

Implication of Social Media on Pastoral Ministry in the Contemporary Time

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Article DOI:

10.48028/iiprds/esjprcd.v11.i2.06

Keywords:

Social Media, pastoral
Ministry,
Contemporary Time,
Implication

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Abstract

A satellite made by man encircles the earth. An electronic machine does the work of hundred men. Many people now being born will live longer than ever before. A hydrogen bombs capable of wiping out the largest city in the world has been tested. Sermons and teachings from international preachers and extraordinary gifted Christian teachers are now in the internet with website: Pastor.com. What is important is whether our competence in dealing with the products and instrument of technology and modernization as we have known it, has equipped us to cope adequately with what has been frequently termed “the second industrial revolution”. The situation and condition created by social media present philosophical, sociological and theological problems. Of course, and its processes are beyond the range of theological concern; nevertheless, the extent of its use and the rapidity of its adoption as a process, having run far ahead of our capacities to adapt to its consequences, have profound theological implications. As if this is not enough, what is termed the “third industrial revolution” through computerization is rapidly gaining ground. This paper will focus more on the negative implication of social media technological era on Christian ethnics especially pastoral ministry; it will not however fail to mention the positive implications and their challenges. This is from the background of evaluating the relevance of religion in contemporary society. Technology and religion are in tussle and the field of their contest is the society: Christianity and the church is their victim and Christians are vulnerable to the effects of these two elephants fighting. What do we do as Christians individually and as a corporate body? This is our challenge; come along to read about my own bit of contribution on this contemporary human/ Christian dilemma.

Background to the Study

Social media is a type of modern technology that include: facebook, twitter, instagram, whatapp, lig likim; snapchat, Kgo etc. It is man's effort to cope with his physical environment both that provided by nature and that created by man's own technological deeds, such as cities – and his attempts to subdue or control that environment by means of imagination and ingenuity in the use of available resources. We have come to think of technology as something mechanical, yet the fact remains that all technical processes and products are the result of the creativity imagination and man's palliative skills of human effort (Melvin et al 4). Pastoral ministry emphasis inculcation of moral values that has to do with principles of right and wrong in behaviour. It is a standard laid against which the behaviour of members or individuals is judged or evaluated. The knowledge of morals raised issues like moral law, moral principle, moral values etc. All these are closely related, hence moral values can be described as those norms, beliefs traditional rules, regulations, etc, acceptable by a given society or group to be the standard to adjudge what is right or wrong. They are standard of moral behaviour, norms with which our conduct should conform.

What is therefore showcase with pastoral ministry is simply understood as moral values defined in a variety of ways by scholars and theologians. The word “church” according to Wayne Grudem, (1994:853) “The church is the community of all believers for all time. In the New Testament, the word “church” may be applied to a group meeting in a private home or the group of believers in the universal church.

Positive Implication of Social Media on Pastoral Ministry

Social media has impacted positively on the society in which Christianity is a fragment. Technology is man's to cope with his physical environ but across all spheres of human endeavours it is as old as man. It is usually consider viewed chronologically. Therefore, what is modern technology is the language of this epoch which will later become obsolete and join its ancestors. Pastoral ministry in the contemporary church is our emphasis and how social media serve as a positive variable?

Its Impact on Individual Christian Values

The Great Liberator of Man: New drugs, better medical attention, and improved health standards have more than doubled the average life span of church members compared with a hundred years ago. There is a change of orientation from some traditional lifestyle that tends to deduce mortality. Modern technology has given an alternative to those silent killer devices that are embedded in our culture. This of course, has actually terminated wickedness that is perpetuated in disguise. Machines have released as from much of the backbreaking labor which previous ages absorbed most of man's time and energy. According to Ian G. Barbour (1970:62) “The ancient dream of a life free from suffering, famine, disease, and poverty is beginning to be fulfilled through the application of computer science. Social media seems to be the main source of hope for the third world of newly developing nations.” This is not to say technology is perfect in this aspect, but there has been a tremendous improvement on preservation of souls as it is taught in the Bible.

New Opportunity for Choice: Moderns technology has attracted urbanization. The positive impact of this is the liberation of the individual from static and confining traditions, he can assume mature responsibility for his own life, social and geographical mobility allows a greater choice of religious practice. Small-town life was actually very constricting and a person's choices were severely limited by his family status and the community's expectations. This liberation provides wide range of freedom of worship. It is not a must for a child to follow his parents to worship ancestral gods. Also, proliferation of ministries and denominations serves as an advantage of making a choice out of heresies and non-biblical decimal practices. It is however true that the pace of technology on urbanization is becoming uncontrollable even to Christians, but its impact cannot be undermined.

