PERSPECTIVES ON CHURCH GIVING IN GOMBE, NIGERIA

OGUNRINADE ADEWALE OLUKAYODE
Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences,
Gombe State University, Gombe, Nigeria
Email Add: wale.ogunrinade@gsu.edu.ng
ORCID ID: 0009-0008-5245-3008

AJIJI DANJUMA MARK
Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences,
Gombe State University, Gombe, Nigeria
Email Add: markdan4reel@gmail.com
ORCID ID: 0009-0001-7841-0224

DOI: https://doi.org/10.64633/wissj.v9i7.35

Keywords

Church giving, Tithes and offering, honesty and answerability,Gombe

Abstract

Research Problem:
Previous studies about tithing and seed sowing have emphasized a lot on the theology of the practice, the benefits of paying and the disadvantages of defaulting vis-à-vis the scriptural legislation. Beyond the aforesaid, there now exists issues and questions relating to the morality of the practice. These are about the appropriateness and efficacy of the act. This paper therefore examined these issues with a view to identifying the perceptions, receptions and the motives of the givers and the skeptics.
Methods:
Three denominations in Gombe city were selected for the study namely the Mainline (Catholic Church), the Evangelical (Evangelical Church Winning All, aka ECWA) and the Pentecostal (The Living Faith Church). These churches were purposively sampled for primary data gathering. A questionnaire was distributed to one hundred and fifty (150) purposively selected respondents across the three denominations per block, fifty (50) copies per each denomination. Secondary data was gathered through the review of textbooks, journal articles, projects/theses, bulletins, pamphlets, diaries, and Nigerian newspapers, among other sources. Data was analyzed using simple percentages, content analysis, and ethnographic summaries.
Results:
About perceptions,many Christians considered tithe and seed offering as obligatory and a ritual to be carried out even if no reward accrues. Some of them see the reward as heavenly treasured while others believe the rewards are both here and hereafter.They believed that there are consequences for defaulting. Skeptics believed that church leaders have unduly manipulated this means of funding to exploit gullible contemporary Christians. Payers' responses towards tithing demonstrated

that Christiansought to pay and not question or doubt the giving legislation.Skeptics felt thatparting with one-tenth of income was economically unrealistic today,not to mention the inordinate and selfish expenditure of the fundsby church leadership. They also claimed that tithing was only ingrained in the Old Testament, whereas not emphasized in the New Testament as a legal command. Tithe payers are motivated by reward, spiritual fulfilment and love of God to be able to offer it. Skeptics feel that God neither needs nor spend money and God would not solicit for man's commitment by testing his greed or generosity. They further felt that the practice had outlived its age and was now used by the contemporary church to exploit givers.

Conclusion:

This study revealed the perspectives of church giving, while portraying a rather objective picture of how church givers think, what skeptics feel and how to perpetuate church giving in an increasingly challenging economy as Nigeria's.Giving of tithes, offering, seed sowing and first fruit generally have spiritual connotations and interpretations.Givers or donors operate within these compasses.Donors and church leaders will continually be challenged at convincing skeptics when allegations of misuse, exploitation and insincerity of fund disbursement are unresolved.Transparency should therefore be encouraged in relation to collection and disbursement of church offerings.

1.1 Introduction

The current discussion within the Nigerian church context centres on the contentious topics of tithes and various forms of offerings, including seed sowing. These have attracted significant attention in both social and print media. This contentious discourse contrasts conservative traditionalists, who fervently support the continuation of these practices as obligatory for Christians, with reformist dispensationalists, who argue for their cessation, claiming that the law's demands have been satisfied through Jesus (Croteau 1-3). Exploring the historical context, researchers such as Warren (1993, referenced in Ehioghae 144) have confronted analogous theological enquiries.

This philosophical conflict resulted in the dismissal of tithe practices in Europe, which then had a revival from 1873 to 1906, spurred by significant texts recognised as "the foundations for the tithing movement" (Croteau 30). Henry Lansdell's foundational article, "The Sacred Tenth" (1906), is a pivotal contribution to this rebirth, giving him the esteemed designation of "the father of modern tithe" (Croteau 32-36).

Notwithstanding these historical precedents, a current surge of scriptural intellectuals, aptly termed "Modern Renaissances" by Ogunrinade, contests the conventional story, fervently claiming the lack of scriptural foundation for tithing or seed sowing among adherents of Christ. Ogunrinade compares the current intellectual movement to the 14th-century Renaissance, emphasising a transition from challenging the church's scriptural interpretations to a deeper critical examination of scripture itself (Ogunrinade, Lecture).

The intensity and prevalence of these discussions across many locations and denominations highlight the necessity of this research endeavour. The discussion during the Renaissance was ignited by the need to discern the distinction between scriptural teachings on

the subject and the knowledge the church intended for the laity. The prevailing issues around tithes and offerings, in relation to the current economic difficulties faced by Nigerians, are purportedly contributing to the intensification of the argument at this time. Current literature and analyses on church tithing and offerings have neither addressed the perspectives of donors who support this practice, nor those sceptics who question it and their reasoning for doing so at this time. This study has discovered a gap to address.

