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"Religion as Opium of the People": A Response from Pentecostal Understanding of Matt 11:28-30

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ABSTRACT
The study "Religion as Opium of the people": A Response from Pentecostal Understanding of Matt 11:28-30, argues that religion especially Pentecostal Christianity is not Opium because its practitioners who have believed the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30 have experienced emancipation in their lives. The purpose of the study is to re-examine Karl Marx's statement above in the light of Pentecostal understanding and interpretation of Jesus' statement in Matthew 11:28-30 and make recommendations to Pentecostal believers and entire Christendom. The paper posits that religion especially Pentecostalism is not opium of the people, since it is encouragement of the believers and fortitude in the soulless conditions. The study employs biblical hermeneutics in the interpretation of the text of Matthew 11:28-30, interpretive interactionism as a social science method of interpreting events in society to complement biblical hermeneutics and qualitative interview of Twenty (20) adult Pentecostal Christians as methodologies for gathering data for the paper. Additionally, existing literature in the field will be reviewed to strengthen the study. Major findings germane to the study include: That Pentecostalism as variety of Christianity is not an opium to its practitioners. That religion as a whole is not an opium of the people since about five (5) billion which accounts for more than half of the world's population belong to one religion or the other. That Karl Marx perhaps did not understand the transcendental essence and value of religion since what influenced his view of religion is the socio-economic and political situation of his time. That instead of Pentecostal religion being opium of the people, it is an emancipation of the people. The study concludes by recommending that those who quote Karl Marx should understand that he was not a religionist and as such does not understand the eternal function of religion. Additionally, the emergence of Pentecostalism has demonstrated that Pentecostalism as variety of Christianity emancipates its practitioners by lightening their burdens of sin and suffering and promising them rest in this world and in the world to come.
Keywords: Pentecostal Christianity, Opium, Pentecostal believers

INTRODUCTION

The statement "religion as the opium of the people" made by Karl Marx (1818-1883) some centuries ago is still being quoted by many religionists and non-religionists alike. Many quote it out of context, while some quote it according its original context. According to Karl Marx, "religion is an expression of material realities and economic injustice" (Cline, 2019, P.1). In this regard, Marx sees religion as the expression of the situation in the society especially its political and economic realities. Karl Marx mirrors religion as a tool which the powerful capitalists and those in authority use to oppress the poor, powerless and those at the bottom rung of the social ladder. As a result, he avers that religion is opium of the people – a substance – drug that is given to those who have been oppressed by the powerful to soothe their pain, sorrow and frustration.

The current paper tends to offer a response to Karl Marx' statement, "religion as opium of the people" from Pentecostal understanding of Matthew 11:28-30. The paper does not intend to be a challenge to Marx's statement rather a biblical response to it from a Pentecostal perspective of Jesus statement in Matthew 11:28-30. Stemming from the Pentecostal perspective, Pentecostal variety of Christianity is not opium of its practitioners.

The study highlights the following areas which includes, introduction, concept explication, theoretical frameworks, methodologies used in the study, context of Marx's statement, issues on Marx's statement, Pentecostal interpretation of Marx's statement, Exegesis of the Matthew's text of study, presentation of data from the field, analysis and discussion of data from literary and field sources, and then conclusion and recommendation have received attention in the piece.

Thesis Statement: Karl Marx's belief that "religion is opium of the people" is disputed by Pentecostal understanding of Matthew11: 28-30 which delineates emancipation of the followers of Jesus.

Conceptual Framework

The explications of the various concepts used in the study are necessary in order for a better understanding of the piece of work. The first one is the term religion. The term religion has been defined severally by several scholars and practitioners. Yet, there seem not to be any agreed and one acceptable definition despite over two hundred definitions of religion across the world. From the American Heritage College Dictionary (2004, P.1175), religion is defined as "belief in and reverence for a supernatural power or powers regarded as creator and governor of the universe." This definition seems to be faulty in that it fails to recognize the object of religion as a Supernatural Being but the object of religion as power or powers. Religion from the Latin root "Re-Ligare" – Ligare means "to bind or to connect". When "Re" is added to "Ligare" causes the term to mean "Re-Bind" or "Re-Connect" (Trimble, 2014, P.1). The author, Trimble (2014, P.1) further posits that religion denotes peace and reconciliation. He adds that religion does not encourage people to "stop thinking". Stressing that religion encourages people to think about how they can re-bind themselves or re-connect with God who is infinitely more intelligent and living (Trimble, 2014, P.1). Trimble's explication quickly informs something contrary to Karl Marx's thinking or act in the earthy situation.

In the same manner, the document, Religion Facts (2017, P.1) offers some definitions of religion which are stated below. From Penguin Dictionary of Religions (1997) in Religion Facts (2017 P.1) religion refers to "all concepts concerning the belief in God(s) and goddess(es) as well as other spiritual beings or transcendental ultimate concerns. Again, Britannica concise Encyclopedia (online, 2006), in Religion Facts (2017, P.1) describes religion as "relation of human beings to God or the gods or to whatever they consider sacred or, in some cases, merely supernatural" it is also "Human beings" relation to that which they regard as holy, sacred, spiritual or diving, (Encyclopedia Britannica (online, 2006) in Religion Facts, 2017, P.1). In the same vein, Melford Spiro in Religion Facts (2017, P.1) writes "viewed systematically, religion can be differentiated from other culturally constituted institutions by virtue only of its reference to superhuman beings". In the words of Sigmund Freud in Religion Facts (2017, P.2), "religion is an illusion and it derives its strength from the fact that it falls in with our instinctual desires." And finally in

these definitions of the word religion comes one from Napoleon Bonaparte in ReligionFacts (2017, P.2) which remarks "religion is excellent stuff for keeping common people quite."