Edification of Personal Faith: Social Media can be located in the area of computerization. Computer is used specially to obtain information. This has Made Christian especially the elites to grow fast. They connect internet with different websites for biblical teaching. There are compact discs contain commentaries dictionaries and encyclopedias on issues of Christian faith. "Jointed with televisions and other electronic communications, social media, computers can serve to alert people in each other's needs on a citywide, countrywide or word wide basis" Carothers et al, (1972: 48) Biblical teaching and sermon has been brought home, the teacher is closer to learners than ever before.

Improved Conditions of Living: Social Media creates new opportunity for man. It strengthens the economy and increases per capital income: employment opportunity is an incentive to good living social comforts enhance the ability to appreciate God and serve Him better. According to Albert Teich (1997:68). "The usual sequence is that: (1) Social Media advances create a new opportunity to achieve some desired goal. (2) This requires (expect in trivial cases) alternations in social organization if advantages is to be taken of new opportunity: (3) which means that the functions of existing social structures can well be interfered with (4) with the result that other goals which served by the older structures are now only inadequately achieved." This will go a long way to check increase in the rate of crime. Christian virtues will be easier to practice and for as many that are serious can now depend on God for sustaining their new status.

Impact on Church/Denomination's Moral Values

The Church/denomination has tremendous positive impacts of social media. The Church is considered a local congregation or universal church. The Church Finds Easier to Reach Out: Automation features of social media afford the church easier transportation and communication avenues. The church can now move her missionaries and church leaders through space transportation. Mass movement is also affordable and sometimes the cost in time wastage is reduced dramatically.

The cyber national Technology Also Aids the Church in Her Outreach

Cybemetics is defined as "control under the guidance of information" Barbour, (1970:95). This includes the use of electronic gadgets. "The scientific study of communication and control, especially concerned with comparing human and animal brains with machines and

electronic devices”. This has helped the church in the communication systems. The use of radio, television, video, microphone even computers in communicating the gospel is a remarkable positive impact. So many people are being reached through this medium

The worship Experience Has Improved: This has to do with method. Content, means and everything, that is done in worship. It includes the drum set, electronic gadgets, musical instrument, even including the mode of worship. The quality of sermons and teaching also reflects modern technology/social media.

Church/Denomination Worker Work at Ease: They have equipment to do their work, do a better and in team. “A new work morality may also arise in place of a morality based on unit worth concept... worth will be judged on the basis of organization and planning and the continuously smooth functioning of the operation. As the individual worker loses his importance and is replaced by the team greater value is placed on the operating unit as a whole. The traditional individualism may soon be replaced” (59-60). The working tools available for workers enhances job proficiency.

The improved condition of living of the members reflects on the Church/denomination assets. It also avails the opportunity of making use of modern means of savings and investments. The corporate existence of the church/denomination is also on advantage to be involved in meaningful and gainful business ventures. No wonder, the kind of building projects, vehicle purchase, etc are superb compared to what existed in the past. The internal decorations of church, evangelism buses/vehicles, ultra-model church auditoriums etc are symbols of the positive impact of modern technology. Worship can now take place through virtual instead of the conventional physical congregation. The challenge of Covid-19 buttressed this better when the mentality of social distance becomes imperative. Therefore, computer provide new and efficacious alternative for medical reasons.

Negative Impact of Social Media on Pastoral Ministry

Floranman (1981) in *Technology and Future* tags the negative impacts as technology and tragic view. According to him, “The tragic view accepts responsibility but does not seek to cast blame. It challenges are to do with caution. What needs to be done, and to consider at the same time the consequences of not acting”. Floraman's (1981) view is ultimately an affirmation of the value of technology in human life, tempered by a recognition of its limits in sustaining human happiness. It is uniquely constructive approach to thinking about the technology with the eye of seeking solutions and not just to leave them open.