From a theological perspective, scholars such as Babbs (24-197), Peck (12-92), and Rigby (17-20) have examined the concepts of tithing and sowing seeds as acts of duty and obedience to divine command, whereas scholars like Vischer (9-12), Babbs (24-30), and Lansdell (1952; cited in Croteau 31-34) have focused their research on the historical context. Adeboye (2011:53), Oyedepo (2011:91), Smith (1971:73), and Roberts (1985:13) have concentrated mostly on the individual advantages of tithes and offerings. This feature is the reason various critical perspectives are emerging to challenge the legitimacy of paying tithes and offerings. These critics asserted that churches and Christian spiritual leaders in modern Nigeria have excessively prioritised financial gain in their teachings, thereby reaping monetary rewards at the price of credulous followers who suffer the consequences.

This research investigates the economic concerns related to tithes and offerings in Nigeria, particularly in Gombe, aiming to discern the sentiments of contributors regarding their motivations, potential rewards, and regrets. The existing literature has not previously addressed this issue, rendering this work significant and filling a vacuum in knowledge.

The primary aim of this research is to examine the prevailing concerns related to tithes and offerings. The primary purpose is to analyse the significance and characteristics of tithing and seed sowing as depicted in scripture, while the secondary objective is to empirically assess the perceptions, receptions, and preferences of Christians across various religious denominations regarding tithes and offerings.

This paper analysed the perspectives of both donors and sceptics regarding tithes, offerings, and seed payments within the church, focussing on their comprehension of the practice, their responses, and their motivations for contributing or abstaining, in order to assess the future viability of this practice.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Why has the traditionally accepted practice of church contributions, such as tithing and seed-sowing, become a contentious issue among Christians in Nigeria today? Current research and concerns with tithe and seed sowing have concentrated on the theological viewpoint and the associated benefits that arise from rigorous adherence to this scriptural mandate. Controversies presently arise regarding the obligation, efficacy, relevance, and morality of this practice and the utilisation of its revenues. Nevertheless, there has been a lack of specific scholarly focus on the aforementioned, hence intensifying the disputes and exacerbating the existing ambiguities. This paper analysed the challenges in Gombe to determine the commitments of church donors, the significance and value of the contributions, and the ethical considerations linked with them in an increasingly hard economy. This aims to emphasise the potential of this approach inside the church in the near future.

1.3 Research Objective

i. To identify why payers of tithes and offering are doing it committedly and as well why

skeptics are questioning this practice today

ii. To investigate the worthiness or importance the payers of tithes and offering attach to fulfilling this obligation

iii. To examine the motives of the donors or givers of tithes and offering and also that of the skeptics whodoubted this practice

1.4 Research Methodology

For this study, three church denominations were chosen: the Mainline (Catholic Church), the Evangelical (Evangelical Church Winning All, abbreviated as ECWA), and the Pentecostal (The Living Faith Church). These churches were intentionally selected for primary data collection. The major data collection instrument was structured questionnaires. A questionnaire was administered to one hundred and fifty (150) intentionally selected respondents across the three currencies per block, with fifty (50) copies allocated to each denomination. Secondary data was obtained via reviewing textbooks, journal articles, theses, bulletins, pamphlets, diaries, and Nigerian newspapers, among other sources. The data was examined by basic percentages, content analysis, and ethnographic summaries. The selected churches are distinguished for their substantial representation of educated individuals, business professionals, and salaried employees from many ethnic groups throughout the country. The research timeframe spans from 2013 to 2023, coinciding with the era during which these debates were prominent in various media. This study may elucidate and enhance the current understanding of the subject matter.

1.5 Conceptual Clarification

Church Offering

In the context of this study, a church offering is defined as a financial contribution that is willingly provided or donated. While the concept of offering encompasses the donation of various resources, including time, talents, and material commodities, this work will confine its definition to cash contributions. It is the financial contribution made to concretely demonstrate a believer's faith, confidence, and dedication to God's love and to promote the advancement of His mission. The phrase "offering" in this book denotes all offerings, including tithes, seed planting or seed-faith, first fruits, and others.

2.1 Broad Concept of Offering

The term "offering," originating from "offer," denotes the act of presenting something to another, frequently employed by religious adherents to indicate a gift bestowed, particularly to God (Hornby 2016; referenced in Kitause&Achunike 8). Kitause and Achunike differentiate between offering and tithing, contending that offering constitutes voluntary contributions made subsequent to the payment of tithes (8). The Oxford English Dictionary Online defines "offering" as “something presented or sacrificed to God, a god, a saint, etc., in worship or devotion; a thing given as an expression of religious homage; a sacrifice; an oblation” (Cited in Oras 127). Merriam-Webster defines it as the act of presenting something, particularly a ceremonially presented sacrifice in worship, or a contribution to sustain a church or religious institution (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Certain scholars often associate the phrase "offering" with "sacrifice," while there is contention regarding the overall relationship between these notions. Baaren thinks that offering represents the essential component of sacrifice (Cited in Oras 130). The

differentiation and use of these concepts in particular instances are contingent upon the writer's perspective and context (130). Garrett asserts that the Old Testament centres on a system of sacrifice offerings conducted by priests to expiate the sins of Israel. The offerings consist of the burnt offering, grain offering, peace offering, purification offering, and reparation offering. In modern times, several forms of offerings are typically solicited or gathered in churches worldwide, including Nigeria. Garrett, Kitause, and Achunikecategorise these offerings under various designations, including free-will offering for church worship, kingdom promotion offering to support divine endeavours (such as construction projects), prophetic offering for anointed emissaries, needy offering to aid the impoverished, sacrificial offering for financial transformation or church construction, and thanksgiving offering to express gratitude to God for answered prayers or breakthroughs. This paper focusses on the offers of tithes and seed sowings (Garrett n.p, Kitause and Achunike 12).