From all these definitions of religion reviewed in this study, many of the definitions refer to religion as having relationship with the holy, sacred and spiritual or supernatural beings. A few followed the line of Karl Marx referring religion as an illusion, and tool to keep ordinary people quite in society. To these later definitions of religion which is similar to that of Karl Marx, the study responds in the pages that follow.

The next concept is the word Opium. Anderson (2018, P.1) opines as follows: Opium is a highly addictive narcotic drug acquired in the dried latex form of the opium poppy (Papaver Somniferum) seed pod. Traditionally the unripe pod is slit open and the sap seeps out and dries on the outer surface of the pod. The resulting yellow-brown latex, which is scraped off of the pod, is bitter in taste and contains varying amount of alkaloids such as morphine, Codeine, thebaine and papavering. Anderson (2018, P.1) continues to give the following information about opium. The history of opium dates back to 3400BC when the first records of its cultivation and use are mentioned. From about 5,000 B.C. poppy plants were grown in the Mediterranean region (The Recovery Village). More details from Anderson (2018, P.1) reveal the following about opium:

- It was used by ancient Greeks and Romans as a potent pain reliever. It was grown in Southeast Asia and called the "joy plant" by Sumerians.
- The Assyrians and Egyptians also cultivated opium and it traveled to Europe and China where it was involved in beginning of the opium wars of the 1800s.
- Opium dens were places where opium could be bought and sold all over the world especially in Southeast Asia, China and Europe.

Similarly, History.com editors (2019, P.1) describes opium as a substance which comes the milky sap of a flower called the opium poppy. The document, History.com editors (2019, P.1) further states that the ancient societies of Greece, Persia, Egypt, Rome etc used opium to help people sleep, to relieve pain and even to calm crying children. Adding that, opium-based medicines were used as anesthesia during Surgery. It was also used for recreational purpose without knowing its additive effects.

In the same manner, another document aDF – Alcohol and Drug Foundation (2018, P.1) writes that opium is a depressant drug, which means that it slows down the messages travelling between your brain to the body. Opium is commonly smoked, but can also be injected, swallowed or chrunk (aDF – Alcohol and Drug Foundation, 2018, P.1).

According to the document, The Recovery village (n.d.) the opium poppy is a key ingredient in many of today's popular psychoactive substances. The document further mentions that opium can produce both mild and dangerous effects which include drowsiness, confusion and constipation. And if used in excess, opium can lead to a physical or psychological dependence.

Perhaps it is based on these effects of opium that Karl Marx made his statement that religion is opium of the people. This means that religion acts in the brain and body of practitioners possibly confusing them by not urging religionists to fight their oppressors or work hard to alleviate their poverty. Rather the religionists depend on their religious faith and belief for solutions to their earthly problems.

The concept "people" in the statement of Karl Marx is yet another term to consider in the study. The concept "people" or "masses" in Marx's statement refers to the proletariat, which are the working class or the lower class as against the bourgeoisie which is the capitalist class (LibreTexts, 2019, P.1). The term "people" or "masses" therefore refers to the common persons, the Ununna, Amala people, the Nwananchi, Anamachuoru ,Civil and public servants and the have- nots.

In this document, LibreTexts (2019, P.1), Karl Marx contends "that religion works to calm uncertainty over our role in the universe and in society, and to maintain the status quo". Karl Marx continues in this document Libre Texts (2019, P.1) to aver that religion plays significant role in calming its followers and maintains the status quo by promising rewards in the after-life rather than in this life; and by allowing social inequalities resulting from the differences inherent in class structures, such as the inequality

between the proletariat- labourers and the bourgeoisie- the capitalists' class. As a result, religion is constructed by people to maintain the current state of things; the way things are, as opposed to the way they could be the existing state of affairs. Therefore, "… the abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness". Since religion according to Marx "was a Significant hindrance to reason, inherently masking the truth and misguiding followers" (Libre Texts, 2019, P.1).

In the views of Yilmaz (2018, P.1), Marx's analysis of religion is not on the negligence of the symbolic, imaginary or affective dimension of religion. Rather, Marx illuminates the nature of religion's transformation and its new form under capitalist social relations, and why the critique or religion is essential for the realization of human freedom.

The author further opines that Marx is not interested in the definition of religion. Rather in how religion works in the historical perspective, especially under the situation of secular political and capitalist order. Marx in Yilmaz (2018, P.1) is concerned with the role religion has played in the organization of people's affection and imagination, adding that religion has helped in what Marx called condensed expression of human suffering, hopes and fears. Karl Marx argues that religion structures the emotional expositions of its believers as a system of belief, imagination and meaning.

