vehicles that make up their escort are all customized bulletproof cars.

### **Adultery**

Adultery is one of the manifestations of the absence of hygiene as depicted in the Novel. When Pastor Jeremiah goes to Mbabama, he becomes promiscuous. Promiscuity means having a lot of different sexual partners or relationship. Pastor Jeremiah, in spite of his

religious belief and his claim that he comes to Mbabama to introduce to the cannibals his God, he starts sleeping with the native women especially, Biwaki, the woman he heals her baby (52 – 57). As a result, the woman becomes pregnant for him, and he takes her to Nigara as a second wife after accomplishing his mission (288).

Also, we witness the case of adultery between Pastor Satin who is Pastor Jeremiah's Assistant Pastor and Deborah the wife to pastor Jeremiah. The affair eats so deeply into her that she does not know what to do when her husband returns. When she summons the courage to call off the affair, Pastor Satin refuses and says they should rather get married. "They were about the same age, and there was nothing wrong to have marriage in their agenda, so long as their chemistry work" (290-291). Though he knows she is married to pastor Jeremiah, and he (Pastor Satin) works with the pastor, he does not bother.

Lizzy, another character in the novel, confirms the subject of adultery among church leaders and members when she tells her story

Talking about pastors, I was in church the other day, and the pastor asked me to stay back after service, he said he had a message for me from God... when I went, he said he had noticed that I was looking very pretty lately. I smiled and thanked him... then, he asked what I would give to the Lord for the good work he is doing on my body. I told him I give an offering, pay my tithe and ceaselessly praise him in prayers... then he said that was not enough... have you thought of giving this beautiful body to the Lord through his servant for what he is doing with your body?... I told him I don't understand. Then he explained that they, as workers in the vineyard of the Lord, need to eat of the harvest of the Lord... I told him I still don't understand his parables. Then he said, you need to give this beautiful body of yours to me for the lord... he advanced at me with intent to touch my breasts, but I slapped him hard, very hard... he was licking his wounds as I left his office. (314 – 315)

## Idolatry

Idolatry is going after strange gods which is also considered by the Christian faith as apostasy. Apostasy in Christianity is the rejection of Christianity by someone who formerly was a Christian.

Pastor Jeremiah and his wife Deborah commit acts of apostasy by going to the demonic kingdom to collect powers to perform miracles, thereby denying the power and miracles of Jesus as the son of God. Pastor Jeremiah confirms this when he tells Ngabamu, the medicine man, that he merely gambled with Biwaki's baby's sickness because he needed to be accepted by the natives (153). Also, he is asked by the medicine man to kill a baby in order to obtain powers to give barren women children. He does this without a second thought which is also contrary to the Christian commandment not to kill (143). He goes through many rituals including laying on a dead man for him to raise the dead. When he calls the dead man's name, which is 'Grabba', the dead will come to life. The medicine man instructs him that anytime he wants to raise the dead, he should call on Agazzama three times, the miracles are not to call on Jesus, but Agazzama who gave him the power. He is strictly warned not to mention the name of Jesus, or if he must, he should call on Agazzama first (141-152). He also gives his wife, Deborah, as a sacrifice for his continual ritual activities. This is what Apostle Paul is warning against when he says

This know ye also that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, (religion) but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. 2 Tim.3:1-5

## Lies

Pastor Jeremiah lies to Takuma, which is another symbol of the absence of hygiene. Pastor Jeremiah lies not knowing that Takuma is aware of the love affair the pastor has with Tumaki that leads to leaving his Bible and Tumaki's headgear in the church. The boy stresses further that,

there was also a woman's headgear in the church. Jeremiah's heart skipped three beats. Shaking his head, he shuttered again, "it is...could it...maybe a woman forgot it". Nodding his head with

confidence, “you cannot tell with women”. But the boy says, “It could be Tumaki’s headgear” ... “I saw her down the road”. Jeremiah asked the boy, “you saw her?” he turned, went into the room and dropped on the bed. It dawned on him that the boy knew he was covering something. (234-235)

Pastor Jeremiah and his wife tell many more lies to cover their evil acts.