2.2 Historical and Scriptural Concepts of Tithe

Ademiluka states that the Hebrew noun Ma'aseris, meaning 'tenth-part,' translates to 'tithe' in English. It is a cognate of the verb 'to tithe,' meaning 'to take the tenth share' (288). Askinglot claims that the Old English name for tithe derives from teogoþa, signifying 'tenth' (n.p). He stated that it constitutes one-tenth of a sum given as a contribution to a religious institution or as a mandatory tax to the government. Ademiluka references Tate, who defines tithe as "the giving or taking of a 'tenth part' of property, produce, or money for a specific institution or purpose" (288). Oyedepo defines tithing as a systematic allocation of one-tenth of all increases to God, or a designated percentage of one's increase that is saved for Him (Cited in Kitause and Achunike 8). The diverse definitions of tithes offered here are largely consistent with the common understanding held by Christians. We assert that Oyedepo's definition comprises two interpretations: the first being one-tenth of income, while the second remains unquantified. He characterises the second as a distinct segment that may exceed one-tenth. This aligns with current Christianity, particularly among Pentecostals, where novice Christians contribute one-tenth, whereas more established believers contribute a greater amount. This represents a further manifestation of the heightened commitment to church donations currently under discussion. We believe it is inexplicable how an individual could contribute more than one-tenth of their income, perhaps two-tenths or four-tenths, without experiencing economic collapse.

The tradition of tithing originates from the ancient Near East, where products or a tenth portion of specified items were offered to deities (Ottuh and Eboh 3). Snoeberger asserts that this practice has a lengthy history, recognised for millennia by both pagans and biblical people (Snoeberger 71). Lindell, as referenced by Snoeberger, contends that tithing was present in numerous ancient civilisations, such as Roman, Greek, Carthaginian, Cretan, Sicilian, Phoenician, Chinese, Babylonian, Akkadian, and Egyptian, tracing back to the earliest documented accounts of human history (Landsell 1-38; cited in Snoeberger 71). Ottuh and Eboh endorse this concept, observing that the practice of offering a 'tenth' in the Ancient Near East was prevalent, frequently bestowed upon monarchs and royal temples, spanning Mesopotamia, Syrian-Palestine, Greece, and extending to the Phoenician city of Carthage (Eliad 1987; quoted in Ottuh and Eboh 3). This indicates that the practice of tithing did not originate with Abraham, extending beyond religious confines to become a secular custom as well.

Tithing, a tradition that predates Abraham's calling, may not have originated with Genesis 14:20, given Abraham's prior pagan affiliations. Upon analysing Genesis 14:20, it seems that Abraham rendered a tithe on behalf of the monarchs rather than for his own benefit, since the confiscated goods were the property of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 14:22-23). Notwithstanding Abraham's vow to accept nothing, he restored ninety percent to the monarchs. Nally posits that Abraham's tithe was voluntary, resembling an act of thankfulness rather than a mandatory contribution (n.p). This reflects Jacob's pledge in Genesis 28:22, vowing a complete tenth to God in appreciation for safeguarding and abundance.

In the era of Moses, tithes were divinely commanded, necessitating the allocation of ten percent of agricultural yield, underscoring thanks and acknowledgement of God as the origin and proprietor of blessings (Lev 27:30-32). This provision supported the Levitical priesthood, festivals, and the impoverished (Num 18:20-32). Deuteronomy 12:11 stipulates that tithing was to be observed in the country designated by God, with its implementation commencing with the Israelites' entry into this promised land (Exodus 28:1-4). Notwithstanding the formation of the priesthood and Levitical order throughout the journey, tithing was not practiced during the exilic period (Schreiner n.p). Nehemiah subsequently imposed tithing regulations after the exile (Nehemiah 10, 12, 13), which were cautioned against by Amos and Malachi (Amos 4:4-10, Malachi 3:8-12). Ademilukaemphasises in Malachi 3:8-12 that the Israelites experienced repercussions such as agricultural failure for disregarding tithes and offerings. Malachi 10:8-12 delineates the most stringent tithe regulation, imposing grave repercussions for non-adherence. The discourse around these lines will be addressed subsequently (Ademiluka 285).

The New Testament, especially the Epistles, is markedly silent regarding the topic of tithing. Jesus addressed tithing in two statements (Matt 23:23 [parallels Luke 11:42] and Luke 18:12), inciting arguments among proponents and adversaries. The Apostles, excluding Hebrews, mostly refrained from addressing the issue, utilising it in Hebrews 7:5-10 to exemplify Melchizedek's priesthood. Matthew 23:23 has been a contentious verse, inciting arguments regarding tithe. The post-biblical era experienced a continuation of this dialogue, with early church fathers polarized—some supporting tithing, while others advocated for its abolition (Kitause and Achunike 9). Croteau provides a thorough and unbiased examination of tithe, analysing multiple perspectives. During the Ante-Nicene period (100-325), he observes the dialogues of Clement of Rome and Justin Martyr, emphasising contributions in the early church that correspond more closely with the model of giving presented in First Corinthians 16, rather than adhering to a rigid tithing framework (8-9).