Marx in Yilmaz (2018, P.2) puts forth that religion perhaps reduces an "individual to imaginary participant in imaginary sovereignty" in modern society. Accordingly, Marx critiques religion because of the bond between the critique of religion, political society, and economic relations. Thus Yilmaz (2018, P.2) argues that because of the function of religion in human society, "any critique aims to displace and challenge generalized conventions, should start from a critique of religion, since religion contains archetype of modern opinion formation, and management of mass psychology, as a sphere of belief, imaginations, and emotions". The author adds that "for the emancipation of the human mind from generalized conventions, opinions, imposed prejudices, and reactionary emotional states, the link between religion, political economy, and politics must first be discovered (Yilmaz, 2018, P.2).

In the same dimension, the Economist Newspaper (2019, P.1) posits "Marx was not exactly against religion. For him, faith was something that "the people" conjured for themselves, a source of phoney happiness to which they turned to help numb the pain of reality. Organized religion with its churches, doctrines and priests followed on from that, a useful tool by which the ruling classes kept the masses Supine"

It is important to mention at this point the population of world religions to support the claim by the present researcher that majority of the world inhabitants still appreciate religion against Marx's opinion of it.

Population of World Religion

According to Roberts (2018, P.1) in the middle of the twenty-first century, God will not be dead, at least according to the number of believers in the world. Instead, it will be those of no religious affiliation who will be rarer as a proportion of population, according to a recent report by the Pew Research Center. The population of the world that believes in one religion or another will increase from 84-87.5 per cent between 2015 to 2060. There are some 4,300 religions of the world. And nearly 75 percent of the world's population practices one of the five most influential religions of the world; Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. In the same vein, Christianity and Islam cover the religious affiliation of more than half of the world's population (Juan, 2006, P.1).

Report from Roser, Ritchie and Ortiz-Ospina (2019, P.5) indicates that two hundred years ago the world population was over one billion. Currently, the population of the world has grown more than 7-fold-7.7 billion in 2019. Therefore, since about 6.66 billion persons belong to twenty greatest religions of the world (Juan, 2006, P.2) religion in general cannot be source of confusion and opium of the majority of world's inhabitant as Karl Marx claims.

From what has been reviewed above, Karl Marx's concern was that religion did not or failed to ginger or persuade or urge its believers to react against the ruling class or the capitalist class for their liberation and or emancipation. Rather, religion kept them calm, alienated from the oppressive class and society instead

of pushing the religionists to fight and win their freedom for themselves. Instead of religion urging its follower to resist oppressive class and structures, it made them passive, promising them of reward of what they were denied in this world in the after-life. Thus Marx thinks that life here on earth is by strength of reason, material possession and resistance to oppression in other to gain freedom and enjoy real life and real happiness.

The term "response" means a spoken or written answer. It also refers to a reaction to something that has happened or been said (Hornby, 2006, P.1002). In this study, the author is trying to answer Karl Marx on his statement on "religion as opium of the people". It is a written answer from the Pentecostal understanding of Matthew 11:28-30 to Karl Marx's statement cited above.

Continuing in the literary exercise, the writer brings in the term Pentecostal. Pentecostals are the people who trace first their biblical origin to Acts 2:3,4 when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the 120 disciples who gathered in the upper room as was recorded by Luke the evangelist. "… there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire and sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance" (Anyanwu, 2004, P.6).

Second, Pentecostals are those who trace their theological root or origin to the holiness movement in the Methodist church. The document, Got Questions (2019, P.1) report that toward the end of 19th century, there was a dramatic rise in religious fervor as various groups anticipated the end of history and Parousia in 1900. Consequently, this was followed by revival meetings in the holiness movement with occasional report of people speaking in tongues. However, the first widespread use of speaking in tongues was at a revival in Topeka, Kansas in January, 1900, which was led by Charles Parham. In this meeting, Agness Ozman, a Methodist began to speak in tongues followed by others. Similarly, in 1906, a series of revival meetings on Asusa street in Los Angeles led to a widespread experience of tongues-speaking which was led by William Seymour, a student of Charles Parham. From these revival meetings at Asuza Street in Los Angeles Sprang up Pentecostal flames across the United States and eventually into other lands and nations.

In this regard, William Meuzies in Dayton (1987, P.24) avers:

> The Pentecostal movement is that group of sects within the Christian Church which is characterized by the belief that the occurrence mentioned in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost not only signaled the birth of the church, but described an experience available to believers in all ages. The experience of an endowment with power, called the "baptism in the Holy Spirit," is believed to be evidenced by the accompanying sign of "speaking with other tongues as the spirit gives utterances."

In the same vein, Dayton (1987, P.25), remarks that the concept of Pentecostal "endowment with power" is available to all generations with all the wisdom, knowledge and divine blessing of emancipation, and present rest and further rest to her believers.

The document, BBC Religion (2009, P.1) states that Pentecostalism is a form of Christianity that emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit and the direct experience of the presence of God by the believer. Pentecostals believe that faith must be powerfully experiential al, and not something found merely through ritual or thinking. In this words of their Saviour and master, Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30 which is text of discussion for the current study.

