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Piety Of Cornelius (ACTS 10:1-22): Model For Government Officials In Nigeria

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ABSTRACT
The study on "Piety of Cornelius (Acts 10:1-22) Model for Government Officials in Nigeria" contents that Biblical piety is scarce in the Nigerian public space. The problem the study attempts to tackle is that while Nigerian government officials seem to be religious, they also seem to be innocent of Biblical piety. That is the reason why Nigerian leaders are calling the citizenry to embrace piety as lifestyle. The study is anchored on Divine-right theory and functionalism theory. The study engaged social-science-method of investigation whereby content analysis of the text of Acts 10:1-22 which examined its historical cultural and social context is explored. The findings pertinent to the study includes: Piety is a scarce commodity in the Nigerian public space. Piety is a connection between God and humans in the society." Piety has God fearing, almsgiving and prayer as components. Piety is contagious. The paper concludes that piety is social and spiritual infrastructure on which to build a just peaceable and progressive Nigeria. The paper recommends that Nigerian government officials should emulate the piety of Cornelius in fearing God, almsgiving to the needy, and praying for a country free from corruption, intimidation, killings and other socio-political vices. Piety brings good reputation which is the highest legacy to leave behind.

Keywords: Piety, Cornelius, Model, Government officials

INTRODUCTION

Piety in modern societies is a scarce item even in the midst of religious world. The world today and Nigeria not an exempt is filled with sounds and echoes of religious activities while piety remained wanting. This is even more among government officials of all varieties, ranks and cadres where piety seems to be non-existence. Put frankly and bluntly many Nigerian government officials, although affiliated to one religion or the other are in the most instance innocent of piety. For many government officials in Nigeria, they are removed from being pious in their dealings within and outside the office. In this wise, the saying that the African or Nigerian Christianity is one mile wide and one inch deep Word press. Com (2008), come to mind. Similarly, Asia missions association (2017) referring to the African continent experience of momentum numerical growth and spread of churches but with poor level of spiritual depth called the phenomenon "one mile wide and one inch deep" what this phenomenon entails is lack of piety among congregants in the African churches.

Literature Review – Conceptual Framework

This section discusses the core literary items that form pillars of the study.

The term piety comes first in this task. Piety in English means "strong belief in a religion that is shown in the way someone lives" Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary (2025). Similarly, piety is defined as "strong religious belief, or behavior that is religious or morally correct". It is also rendered as "dutiful devotion to God and observance of religious principles" Collins Dictionary (2025). A document Christianity. Come describes piety as the quality of being religious or reverent". The document adds, that piety means trust and love for God, by following his commandments and faithfully praying to him for blessings (Christianity.com, 2021).

Again the document Got Questions.org (2025), explains the term piety as godliness in reverence for God. In the same vein, bible-tools.org (2025), opines that piety means to give reverence to God and worship him from a holy life. Berke (2025) making reference to John Calvin remarked that piety (pietas, Latin) delineate the right attitude of man toward God expressed in knowledge of God, saving faith, heartfelt worship, prayerful devotion, reverential fear and love. The author further quoted John Calvin in saying that piety is comprehensive, showing theological, ecclesiological, and practical aspects which are nurtured by spirit filled teaching of the church.

All the definitions, descriptions and explanations of piety have to do with reference and reverence to God in love, worship and submission. Therefore piety is deep and conscientious devotion to God and benevolence to mankind.

The importance of Piety in Christianity

Piety as a concept is not everyday word among Christians. It is often used in passing an advice or recommendation without extensive explanations. Contemporarily, such words as faithfulness, devotion or spirituality are often used in place of piety (Mceachran; 2024). This lack of popularization in conservation has brought lack of scholarly literature on the concept of piety.

In the words of Mceachran (2024) piety transcends mere theoretical concept to generate transformative force which fashion open's relationship with others and lifestyle. It enhances such virtues as kindness, humility and devotion to God's commandments molding one's character and reverence to God. Piety is seen in the Christian's constant prayers in humility as well as loving your neighbor. Serving others as piety demonstrated, (Mc earchram, 2024).

Importance of piety in society

Piety is crucial for the unity and progress of any society even in modern times. The ancient Roman Empire held piety as one of the highest virtues because it knits all aspects of society together in love, loyalty and reciprocal obligation. Piety is the glue that cements people together (Pope, 2012). Piety was a great virtue of Socratics who consider help received from others as what make him. Individualism is a great enemy of piety because it tends to instill self-sufficiency. Many of our struggles in the modern day are consequent on loss of piety (Pope, 2012).

Piety to parents known as filial piety is important in the family unity and effectiveness. Reverence to parents, elders and teachers is the bedrock of peaceful, organized and progressive society. Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it May be well with you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you (Deuteronomy, 5:16). In this wise, piety becomes an expression of one's reverence and love to parents and demonstration of obedience to God's commandment. Whether the piety of a city-state is true piety, piety is a virtue which means that state should be pious in whatever forms (Yang, 2022). Piety is what God loves and humans affirm and appreciate.

Piety as evangelistic strategy

Piety may be used as evangelistic strategy to bring lost person back to the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Popular piety may be an effective method of evangelization in the modern world as it was in the Bible times where it enhanced growth of the Christianity community and belongingness. In this sense, piety serves as connection to the root of Christianity which is faith in Jesus Christ (Zengarini, 2024).

Additionally, piety is not mere outward expression of religiosity, but genuine religious spirit that brings to the heavenly Father as his children, growing in love for others and embracing them as members of God's family (Pope, 2014)

This is what James referred to as true religion. "pure and undefiled religion before God and the father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). Piety is the true religion and Christianity that offers true devotion and reverence to God and true respect and benevolence to man.