Impact on personal Christian Virtues

Social Medial modern technology came along with the tragedy of western civilization. Omoregbe (1993:143) while quoting Schweitzer, a German philosopher, defines correct civilization as “civilization is the product of an optimistic-ethical conception of the world.” This implies that civilization in the true sense takes full cognizance of ethical value. It is the sum total of all progress made towards the moral and spiritual perfection of the individual within the society. But western civilization did not understand this. Instead, they allowed

themselves to be carried away by their progress in knowledge and power. This is quite unfortunate. Schweitzer laments, (1999:43) “We did not reflect on the danger to which we were exposing ourselves by the diminished value we put on the spiritual element in civilization.” Social Media advancement cum western civilization grow at the detriment of moral value. It is not surprising that they embark on dehumanization activities for instance, the liquor trade became former against the local made and local consumption. The quantity was quite unlimited when the European traders imported liquor in large quantities. As alcoholism assumes a new dimension, it became one of the major evils plaguing the society. Henceforth the church had ran into the problem of alcoholism, drug addiction and serious perverse family problems. Bars are thriving business. Many children die of malnutrition and lack of medical care because addicted fathers have spent their wages on liquor Falk, (1997:421). This is quite a challenge to the church. How to curb. eradicate this malady has become the struggle of the church.

Materialism is another evil that came with modern technology cum social media. As the societal values changed and there was availability of social comforts, the worldviews of the citizens also changed. This does not exclude the Christians. The concern for the economic gain influence some people to engage in activities on Sunday rather than assist in the work of the church. Materials gains are becoming more important than the personal spiritual blessing and ministry of the church. This point will probably answer the question of why people scramble for some offices as volunteer workers in the church. 'Profitable' office like working in the account department of the church serving in the building and maintenance committee even becoming the church secretary are hot cake in the church while office like being an ordinary usher Sunday school teacher evangelism member are suffering for personnel. Without question there is a faithful core in the church but various influences are making inroad and the church has every reason to consider its life seriously.

Scientific thinking is a twin brother of social medial

Both science and technology tend to affect the work of the church. According to Falk, (1997:422) “In placing emphasis on science the religion education or sacred in many ceremonies perfumed in the past is neglected. Secularization refer to the desecration of object formerly thought to have supernatural influences.” This is an era when sacred and or holy object/subject concepts etc. are being questioned hence watered down.

Proliferation of literature that has strange philosophies and ideologies

Consequent to the flair for technology education there is hazardous communication impact. In the words of E Bolaji Idowu, (1993:423) these are “What the professor disseminate and influence the universities as humanistic secularism. These professor's and lecturers have different moral and spiritual standard.” This is an output of technology that has influenced learning/educational system. It has continued to manifest all in the name of modernization and western civilization. These literatures are considered authoritative. It is baffling to some, confusing to others and an ideal way of life to others. The church has task of guiding people through the maze information to acknowledge Christ and live faithfully under His Lordship in this scientific/technology age. What a dilemma to children who come from Christian homes.

With sound Christian ethical values only to get to the university to encounter a different kind of belief worldview and paradox kind of knowledge.

Technology had impact on settlement pattern: The provision of social infrastructure attracted population pull from the rural area to the urban centers. Hence the growth of urbanization. This of course has bred so many social vices that the church has to cure. Crime rate is on the increase and is being modernized on daily basis: prostitution is seemingly legal now especially now, when it does not have to require renting an apartment. It is now a spirit that wonder about cosmetics in different forms of socialization. We have the senior girls, career women, homosexual, lesbian etc.

Viewed in a different Perspective from the above is the issue of Separation: When the husband will have to move to the urban centers for job. The technology facilities which provide social infrastructure cannot adequately meet the needs of growing population. Running water, electricity, education, medical care etc, have become a source of great frustration to the urban dwellers, the church's ministry inclusive.

Unemployment is another Social Problem: Technology has promised job but because it is dynamics so many who cannot meet up with its pace are thrown out of job There is therefore the tension of catering for the family yet to a good Christian you must give your tithe and offering. Consequently, the employed person frequently has a number of relatives or friends staying in his home while they look for job. This causes social and moral problems Overcrowded quarters financial drains may become excessive This may drive the unemployed to engage in unworthy activities. Line yahoo, yahoo.com. The church is further pushed to a greater challenge.

Impact on church Denomination Virtues

Technology has Improved the kind of Facilities used for Worship: The music aspect of the church ministry for example is highly demanding. Instruments and electronic gadgets are putting the church on race as they keep flooding the market of course this challenge has heightened the church's spirits of moneymaking. This arouses the reaction of Henry F. Ward (1995:168) in his book *our economic morality and ethics of Jesus*. He wrote starting with rhetoric questions:

Has the economic doctrine that rationalizes and justify greed now accomplished its perfect work? Has the spirit of money making finally demonstrated its capacity to keep its official defender blind to its destructive efficiency whenever it operates unmixed with other elements has this most seductive form of self-interest now shown its ability to destroy their sense of honor, to subvert their loyalty to the truth.