According to Anyanwu (2004: P.57-61), the identity of the Pentecostal is summarized as follows:

> Pentecostals are tongue speakers. They believe in Miracles. They are exuberant, happy and spontaneous worshippers. Pentecostals believe in witnessing as validation that one has really received the power of the Holy Spirit according to Acts 1:8.
>
> Pentecostals are Charismatic. Pentecostals are born again. Pentecostals believe in the literary interpretation of the word of God as in Matthew 11:28-30

The Pentecostal worldview according to Poloma (2000, P.2) is transforming experience with God. God is known through relational encounter which finds its penultimate expressions in the experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit. This experience becomes the normative epistemological framework and thus

shifts the structures by which they interpret the world. So that the statement of Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30 is interpreted by the Pentecostal believer as authentic, real and veracious.

In the same manner, Hornby (2006, P.1302) defines understanding which is the other term that needs explication as "the knowledge that somebody has about a particular subject or situation". In this study, Pentecostal understanding of Karl Marx's statement would mean using Pentecostal spectacle to view and answer what Marx said.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study "religion as opium of the people": a response from Pentecostal understanding of Matthew 11:28-30 is anchored on two theories, namely, Phenomenological theory of Edmund Husserl (1859 – 1938) and Rudolf Otto's (1869-1937) the theory "the idea of the Holy". Explaining the phenomenological theory of religion, Stefon (2019, P.1) writes that it is a methodological approach to the study of religion which emphasizes the standpoint of the believer. It seeks to uncover religion's essence through investigations that are free from the distorting influences of scholars and traditional values and prejudices. Adding his view on this, Gale (2005, P.5) opines, this methodology of the study of religion requires an intentional immediate experience that entails the adoption of a "phenomenological epoche", defined as a method of "bracketing". The author further posits that "it is only by bracketing the uncritically accepted "natural world," by suspending beliefs and judgments based on an unexamined "natural standpoint" that the phenomenologist can become aware of the phenomena of immediate experience and can gain insight into their essential structure".

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2016, P.1) highlights that appreciation of the phenomenology of religion brings to focus the understanding of what is involved practically, cognitively and affectively in a religious way of life of believers. In the words of German Philosopher Immanuel Kant, in Gale (2005, P.2), Kent describes the concept "phenomena" as the data of experience, things that appear to and are constructed by human minds. Such phenomena which Kant distinguishes from "noumena" or "things-in-themselves" are independent of our knowing minds can be studied rationally, scientifically, and objectively. It also consists of comparative study of the experience in various religions.

The second theoretical framework comes from Rudolf Otto which is called "the idea of the Holy". According to Rudolf Otto in Meland (2019, P.3) tries to explore non rational aspect of the religious experiences for which he coined, the term numinous, from the Latin numen (god, spirit or divine). "The numinous, the awe-inspiring element of religious experience, Otto argued evades precise formulation in human words. Like the beauty of a musical composition, it is non-rational and eludes complete conceptual analysis; hence it is described in symbolic terms. From this analysis, Otto employs an appropriate term mysterium tremendum meaning mysterious terror and awe. This entails the believer of a religion drawing upon their own experience of religious sentiments and beliefs.

In this wise, the Pentecostals understand from Matthew 11:28-30 that the invitation of their Master and Lord, Jesus Christ is numinous logos which is received with certain mysterium tremendum, in their hearts and minds, and inward fibre of their entire being becomes quitted.

METHODOLOGIES

The present study employs biblical hermeneutics, interview of twenty adult Christians from three Pentecostal churches in three local governments of Imo State, Nigeria and interpretive interactionism as Methodologies for gathering of data for the piece. The churches are Praise Center Church International, World Bank New Owerri, Life Line Assembly, Aboha Ohii, and Holiness Evangelical Church, Amakohia, Owerri North. Biblical hermeneutics in the words of Klein, Blomberg and Hubbard, Jr (1993, P.5) "provides the precepts and methods for acquiring an understanding of the scriptures." It involves the study of literary, historical-cultural background of the text and then proceeds to word explications. By this procedure, the meaning the author of the text of scripture under study intended to communicate is secured. In the current study, the Pentecostal spectacle is used to mirror the text of Matthew 11:28-30

which implies literary understanding of the statement of Jesus in the text with all the empathic and divine feelings and attitudes that Pentecostals approach such scriptures like Matthew 11:28-30.

Similarly, the study is strengthened by the use of interview questions whereby twenty Pentecostal adult Christians from three Pentecostal churches and from three local Government Areas of Imo State were interviewed. The churches are Praise Center Church International, World Bank, New Owerri, Life Line Assembly, Aboha Ohii, and Holiness Evangelical Church, Amakohia. The local government areas include Owerri Municipal, Mbaitoli and Owerri North. Five questions were administered to each of the twenty respondents independently on the areas surrounding Karl Marx's statement, "religion as opium of the people" and Jesus' statement in Matthew 11:28-30. The sample questions and the particulars of the respondents are affixed as appendage to the paper.

Interpretive interactionism is brought into the study as a social science theoretical perspective that derives social process (such as conflict, cooperation, identity formation) from human interaction. It is the study of how individuals act within society. As a research methodology, interactionism is used in multi-dimensional studies, it is flexible and helps to uncover the meaning behind actions and generate qualitative data (thoughts, feelings and opinions). Interactionism is micro-sociological and believes that meaning is produced through the interaction of individuals. It is used here to complement biblical hermeneutics in the interpretation of the society, both of Karl Marx and Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30.