His examination of the perspectives of several Church Fathers uncovers a range of opinions on tithing. Irenaeus posited that Jesus abrogated tithing, while Tertullian's portrayal of giving undermines the concept of mandatory Christian tithing. Origen expressly referenced his practice of not tithing, although Cyprian's comments imply that tithing was not common during his time. The DidascaliaApostolorum explicitly asserted that Christians were not required to tithe or offer first fruits. Jerome (385) and Augustine (400) supported tithing but regarded it as a concession relative to the New Testament's instruction to liquidate property for the welfare of the impoverished. Ambrose (374) and John Chrysostom (375) affirmed the necessity of tithing, while Epiphanius (370) compared tithing to circumcision, deeming it non-binding for Christians, although he supported

first fruits and oblations (Cited in Croteau 9-11).

The analysis indicates that tithing was not mandated in the New Testament as it was in the Old Testament. This perspective is the basis for those who contend that tithing is unsuitable due to its lack of reinforcement in the New Testament.

Croteau meticulously documents the historical development of tithing, observing that following the church Fathers, the apostolic successors refrained from addressing the issue. Tithing reemerged in 585 AD following the Second Synod of Macon, which designated it as a "obligatory Christian practice" (Croteau 12). In the Middle Ages (604-1517), tithing transitioned from a practice supported by ecclesiastical law to a requirement enforced by civil law, promoted by leaders such as Charlemagne, Offa, William the Conqueror, and Bernard of Clairvaux (Cited in Croteau 12-13). Popes instituted tithing regulations; however, dissent arose, with Thomas Aquinas, John Wycliff, and John Huss presenting alternative viewpoints (Croteau 13).

During the Reformation period (1517-1648), resistance to tithing arose, as German peasants, Martin Luther, and Anabaptists repudiated its obligatory character (Croteau 13:14). Huldreich Zwingli's and John Calvin's perspectives were marked by ambiguity; Zwingli ultimately embraced tithing, whereas Calvin's contemporaries, such as the Anabaptists, repudiated it (Croteau 16-17). The Post-Reformation period (1648-1873) exhibited a range of perspectives, including Roger Williams' endorsement of voluntary ministerial support and John Milton's opposition to the tithe. John Wesley advocated for sacrificial giving rather than a strict ten percent, while the English Parliament recognised ministerial support but dismissed tithing as an immutable law. Quakers, English Baptists, and others similarly repudiated the practice (Croteau 17-20).

In the late 17th century, ministerial support transitioned to taxation, and by the 19th century, tithing was abolished, as evidenced by the Tithe Act of 1836 in England. Newton J. Brown's 1833 dictionary in the United States explicitly declared that tithes had terminated. In the late 19th century, modern tithing experienced a resurgence due to academic research, resulting in renewed advocacy for its implementation (Cited in Croteau 28-36). Tithing remains a church concept, regarded as a compulsory divine mandate applicable to all Christians to the present day (Croteau 36-44). In modern times, particularly in Africa, specific denominations issue record booklets for tithe payments, indicating a diligent attitude to its practice (Cited in Kitause and Achunike 12). Some believe that transgressing this practice may result in serious consequences, including curses, impediments to material advancement, and even death (11-12). Some pastors assert that the payment of tithes functions as a passport to paradise, highlighting its spiritual importance (Cited in Kitause and Achunike 13). These extreme perspectives provoke enquiries over the persistence of the practice, inciting discussions and counter-discussions in reaction to recent worldwide and Nigerian media eruptions (Ehioghae 146). These diverse prevailing perspectives on the matter prompted us to assess and analyse the perceptions of donors in Nigeria and Gombe amidst the ongoing disputes.

2.3 Arguments about Tithing

The longstanding discourse on tithing, prevalent in Christian communities for centuries, has intensified over the past decade, potentially exacerbated by the internet, resulting in divisions within the global and specifically Nigerian church. One viewpoint asserts that tithe was solely applicable to the land and people of Israel under the Mosaic Law, using Deuteronomy 12:6, 11, and Nehemiah 10-13. This group advocates for

discontinuity, asserting that the church has transcended the confines of the Promised Land under the law of Christ (Rom 6:14), with Colossians 2:14 highlighting the annulment of the written code and its regulations pertaining to the church. Hebrews 7:12 substantiates this perspective by asserting, "When the priesthood changed, the law must be changed also." Malachi 3:8-12 is regarded as relevant solely to the Israelites under the Law of Moses, which contemporary Israelites no longer adhere to (Bamfo-Darko). Conversely, advocates of continuity contend that the church represents the new Israel, maintaining that all promises from the Old Testament are still applicable to the church (Mayo). This group asserts that tithing predates the Mosaic Law, as demonstrated by Abraham's payment of tithes prior to the establishment of the law. Matthew 5:17 is referenced to underscore Jesus' declaration that he did not intend to nullify the law, affirming its ongoing significance until its completion. Infantado contends that all scripture, whether from the Old or New Testament, serves as inspiration and is binding for Christians (2 Tim 3:16). Obembe perceives tithing as both a legal requirement and a spiritual act of worship, reverence, and devotion to God, highlighting Jesus' affirmation of the practice in Matthew 23:23 (with parallels in Luke 11:42). The assertion "you should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former" is understood as Jesus advocating for the ongoing practice (Mayo). Several prominent Nigerian ecclesiastical leaders are reported to have made the following statements:

Individuals who do not fully remit their tithes will not attain Heaven. Some individuals have instructed you that failing to pay your tithes will result in a lack of divine blessings. This is accurate, albeit somewhat graver. Failure to pay tithes results in exclusion from Heaven. What is the reason? Due to the absence of robbers in Heaven. The Bible designates individuals who fail to pay their tithes as thieves in Malachi 3:8. Tithing constitutes an unavoidable covenant responsibility. In its absence, God cannot reach you, since His law dictates that a harvest cannot occur without the prior sowing of a seed (Cited in Kitause and Achunike 11-14). The discussion regarding tithing among Nigerian church leaders transcends mere temporal benefits, with some positing that it may influence salvation and act as a safeguard against poverty and calamity. In contrast, proponents of discontinuity reference Matthew 23:23, contending that Jesus did not advocate for tithe (Ademiluka 297; in Schreiner n.p). This viewpoint asserts that when Jesus made the declaration, the new covenant had not yet begun (Matt 26:26-28). Ehioghae interrogates the pertinence of tithing for modern Christians, considering it an anachronism that ceased to be obligatory following Christ's event (147). Schreiber contends that Jesus, born a Jew under the law, satisfied its stipulations, and that the teachings of the Apostles affirm the discontinuity with the law (Romans 3:19-21, 4:14, Ephesians 2:15, Hebrews 7:11-12, 7:18-19, 8:7, 8:13). Referencing 2 Corinthians 3:6, Schreiber contends that pastors under the new covenant are empowered by the Spirit rather than constrained by the letter. Some argue that the context of Matthew 23 illustrates Jesus denouncing those who practise tithing within the seven miseries, as corroborated by Luke 18:12. They challenge the lack of tithe references in the Jerusalem council deliberations (Acts 15) and contend that the Apostles' reticence on the issue undermines the pro-tithing position (Hetrick n.p). Hetrick asserts that the Apostles frequently addressed money issues but did not reference or instruct on tithing. Certain academics refute the argument of quiet, asserting that the New Testament's seeming silence does not substantiate the termination of a practice, referencing John 21:25, which acknowledges numerous unrecorded activities of Jesus

(Ogunrinaden.p). The discourse around tithe payment is fundamentally anchored in Christian history, showcasing varied viewpoints on its persistence or cessation.

2.4 The Concept of Seed Sowing

The notion of seed sowing in Christianity is a problematic topic, inciting arguments among several Christian denominations and theologians. The practice of seed sowing, in contrast to tithing, lacks clear biblical justification. Advocates of this practice sometimes reference Genesis 8:22, which asserts, "As long as the earth endures 'seed times and harvest,' cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease," as a fundamental scripture for the notion of seed-faith (Kitause and Achunike 10). Moreover, passages such as Luke 6:38 and Acts 20:35 are sometimes referenced to advocate for seed sowing. The name for this activity encompasses "seed faith" or "seed of faith" (Kitause and Achunike 8). Akabike, Ngwoke, and Chukwuma characterise seed planting as the conviction that substantial financial or property contributions can induce God to realise one's aspirations (3).

Although there is no documented historical evidence identifying the precise origin of the Christian practice of seed sowing, scholars commonly concur that it became prominent among Nigerian Pentecostal adherents and likely infiltrated the Christian religious milieu through the Word Faith Movement during the 19th and 20th centuries (Akabike, Ngwoke, and Chukwuma 3; Kitause and Achunike 10). The Word Faith Movement, alternatively referred to as the Faith Movement, Faith-Formula, Word of Faith, Hyper Faith, Positive Confession, Name it and Claim it, or Health and Wealth Gospel, features notable proponents such as Kenneth Erwin Hagin, Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Oral Roberts, Robert Tilton, Charles Capps, Frederick K.C. Price, and John Avanzini, among others (Kitause and Achunike 10). Kitause and Achunike assert: The notion of seed-faith is employed when an individual faces a seemingly insurmountable challenge that has resisted all remedies. This practice is utilised when an individual seeks a breakthrough in a life difficulty; one then sows a seed of faith to a 'man of God' while requesting his prayers for the specific need at hand. The act of sowing seed is accompanied with the designation of the seed in faith, linking it to a specific issue that requires resolution. It is asserted that these 'anointed prayers' of the 'man of God' will directly confront the issue. Likewise, contributions are occasionally allocated to a specific church project to elicit particular blessings (12).

Seed sowing is generally undertaken with an eager and optimistic disposition, marked by a generous display of trust. Kitause and Achunike assert that following the initial act of enthusiastic generosity, the next phase requires the ongoing cultivation of the seeds. This entails a process of affirmative declaration, asserting what legitimately belongs to the individual, and sustaining an unwavering conviction in the tenets of seed faith (12). The dominant idea is that persons who exhibit faith through seed planting are more prone to attain success than those who abstain from this practice (Akabike, Ngwoke, and Chukwuma 3).