### **Hypocrisy**

Hypocrisy depicts the absence of hygiene in the novel. Ezech exposes that Nigarans go to church not because they want salvation but because it is traditional to go to church every Sunday, where they display their newest shoes and clothes. In Nigara, it is difficult to know which church is good and which church is bad. “To all right-thinking Nigarans, it was clear that ninety-nine per cent of the churches and pastors were not honest and were only after the money in the system” (154). Pastor Jeremiah on returning to Nigara. People are cheering and calling him “Your Holiness”. He knows that the power he is coming with is not from God, yet he hypocritically responds “... we praise his Holy name. Only God gives us the power to help humanity” (332).

In the novel, elderly Nigarans weep for a country that has lost her focus and is heading for destruction. They recall that as small boys, it was the desire to go to heaven that propelled them. They never missed church services because that was like saying, “one had chosen hell. It was the desire to go to heaven that made one do the right things. It was the hunger for salvation that only existed in heaven that if one did not behave properly, and he was told he was not going to heaven, he quickly retraced his steps” (156). Ezech exposes that hypocrisy has become an in-thing in the churches. People act and say things they don’t mean in relation to their relationship to God.



## **Greed**

Greed is the desire for more, lack of contentment. This is seen in the character Deborah, the wife of pastor Jeremiah, how she pushes her husband to deviate from the true worship of God because she wants to be and to remain in the limelight. She firstly asks her husband to leave pastor John's church to start their own so that she will be called, "the wife of a General Overseer". When things begin to turn upside down, she again pushes her husband to go to the demonic kingdom to acquire the power to perform miracles so that they can be rich. She also accepts her husband's second wife which is against the Christian dogma to satisfy her greed.

## **Loneliness**

Loneliness is experienced as a consequence of the absence of hygiene in religious worship. Pastor Jeremiah travels to look for powers to perform miracles. He overstays the agreed three months and becomes lonely. The consequence is his extra-marital affairs (54-57). Deborah, his wife becomes lonely and has a sexual affair with their assistant Pastor, Satin "they were the same age, and ...their chemistry work...she let him in at a quarter to five o'clock in the morning, she did not want the embarrassment it would cause her, not when she wanted the affair kept as secret as possible" (289-298).

## **Sickness and Death**

Sickness and Death are also consequences of absence of hygiene in Christian churches explored in the novel. Deborah discovers that her husband wants to use her as sacrifice for his powers and kills herself. Biwaki whom pastor Jeremiah impregnated while in the demonic kingdom cannot deliver the baby and she dies with the pregnancy. Pastor Jeremiah also wakes up early Sunday morning, as usual, to prepare for service. As he makes to stir in bed, he cannot move his legs. Thinking he had cramps, he raises his body from the bed and tries to massage his legs, but there is no feeling as he touches his legs. When he realises that his efforts to move his legs are futile, he

gets alarmed. Making to move out of the bed, another attempt at trying to see if the legs are really bad; he cannot. He tries to get a stronghold of his mind, making an effort not to panic. He says, “after all, he did have cramps once in a while. They got so bad sometimes that he could not use his legs for three minutes. But after five minutes that seem like eternity without regaining the use of his legs, he knows he is in trouble” (379). In the end, pastor Jeremiah can neither see, speak nor walk. “The empire he had dreamt of building through the miracle he acquired from demonic kingdom collapses” (379-422).

The end result of the absence of hygiene in Christian worship is therefore shame, pain and death. The Christian faith preaches that the wages of sin is death as exposed by Ezech in the character of pastor Jeremiah and his wife, Deborah. The vice that has eaten deep into the Christian faith and worship as depicted by Ezech must be addressed so as to allow for true worship of God. That way, hard work and discipline can be inculcated into the society of Christians and other religions in our contemporary society creating a viable, progressive society.

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