Context of Karl Marx's statement "Religion as Opium of the People."

The context of Karl Marx's statement "religion as Opium of the people" deserves attention in this study because it will help to throw light on why he made such a statement. The context of his statement includes his family background, philosophical perspective and religious background. Information about Karl Marx is taken from Cline (2019, P.1) which states that Karl Marx was born on May 5, 1818 in the German city of Trier. Marx's family was Jewish but later converted to Protestantism (Lutheranism) in 1824 in order to avoid anti-Semitic laws and persecution. As a result, Marx early in his youth rejected religion and stated it obviously clear that he was an atheist. This was the beginning of his problem with religion.

Karl Marx studied philosophy at Bonn and Belin, where he came under the influence of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich von Hegel Philosophy, which had impact on his thinking and later theories. According to Hegel philosophy, as an idealist, mental things (ideas, concepts) are fundamental to the world, not matter. Hegel in Cline (2019, P.1) continues to assert that material things are merely expressions of ideas – especially an underlying "Universal spirit" of Absolute Idea". However, when Marx met the young Hegelians, they agreed that a division between mind and matter was a fundamental philosophical concern but conversely contended that it was matter which was fundamental and that ideas were expressions of material necessity (Cline, 2019, P.2). Although this later philosophical principle that matter is fundament issue is faulty and not logical since all material creations started as idea in the mind of God. The "Let there be" declaration in Genesis chapter 1 (Thompson, NIV, 1990) Suggests that what is to be has already existed in the mind of the Creator God, before their manifestations. So that God created ex nihilo all things from nothing except by existential Conceptualization. Surprisingly, Marx's philosophies of Politico-Religio-economic ideas were anchored upon the faulty fundamental concept that material things are the super structure and or Absolute idea. It becomes obvious that here lies Marx's problem with religion for religion does not fundamentally consist of material things but immaterial or absolute idea which is the Divinity.

Consequently, Marx in Cline (2019, P.4) saw religion as an illusion that provides reasons and excuses to keep society in status quo. Whereas capitalism takes our productive labour and alienates us from its value, religion takes our highest ideas and aspirations and alienates us from theory projecting them unto an alien and unknowable being called god (Cline, 2019, P.4).

According to Cline (2019, P.4) Marx disliked religion for three reasons. These reasons are:

1. It is irrational – religion is a delusion and worship of appearances that avoids recognizing underlying reality.
2. Religion negates all that is dignified in a human being by rendering them servile and more amenable to accepting the status quo.

3. Religion is hypocritical. Although it might possess valuable principles, it sides with the oppressors.

Jesus advocated helping the poor, but the Christian church merged with the oppressive Roman state, taking part in the enslavement of people for centuries. The Catholic Church preached about heaven but acquired as much properly and power as possible. Martin Luther preached the ability of each individual to interpret the Bible but sided with aristocratic rulers against peasants who fought against economic and social oppression (Cline, 2019, P.4)

Although Karl Marx was disgusted about religion because of its failure to economically and politically give solace and happiness to the labourers and masses, Marx was literary overacting against religion because of his personal experience of poverty. In this direction, King (2017, P.1) remarks that Marx though received his doctorate degree at the University of Jena in 1841 at about the age 23 having being born in 1818, was barred from an academic career because of radical political views. He took up journalism in Koln but was exiled first to Paris and to Brussels. As a result of his unsuccessful revolution against the Prussian Monarch, he was exiled again from German to England.

Consequently, Marx's radical philosophical views, unstable career and lifestyle made him become poor. Except for his companion, Friedrich Engels according Cline (2019, P.2) who was important to Marx in a financial sense – poverty weighed heavily on Marx and his family. "Had it not been for Engels' constant and selfless financial aid, Marx would not only have been unable to complete most of his major works but might have succumbed to hunger and malnutrition" (Cline, 2019, P.2).

Similarly, Kunin (2006, P.68) concurs that "Marx could not stay in Paris and was forced to flee to England, where he lived out the remainder of his days in poverty". Once more this is another reason why Karl Marx made his statement on "religion as opium of the people" this is because he believed that religion could have helped him out of his stricken poverty which according to his perception was caused by political and economic system and structure in Europe at the time.

Issues and concerns in Karl Marx's statement "religion as opium of the people.

It is necessary to highlight Marx's central issue in his problem with society and religion. Karl Marx was a radical revolutionist who wanted to overthrow existing exploitative systems and structure whether political or economical or religious which should be replaced by an exploitative free ones. The exploitation he found in the economic structure and system of his time in Europe consists of the situation where the surplus value from labour is being stolen or hijacked by the bourgeoisie – capitalists. But the proletariats who work more are paid less for the value of the labour. This is the cause of social conflict and social classes that exist.

King (2017, P.2) expresses Marx's view thus:

> Marx believed, had explained the evolution of modern economies in terms of the fundamental conflict between the different social classes in a predominant agricultural society where the producers enjoyed a bare minimum standard of living and the surplus product was shared between landlords and capitalist farmers. The size of the surplus, relative total output, set a maximum limit on the rate of growth, actual growth depended on the relative shares of the surplus that were received by thrifty capitalists and prodigal landlords. Marx himself defined the subject matter of the political economy of capitalism as the production, distribution, consumption and exchange of commodities, which are useful products of human labour destined for sale in the market rather than for direct use by the producers.