3.0 Analysis of Findings and Discussions

Here, the field study results are discussed, covering the following main segments namely:should it be made compulsory or optional",“does payment of tithes and sowing seeds yield varying benefits",“could neglecting them entail consequences" and, whether there should be transparency about how the proceeds is used.

3.1 Offerings in form of tithe payments and seed sowings should bemade compulsory or optional

Table 1: Every Christian is scripturally obliged to pay tithes and sow seeds

Label	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	127	87.0
Disagree	17	12.0
Indifferent	2	1.0
Total	146	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

The data presented in the table underscores a strong consensus among respondents, with 87.0% agreeing that tithe payments and seed sowings are rooted in scripture, thereby considering them obligatory within the church. Conversely, a minority of 12.0% disagrees with this perspective, while only 1.0% remains indifferent. The analysis encompasses a total of 146 respondents, comprising 80 (56.0%) males and 66 (45.0%) females. This data shows that the obligatory nature of paying tithes and sowing seed is popular among Christians in Gombe.

3.2 Paying tithes and sowing seeds yield varying benefits, while neglecting them entails consequences

Here, respondents reacted to whether tithing and seed sowing could result ingrowth, enhanced protection and lesser life crisis or non-payment could lead to adverse consequences. The responses of the respondents are outlined in the table below:

Table 2: Tithing and seed sowingenhances prosperity

Label	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	99	68.0
Disagree	42	29.0
Indifferent	5	3.0
Total	146	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

A dominant sentiment is evident among respondents in the above table, with 68.0% agreeingwhile 29.0% of respondents disagreeing and 3.0% remaining indifferent. This result shows that many Christians in Gombe feel that by engaging in these forms of

church giving, there could be positive changes in their finances and economies.

3.3 A Christian should not be inquisitive about grey areas surrounding tithing and offerings.

This section concentrates on analyzing responses regarding rights to ask questions about tithing and seed sowing. This research question becomes necessary as questions are arising about the practice while the posture of responses provided is either evasive or confrontational. The summarized responses are presented in the following table:

Table 3: Christians need not question the appropriateness or otherwise of tithing and seed sowing

Label	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	88	60.0
Disagree	48	33.0
Indifferent	10	7.0
Total	146	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

A significant majority of respondents, constituting 60.0%, support the notion that believers need not question the appropriateness or justification of tithing and seed sowings. Conversely, 33.0% of respondents disagree with this assertion, while 7.0% express indifference. This data suggests that for as much as 33% of respondents to be asking questions around church giving shows that the Christians are now inquisitive about what they give in the church.

3.4 Differing beliefs about the necessity and impact of these practices fuel the ongoing arguments

This section aims to explore the perception that arguments about tithing and seed sowing are coming up now in Nigeria and Gombe metropolis as a result of Nigeria's declining economic situation and overbearing attitudes perceived in some churches.

Table 4: Curiosity about tithing and seed sowing is partly attributed to dwindling economic situation and poverty

Label	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	102	70.0
Disagree	26	18.0
Indifferent	18	12.0
Total	146	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

Based on the data, a substantial 70.0% agree that certain Christians attribute the trending arguments about tithing and seed sowings to an increase in knowledge and socio-cultural awareness. In contrast, 18.0% disagree with this perspective, and 12.0% express indifference. The findings indicate a range of views within the surveyed population but it is clear from this data that the income of resident of Gombe Christians is an important determinant of what they give in the church. Their incomes are however determined by the economy of the city and Nigeria at large.

Table 5: Some Christians areskeptical towards paying offering and tithesbecause of the alleged greed of some churches and their leadership

Label	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	111	76.0
Disagree	27	18.0
Indifferent	8	6.0
Total	146	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

The data indicates a prevalent sentiment among respondents, with 76.0% agreeing that perceived overbearing attitude of the church contributes to indifference on the part of the members. Conversely, 18.5% disagree with this attribution, and 5.0% express indifference. The data here shows that some Christians perceive that monies donated to the church are not being judiciously expended. The percentage here is high and this shows that it should be unsettling.

3.5 Discussions

The provided data from the field results offers a thorough understanding of the intricate dynamics related to discussions on tithe and seed sowing across various Christian groups. The diverse perspectives presented in Tables 1 to 5 underscore the range of beliefs and attitudes among the 146 respondents. Regarding Table 1, which enquires about the necessity of tithing and seed sowing with this question: All Christians are biblically mandated to pay tithes and sow seeds, indicating that this practice is prevalent among Christians in Gombe, as it is throughout Nigeria. The table indicates that the majority of Christians likely contribute tithes and sow seeds in their respective churches. Another assumption, although not reflected in the data, is that some respondents may not actively participate in tithing and spreading seeds, although acknowledging the scriptural mandate. This response indicates that contributing to the church through the aforementioned methods remains prevalent despite ongoing arguments regarding its continuation. This illustrates that significant importance is ascribed to this practice, compelling Christians to persist in the absence of a monitoring system to enforce compliance or penalise transgressions. Some churches that distributed questionnaires utilise tithes and offering cards, while others allow members to respond based on their conscience. This indicates that Christians inherently possess the inclination to fulfil this as a voluntary spiritual commitment.