These are question that pose challenges to the church and tend to query the effective impact of the church to parishioner and or to the society. Put in another form let's consider the following. Is it the soul of man or the gigantic cathedral? Is it benevolent to the poor, widow, orphan or ultramodern musical instrument? Is it propagation of the gospel through mission

and evangelism or different kinds of church buses and interior decorations? Are we actually building school to impact the life of the pupils and gain them for Christ as expected or we are investing church money for motive?

Again let us consider the concern of Harry. He first asked:

If capital were allocated only by the desire for more money as the profit-motive theory assumes where would it go? Where some of it now does go into bootlegging and stocks promotion deals and other occupation equally beneficially to society. But fortunately the law of larger return does not always govern investment. In obedience to that law, however an increasing portion of our capital now flows-abroad, leaving needs unmet at home and incurring liabilities of fiction to come (169). To invest and save for the evil days is good but at the long run does it help the church to stay focused? Investing in stocks, buying promissory notes, treasury bills, fixing huge amounts of money in the bank and some are in other deposit account etc. Is now the order of the day when the society is getting rotten with moral decadence? In fact the church directly engenders these atrocities especially when they do not care how a donor to the church got the money. This has actually boosted ill-gotten wealth among the parishioners. The ministers of God have become a laughing stock for these money bags, messages, however Godly presented is not impacting life to the dead in conscience. The church is gradually becoming a business venture. I pray the experience of mission work and Christian activities in European countries now will not be our lot in Nigeria.

Proliferation of Ministries and Increase in number of Gospel Ministers are Products of Modern Technology

Some ministers are trained on the internet through the use of computer, they got their mentors, a new ministry eventually springs up suffice it to say that fund is not a problem for these ministries and their ministries because the foreign aid from the mentors, coupled with this is the availability of mission programmes, seminars, conferences etc, that are displayed on the internet. It is a good thing for the gospel to grow through modern technology. But let us breathe a bit to ask: Why is the society getting more corrupt and indiscipline, in spite of the increase in the number of ministries and ministers?

Modern technology can as well account for the modern system of worship all in the name of Pentecostalism. A church where signs and miracles are not preached, where shout of halleluyah is not heard, where prosperity and healing is not mentioned is not a living church to the modern convert. Thorough teaching of the Word of God has lost its place in many of these new ministries. This is posing a threat to the living churches, some of them are already compromising their sound doctrines.

Knowledge and deal to catch up with modern technology is producing a kind of parishioners that are drifting away from the truth of the Bible. There is a different view of Christian stand on faith and secularism. The orientation of the modern Knowledge is freedom and autonomy for man. A thesis presented by the German Theologian Fredrich Gorgarrten say, "Christian faith frees man from bondage to the power of the world." He went further to say, "The Christian is called to be autonomous and responsible" (61). Dietrich Bonhoeffer's references to maturity,

autonomy and adulthood of “a world come of age” (61). In the radical thinking of these theologians, modern man no longer need God as hypothesis or his help. He does not need religion as an explanation or as a way of solving problems. Any historical judgment on modern technology will surely have to take into account the contribution, not only of biblical religion, but of Greek rationalization, Renaissance, humanism and the Enlightenment's confidence in man, as well as economic and social forces in the growth of industry (61).

The implication of this is an absolute freedom that does not have to conform to the biblical injunctions. This is a big challenge for the church. How can the church insist on discipline? What happens to the teaching of the truth that is presumably rationalized? How do we cope with followers that are not ready to submit to leadership, etc? The slogan now is “do things we want 'not as' it ought to be'. Secularization is taking over the churches who are ready to follow gain influx of members.

Conclusion

Modern technology cum social media as it were is a phenomenon that cannot be curbed nor avoided. Even the scripture talks about dynamism of nature. It also warned on the end time spirit. Since it is not necessarily sinful or ungodly, the church cum believers should consider the following recommendations.

Recommendations

1. The believers/church should have a correct perspective of modern technology/social media.
It is a phenomenon to cover every facet of life not only on automation industrialization and/or computerization. This mindset will avail us the advantage of contributing positively to the trend.
2. Since we are involved and cannot avoid the trend we should get along positively without compromising our faith. It is a challenge for us to understand the scripture very well and apply it appropriately.
3. The negative influences of modern technology cum social media should be carefully located and address them with the wisdom of God. Through teaching and our exemplary life will go a long way to correct others.
4. The church should not pretend on corrupt practices of her members. We should not for greed to accumulate wealth encourage worldliness. Hence, we should rebuke social vices in the church without favor.
5. Let us be determined to start to influence the world; we should block the back doors that secularizes the church.

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