Karl Marx continues to lament in King (2017, P.3) as follows:

> Characteristics of capitalism in the relationship between wage labourers and capitalists capital is defined as a social relation, not primarily as a sum of value or a collection of machines and buildings. In this relationship, workers are not only exploited, that is, forced to perform surplus labour, being required to work for longer than would be necessary to produce the means of subsistence that they need to keep them alive and

able to work. They are also alienated, since the products of their labour have escaped their control have instead become external forces that dominate their own producers.

Kenton (2019, P.4) supporting what is said above, writes that Karl Marx believed in the labour theory of value to explain relative differences in market prices. This theory states that the value of a produced economic good can be measure by the average number of labour-hours required to produce it. If goods and services tend to be sold at their true objective labour values as measured in labour hours, then no capitalist will enjoy profits. It means therefore that capitalist were underpaying or overworking, and thereby exploiting labourers to drive down the cost of production.

This system of political economy makes the proletariats powerless and thus they cannot fight the capitalists. In this regard, Marx expected religion as Institution to help alleviate or solve the problem of the masses – labourers or proletariats who have been exploited and oppressed by the capitalists system of the economy, rather religion, like other social institutions is dependent upon the material and economic realities in a given society (Cline, 2019, P.2). In this case Marx was not happy with religion as it failed its social function of liberating its believers from class struggle between those who own things and those who do not own things but must instead work to survive. Most importantly, Marx fell out with religion for not urging the labours or proletariats to fight the political economy of their time and win their freedom to themselves. Instead, religion made its practitioners, passive, promising them of future bliss in heaven from an unknowable superman called God. So Karl Marx was an economic determinist who advocated for a socialist society where there will be no haves and no-haves-nots. He was a humanist, for he said, "man is the world of man, state, society (Marx, 2006, P.69). This gave rise to Marx's statement. Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people (Carmody, 2009, P.1).

Pentecostal Interpretation: - The practitioners of religion, especially Pentecostal variety of Christianity do not perceive it as suffering or bringing any suffering upon them because of its phenomenal manifestation and the transformative power of its "numinous state of mind" (Otto, 2006, P.82). Similarly, Pentecostal Christianity is not the sigh of Pentecostals rather their smile as they anchor their faith in the invitational words of Jesus "Come unto me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest (Matt 11:28, Thompsom, NIV, 1993). Pentecostalism based on the words of Jesus above is not oppression as Marx believes but an entire emancipation of the Pentecostals. Pentecostal Christianity is definitely the encouragement and elation of the heartless world. Pentecostal Christianity is obviously the fortitude of soulless earthily life. It is not an opiate from mundane tree but Pentecostal Christianity based on the librating words of Jesus is a divine drink that has the potency of refreshing the believer's entire being, spiritual, physical and psychological. Jesus speaking in John 4:13 avers, "…but whoever drinks the water I give him, will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life". The effect of the opium Karl Marx discusses is temporal in the lives of those who drink it. Conversely, the words of Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30 as a refreshing drink has permanent effect on Pentecostal believers because of its "Numen-Numinousness".

Herein is the text of Matthew cited and exegeted using hermeneutical procedures and principles.

Literary Context.

The gospel of Matthew chapters 11:25 – 30, records the central ministry of Jesus the messiah as a bringer of Justice. The literary context of this passage is important in the understanding of the text. Jesus brings Justice to the weary and burdened.

Historical – Cultural Background.

The Jews were expecting a messiah as it was prophesied by the prophets who will come as a mighty political leader to deliver them from the attacks of their enemies like the Philistines etc. Of course, they did not understand that the role of the messiah would be that of the suffering servant who will bring justice to victory (Isa. 42:1-4). Hence, the messiah Matthew presented to them was a different one from their expectation. The messiah presented by Matthew is neither a political – military leader, nor a national leader of the Jews only. Rather, He is the messiah of the whole world (visit of the Magi illustrates this).

And also the suffering servant who identifies with the lowly and marginals (women) in His genealogy, ministering to leper etc, demonstrates this fact. Matthew's Jesus is the Messiah who fulfills Old Testament expectation.

Jesus the New and Greater than Moses who brings Justice to the Weary and Burdened (Mtt. 11:25-30).

The Setting for Matthew 11:25-30.

In verse 25-27, Matthew provides the setting for this section. Here Jesus praised his Father as the Lord of heaven and earth. The use of the verb exomologoumia soi (I praise you) in the context, when it is used with respect to God, the person praying "acknowledges" who God is, the propriety of His ways, and the excellence of His character. Jesus addressing God as Father indicates Jesus' sense of sonship and God as Lord of heaven and earth shows God's sovereignty over the universe (Carson, 1984, P.274). Now God has revealed "these things" which were hidden from the wise and learned and have revealed them to children. The things God has hidden include: Presumably the deeds and words of Jesus in His Galilean ministry that disclose the presence of the Kingdom (Hagner, 1993, P.313). Davies and Allison (1991, P.277) suggest that the revelation of "these things" in this passage is eschatological but now available in Jesus. They added that, it was widely anticipated that the End would bring unprecedented knowledge and wisdom for the elect (Jer.31:34; Hab. 2:14).