The responses from participants regarding Table 2 on the effectiveness of tithing and seed sowing in promoting prosperity indicate that the principle of giving to receive, as articulated in scripture, remains prevalent. Luke 6:38, which asserts that giving must

precede receiving, appears to significantly bolster the spirit of church giving. The text elaborates on the amount and weight of the reward; well-measured, compacted, agitated, and overflowing. It is evident that the reward for giving cannot be less than the contribution, but may indeed exceed it. This is regarded as the impetus for contributions during numerous church assemblies. Some churches have slogans such as “offering time, blessing time” and “givers never lack.” This is enthusiastically echoed whenever the offering bowl is ready to be presented. These motivational slogans significantly encourage donors to contribute with the expectation of bigger returns. Some individuals prioritise the incentive associated with donating to such an extent that they focus more on philanthropy than on enhancing their capacity to invest in their everyday enterprises for sustainability. This, however, reflects an unfavourable opinion of church donations. Some prioritise charitable giving to the detriment of fulfilling other Christian obligations. This reaction indicates that some Christians may choose to contribute primarily to augment their potential rewards, rather than from a sincere desire to serve without anticipating compensation. Some Christians, however, feel that the blessings from tithing and seed planting may be attained in heaven rather than on earth. The two tables illustrated the perceived consequences of participating in tithe and seed planting vs abstaining from these practices.

The third point asserts that Christians should not scrutinise the propriety of tithing and seed sowing, and is intended to evaluate Christians' sentiments regarding their comfort with church contributions. Churches and their leaders maintain that Christians should not question or mistrust contributions to the church. They additionally asserted that a Christian who engages in such behaviour is under the sway of diabolical illusion. Questions are arising from the curiosity of individuals who scrutinise the practice of churches accepting tithes and contributions in the 21st century. They asserted that the New Testament does not emphasise this method of giving to the same extent as the Old Testament. Their enquiries also focus on the lack of sensible and transparent expenditure of these funds' profits. In this study, we classify them as "sceptics or questioners." They exist both within and outside the church. Church leaders perceive them as instigators or provocateurs who are unwelcome in the congregation, and any church that accommodates them would seek to eliminate their presence. Their enquiries pertain to the suitability of this fund, the unreasonableness of the church leaders, particularly regarding their lack of accountability in fund disbursement, and the lavishness of these leaders, which they assert is at the expense of the church members who suffer the consequences. The churches targeted by these sceptics primarily include Pentecostal and independent denominations, particularly those led by a single founder. We believe that in the absence of clarity regarding religious donations, enquiries regarding the allocation of funds would persist indefinitely. We assert that the subject of giving inside the church is both limitless and inexplicable. It is a practice imbued with spirituality and reverence; thus, it cannot be entirely quantified in material terms.

Proceeding to the fourth research statement: It appears that individuals interested in tithing and seed planting may be linking these practices to the declining economic conditions and poverty. In this context, donating typically occurs when the item is accessible and the circumstances permit. Consequently, the relinquishment of your resources is contingent upon assessment and advantageous economic conditions. From this context, we discern that sceptics and certain contributors experiencing relapse are grounding their rationale for doubting church contributions. The donation capacity of numerous Christians contributing to the church

seems to be contingent upon the existing adverse economic conditions they face. When they are unable to fulfil their financial obligations, they reduce certain expenditures, including their gifts to the church. Simultaneously, ardent contributors to the church assert that economic downturns do not deter their generosity. They assert that they gain blessings and pleasures from making such offerings, which renders the motivations and resolve of these benefactors enigmatic. This is because a gift relinquishes ownership permanently, yet to assert that such a gift returns manifold through divine blessings is beyond ordinary explanation. This represents the underlying motivation and influence sustaining the continuity of church donations in Nigeria.

The results of the poll regarding the fifth item indicate that a majority of respondents concurred with the notion that some Christians are sceptical about making offerings and tithes due to perceived greed within certain churches and their leadership. This synchronicity is not implausible, given many view the church to be predominantly reticent regarding some purported atrocities within it. Some assert that the church in Nigeria possesses substantial financial resources, with just a select few reaping the benefits of its wealth. We see that churches in Nigeria, apart from the mainline and mission-oriented evangelical denominations, are typically linked to financial misappropriation and irresponsibility. Some lack a well-structured administration, resulting in inadequate internal controls. The churches predominantly belong to Pentecostal denominations, characterised by a leadership system centred on a founder figure whose decisions are paramount within the organisation. Church adherents frequently regard the pronouncements of these leaders as divine and infallible, thereby disregarding their excesses, which they attribute to God Himself. This condition may lead past donors to grow apprehensive about contributing to the church. Enhancing openness and accountability may improve the prospects for church donations.

The summations presented are from two perspectives. Firstly, in situations concerning the allocation of funds during economically challenging conditions, such as those currently present in Nigeria, objectivity is a critical consideration. Contemporary church members seek to understand the justification for their expenditures and the rationale underlying such financial commitments. Contributions to the church cannot be disregarded in this context. Secondly, the allocation of funds for tithes, offerings, or seed-faith inside the church is frequently ascribed to faith, which is not subject to empirical verification. This is why a definitive explanation of its rationale may be unattainable.