The hidden things that are now revealed should be contemplated in reference to the ministry of Jesus to the lowly and marginals through His healing which indicate that He is the messiah. These things were hidden from the wise but made manifest to the "little children" (v. 25). The term "little children" here signifies the humble and simple people which corresponds to the weary and burdened of (v. 28). The psalmist holds this view too. "The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the Soul, the status of the LORD are trustworthy making wise the simple" (Ps. 19:7). The entrance of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the humble and simple for it will make them wise. But the truth of God is foolishness to the "prudent."

The main point in verse 27 is about the mutual knowledge of the Father and the Son. In this text "knows" goes beyond mental acquaintance; it is an intimate relationship. According to France (1987, P.200) the exclusive communion between the Father and the Son is the essence of their relationship. At this point reference could be made to (Deut. 34:10) where Moses knew God face to face, and was the revealer of God to whom He wills. More also, He is the embodiment of God's truth, life and the way to God (Jn. 14:6)

According to Carson (1984, P.274), what is made clear in this passage is that Sonship of Jesus and His messiahship are not quite the same. Carson (1984, P.274) quoting Ladd said that sonship precedes messiahship and is in fact the ground for the messianic mission.

B. **The Messiah's Gentle Invitation (Mtt. 11:28-30.)**

Perhaps, Ex.33:14 provides background for (Matthew 11:28-30), because of the promise of "rest" to Moses by the LORD. In this passage, Jesus the messiah who brings justice to the weary and burdened invites them to come to Him and have rest. The phrase, "come to me" is present imperative. The words oi koplontes (the ones labouring) means in this context, "those who are loaded down, "burdened." Again, anapauso, (rest) means will give rest or "refreshment".

Thus in v. 28, Jesus invites those who have been crushed under the heavy load that results from the Pharisees misinterpretation and multiplication of the laws, and their oppressiveness, to come to Him for rest. Hagner (1993, P.318) has it that, the Pharisees spoke of 613 commandments, and their halakot ("rulings") involved a complicated casuistry. This is a very heavy load indeed.

Matthew continues to stress the fact of the burden and injustice of the Pharisees on the people. "They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them (Mt. 23:4). Is this not oppression and injustice of the Pharisees on the people? Hence, Jesus invites these oppressed people to change side because He is a bringer of Justice and they will have rest.

As Bruce (1980, P.180) puts it, these people in coming to Christ's school, they would find rest by passing from letter to spirit, from form to reality. The Pharisees were enforcers of obedience to the external principles of the law (perhaps not even the Old Testament).

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, ": notice the immediate connection between yoke and learn in this passage. Literarily, the term yoke means, lever, of a balance, then balance, pair of scales, yoke (Arndt and Gingrich 1974, P.340). But in this context, it refers to Jesus teaching. And the word is often used as a metaphor for obedience. The Jewish teachers commonly spoke of the yoke of the Torah and the yoke of the commandments (Davies and Allison, 1991, P.289). And to the Jews, Torah is the full revelation of God's nature, character and purpose. (Davies and Allison, 1991, P.289) Thus Jesus, in both v. 27 and v. 29, and in contrast to Moses, is the perfect embodiment of God's purpose, demand and the functional equivalent of Torah (Davies and Allison, 1991, P.289).

Therefore, Jesus by inviting people with the words "take my yoke upon you," He invites them to follow his own teaching as the definitive interpretation of the law. Jesus' right and correct teaching is the meaning of yoke in the context. The invitation to come to Jesus is an invitation to discipleship, that is, to follow him and his teaching.

Similarly, Arndt and Gingrich (1974, P.340) inform that "learn from me" signifies learning from Christ's instruction, teachings, for He is meek which means gentle, humble, considerate in Matthew 11:29, and tapeinos meaning, esteem of low position, poor, lowly, undistinguished and humble. In this passage, the two words Praus and Tapeinos can be taken to be synonymous. Hence the use of these terms presents a vivid description of the messiah. The same word "meek" is used for Moses in Numbers 12:3.

More important here, is that the messiah is described as lowly, humble and gentle as opposed to the Pharisees who were proud and oppressive to others. This description of the messiah is a reflection of the Isaiah's servant song in Isa. 42. Consequently, Gundry (1975) posits that Jesus fills the role of the Isaiah servant prophecy despising popularity and living out His sonship position as a humble servant.

Furthermore, Pilch and Malina (1993, P.64, 158) remark that the term "Soul" means the individual's very life, self, soul, personality, oneself, one's psyche. Therefore, "Souls" in this context depict "selves", the whole of man's life both physical and spiritual. Thus rest for selves is monistic and holistic. Jesus is a bringer of monistic justice to the weary and burdened.

Jesus' "yoke" in vs.30 is His teaching as said earlier on. The easiness and lightness of Jesus' yoke lies in the fact that "the yoke of Jesus does not throw a man upon his own efforts but rather brings him into fellowship with the (Praus) meek. Davies and Allison (1975, P.291) supporting this view remarks that, correspondingly, the lightness of the burden Jesus imposes consists in His meekness and humility in heart. Jesus' teaching is orthodox coupled with mercy and gives the people rest. Jesus stands in the place of Yahweh to give people rest. This is distributive justice. This is how Pentecostals understand and appreciate this scripture. Whereas both capitalists in Marx's context and the Pharisees in Jesus time are oppressive and unjust, Jesus emancipates those who answer His invitation to come to Him.

DATA PRESENTATION

The date presented here is from personal interview conducted in three Pentecostal churches in Imo State, Nigeria. These three Pentecostal churches were randomly selected by the researcher for the study to complement the date collected from literary sources for the study. This step is necessary as it relates the study to contemporary times and society and strengthens the relevance of the current study.

Twenty adult Pentecostal believers comprising males and females were interviewed in the month of May, 2019. Five different questions were posed to them independently. To the first question which is "do you agree that religion is opium (drug that reduces pain and makes people sleep) of the people according Karl Marx?", sixteen (16) respondents answered "no" meaning that religion is not an opium of the people. The four respondents who answered "yes", that is that religion is opium of the people may not have understood the concepts employed in the question very well. In answering question two, "since more than 5 billion people in the world belong to one religion or another, religion cannot be opium of the people?", sixteen (16) respondents answered "yes", indicating that since majority of the world's people are

religionists, religion cannot be opium of the masses. Again the four respondents who disagreed by answering "no" may not have understood the question well. Responding to question three, which stated, "do you agree that Jesus Christ gives His followers true rest through salvation He offers according to Matthew 11:28-30?", the whole interviewees (20) answered "yes". This possibly means these Pentecostal believers have individually experienced the divine "numinous" rest or refreshing which comes from the Salvation that Jesus brings.

In another question, "do you agree that Pentecostal religion emancipates her practitioners according to Matthew 11:28-30?", Nineteen (19) respondents answered "yes" which is indicative of the fact that Pentecostalism is not a confusion but an enlightenment which brings holistic emancipation of its members who abide in the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30. The one respondent who answered "no" may not have understood the question or may not have perhaps had a personal and practical experience of the refreshing emancipation Jesus officers to those who truly believe in Him.

In the same development, sixteen (16) respondents to the question, "since Karl Marx was an atheist, his assessment of religion cannot be true?", answered "yes" whereas four answered "no". Here again majority of the respondent are of the opinion that an assessment of an atheist, Karl Marx on religion cannot be true. The other four respondents who answered to the contrary may not have understood the question very well.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Herein, the researcher makes analysis and discussion of the data collected and collated from both the literary sources and empirical study of respondent in the field.

From the literature reviewed, Karl Marx was great theorist, political economic activist who wanted to overthrow all forms of exploitative and oppressive systems and structure whether political, economical or religious. Thus, his personal economic depression and poverty and his philosophical persuasions pushed him to regard religion as opium of the people since religion does encourage its practitioners to rise above the fettering effects of capitalists' oppressive domination.

Further analysis of Marx's views about religion reveals that practitioners of religion especially Christianity whether Catholicism and Protestantism became capitalists and oppressive at one point or another, but Jesus was different in the sense that He maintained His advocacy for the oppressed, needy and weary to date. This means capitalism and materialism observable in religions are aberration and distortions of real ideas and ideals of religion especially Christianity.

Pentecostals believe that Jesus offers them rest from the salvation that is in His invitational statement in Matthew 11:28-30. Jesus' word in Matthew brings numinous refreshment to Pentecostal believers and not confusion or a sigh but smiles on their faces.

Pentecostals interview overwhelmingly agreed that they have received emancipation from the words of their master, Jesus and are not under the control of the fettering of any other lord(s). This is contrary to the belief of Karl Marx that religion keeps its followers under that fettering control of capitalists and landlords.

Finally, overwhelming number of the respondents interviewed agreed that Karl Marx who is an atheist and does not believe in God or gods cannot have genuine and authentic assessment of religion whatsoever.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study which aimed at responding to the statement of Karl Marx on "religion as opium of the people": a response from Pentecostal understanding of Matthew 11:28-30 has done justice to the subject under discussion. Step by step study which includes, introduction, concept explication, theoretical frameworks, methodologies used in the study, context of Marx's statement, issues on Marx's statement, Pentecostal interpretation of Marx's statement, Exegesis of the Matthew's text of study, presentation of data from the field, analysis and discussion of data from literary and field sources, and then conclusion and recommendation have received attention in the piece.

The study therefore concludes by recommending that Karl Marx an atheist, a humanist and political economic activist who wanted to overthrow all forms exploitative and oppressive systems of his time – space must be read and quoted in contextual perspective.

Karl Marx was perhaps sincerely wrong in his philosophy and methodology of achieving socio-politico-economic freedom for proletariats or labours of his time. That is why he was exiled many times and his socialist/communist philosophy has barely survived the test of times. Thus his methodology to achieve socio-politico-economic freedom should not be imbibed by modern political economic theorists and activists.

Those whose religious belief have not offered real rest and refreshing encounter with the numinous are hereby invited by Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden light" (Thompson, NIV, 1993).

Jesus offers justice to the exploited and oppressed. Many Pentecostals have experienced this truth across the world. Jesus through the Pentecostal Christianity offers once more an alternative society for those who are weary and burdened by sin and oppressions in the world, for they will receive and enjoy numinous refreshment in their entire being and eternal life at last.

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