The data together illustrates a diverse array of views and perspectives within the surveyed group. The discourse on tithe and seed planting is shaped by elements including scriptural exegesis, anticipated advantages, repercussions, believers' entitlements, and external socio-economic conditions. The variety of responses emphasises the intricacy of these topics and stresses the necessity of open dialogue within the church to promote understanding and harmony. These findings can provide a basis for additional investigation and discussion regarding the importance of financial practices in religious communities.

3.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the outcomes of this study indicate that many Christians regard tithes and seed offerings as mandatory. They proceed without regard for any immediate benefits that may arise. The implication is that church donations are spiritual acts characterised by profound devotion that defies quantification. This mode of altruism is selfless, however they anticipate a recompense in the afterlife. The ethos of generosity is promoted in Nigeria, where donors provide without

anticipating immediate recompense, particularly not from the recipients of their benevolence. Sceptics are questioning due to uncertainty regarding current economic conditions and the lack of established openness and accountability in the disbursement of church monies. This necessitates that religious entities in Nigeria, particularly churches, maintain transparency regarding their financial intake and expenditures. This transparency would significantly mitigate doubts and bolster institutional confidence among church members and society as a whole. The primary motivation for contributors of tithing, seed faith, first fruit, and similar offerings is to give out of love for God. This mindset might foster and sustain love within society if every Nigerian embraced the principle of giving out of love for God and humanity. This will significantly eradicate selfishness, excessive emotional displays, and biases.

Reference

Adeboye, E.A. Austerity to Prosperity. Christ the Redeemer's Ministries, 2011.

Babbs, Arthur V. The Law of the Tithe: As Set Forth in the Old Testament. Revell, 1912. Web.

Ehioghae, M. Efe. Tithing and the Quest for Material Prosperity: A Critical Evaluation of Contemporary Trends in Nigerian Pentecostalism. AAMM 6, Babcock University, 2012. Web.

Miller, A. W. The Law of the Tithe, and of the Free-Will Offering. Presbyterian Publishing House, 1873. Web.

Lansdell, Henry. The Sacred Tenth or Studies in Tithe-Giving Ancient and Modern. Gorham, 1906. Reprint, Baker, 1952. Web.

Vischer, Lukas. Tithing in the Early Church. Fortress, 1966. Web.

Ogunrinade, Adewale O. Lecture. Gombe State University, 22 Mar 2021.

Oyedepo, D.O. All You Need to Have all Your Needs Met. Dominion Publishing House, 2011. Web.

Peck, Kenrick. The Universal Obligation of Tithes. Elliot Stock, 1901. Web.

Rigby, N. L. Christ Our Creditor: "How Much Owest Thou?" or The Tithe Terumoth: Its Philosophy, History and Perpetuity.News and Truth Publishing, 1895-1899. Web.

Roberts, O. Attack Your Lack. Abundant Life Publications, 1985. Web.

Ademiluka, Solomon O. A Study of Malachi 3:8-12 in Relation to Tithing in some Churches in Nigeria. Essays 33.2, 2020. Web.

Akabike, Gladys N., Peace N. Ngwoke, and Onyekachi G. Chukwuma. A critical analysis of tithe and seed sowing on Contemporary Christianity in Nigeria. HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies 77.1, 2021. Web.

Askinglot. "What is Biblical Meaning of Tithe?" 2020. Web.

Bamfo-Darko, Edward. Jews do not Pay Tithes Today. "Modern Ghana", 2017. Web.

Croteau, David A. A Biblical and Theological Analysis of Tithing: Toward a Theology of Giving in The New Covenant Era. Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2005. Web.

Ehioghae, Efe M. Tithing and the Quest for Material Prosperity: A Critical Evaluation of Contemporary Trends in Nigerian Pentecostalism. AAMM 6.143, 2012. Web.

Hetrick, Lon. Why the Apostles Didn't Teach Tithing (And Why You Shouldn't Feel Guilty About It). Average Us, 2010. Web.

Infantado, Joshua. What did Jesus Teach about Tithing? "Becoming Christian", 2020. Web.

Kitause, Rimamsikwe Habila and Achunike Hilary Chukwuka. A Historical Discourse on Tithing and Seed Sowing in Some Nigerian Pentecostal Churches. Journal of Humanities And Social Science18.3, 2013. Web.

Mayo, Ramon. Here are 3 of the Most Powerful Arguments for and against Tithe. "Urban Faith", n.d. Web.

Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. "Offering." n.d. Web.

Nally, R. Joseph. The New Testament Tithe? "Trade Mill", n.d. Web.

Obembe, Olanrewaju. The Power and the Blessings of Your Tithe Seed. "The Guardian", 2017. Web.

Ogunrinade, Adewale O. Personal Discussion. Gombe State University, 11 May 2021.

Oras, Ester. Sacrifice or Offering: What Can we see in the Archaeology of Northern Europe? Folklore 55, 2013. Web.

Ottuh, Peter O. O. and AkpotorEboh. A Philosophical Assessment of Tithing as a Tool for Tax Avoidance and Evasion in Nigeria, 2020. Web.

Schreiner, Thomas. 7 Reasons Christians Are Not Required to Tithe. The Gospel Coalition, 2017. Web.

Snoeberger, Mark A. The Pre-Mosaic Tithe: Issues and Implications. Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal 5, 2000. Web.