Examples of people of piety in the Bible

Some of the people who showed piety in the bible beside Cornelius include the following:

In acts 22:12-13 tells about one, Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there, came to me; and he stood and said to me, brother Saul, receive your sight. And at that same hour I looked up at him.

Again, Luke 2:30-37 presents another example of pious person. " Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher, she was of a great age and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about 84 years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fasting and prayers night and day. Similarly, Job was yet another pious person in the Bible. In Job 1:1, there was a man in the land of UZ, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright and one that feared God, and shunned evil. Noah was also an example of pious man. In Genesis 6:9 "these are generations of Noah. Noah was a just man and perfect in his generation, and Noah walked with God. These examples are illustrative and not exhaustive as there are more biblical examples of person who demonstrated piety in the lives. These examples are for us to learn from them and live lives that our generation will testify that we brought positive changes in society through pious activities.

Model is another term to be considered and it is one of the building blocks in the conceptualization. From the Cambridge Dictionary (2025), model means something that a copy can be based on because it is an extremely good example of its type. In the Collins dictionary (2025), model is used to express approval of someone when you think that they perform their role of duties extremely well. The document vocabulary.com (2025) looks at the Latin root of the term model which is "modulus" and duties "measure'' or "standard" .

In this wise therefore, a model is a standard or measure that can be copied or imitated for being exemplary. In this case Cornelius, the centurion in the performance of his duties showed forth a standard and measure that can be presented for emulation by others. Hence the essence of the paper on "piety of Cornelius (Acts 10:1-22) model for government officials in Nigeria".

Government officials are described as officials, employees and other persons working in an official capacity on behalf of any branch of a government (eg;, legislative administrative, judicial, military or public department or agency thereof; directors, officers and employees of state owned, state-controlled or state –operated enterprises (Law Insider, 2025). This explanation suffices for this paper as it captures the personality and duties of Cornelius, the Roman centurion being studied in this piece.

Theoretical frameworks for this study are:

1. Divine – right theory which states that government is established and legitimized by a higher-power, like a deity or a divinely ordained leader. Consequently, rulers are believed to have a special relationship with divine and are therefore required to rule with divine right. This Theory can be traced to the medieval European conception that God awarded earthly. Power to government officials and spiritual power to church officials (The editors of encyclopedia Britannica, 2025). The proponents of the divine-right theory of government are Jacques-benigne Bossuet a French bishop 1621-1704, James I (1627-1704) and VI of Scotland (1567-1625) and the "sun king" of France, Louis xiv famously promoted this doctrine during his reign. This theory is relevant to the study in that it links rulership of government officials with divinity through the platform of piety. In that sense, piety becomes connection between God and humans in society in the one hand and humans in progressive societies in the other hand. It is also supported by 'let every soul be subject to the governing

authorities. For there is no authority expect from God and the authorities that exist are appointed by God (Romans 13;1).

2. Functionalism is a social science theory that was postulated by Emile Durkheim. It argued that a social system such as government should have functional unity in which all parts of the system work together, where all cultural or social phenomena have a positive function that are indispensable (the editors of encyclopedia Britannica, 2025). Consequently this theory is relevant to the present study because it brings the cultural, social and religious phenomenon of piety as indispensable in smooth and peaceful progress of societies. Abraham Heschel popularized the concept in his famous. 'The phenomenon of piety written by Joseph Harp Briton in 2013 published by London; bloomsbury.

As a phenomenon there is a formula:-**piety-deity-society**. Piety is spiritually linked to God and socially linked to human being and their societies. This study is in pursuant of piety of Cornelius in Acts 10:1-22 as model for government official in officials where there are not much observable evidences of phenomenal piety.

Methodology

The study employs social-science methodological approach whereby content analyses of the text of Acts 10:1-22 which examines its historical cultural background and social context is undertaken. Intercultural hermeneutics whereby word analyses are deployed to enrich the understanding of the text of the study. Secondary literary texts and maternal are also reviewed to strengthen the paper.

Nigeria: Context of interpretation

Piety among government official in Nigeria is captured by Nmah (2017), where the author upheld that there must be filial piety between rulers and the ruled so as to close the gap between the rich and poor masses in Nigeria. However, there cannot be genuine filial piety without deep religious piety. Furthermore, Anayo (2025) reported annual Ramadam lecture held at the Obafemi Awolowo university campus in Ile –Ife on Sunday a 9th March 2025, where the audience were enjoined to "invoke the virtue of piety, charity and moderation as useful tool for building resilience, patriotic and charitable Nigerian citizens. The lecture titled "navigating economic difficulties in Nigeria through resilience on Allah called on Nigerian populace to embrace reliance on divine providence, economy of resources, resource redistribution through obligatory and emphatic charity and mercy for the poor in the society. The lecture was on practical piety. But will the Nigerian government officials heed to this clarion call to piety in society?

In the same dimension, Usigbe (2025) opined Ramadam: Tinubu urges Muslims to embrace piety, humility and selflessness which will aid to foster unity and peace in the Nigerian communities. In the light of the afore mentioned literature, it becomes abundantly clear that piety amongst Nigerians is much needed building block in the society.

It is therefore not a gain say that the present paper on "piety of Cornelius acts 10:1-13) model for government officials in Nigeria" is apt fitting the situation in Nigeria where piety as exemplified by the Bible character is in high demand. Piety should not be confused with being religious. Many Nigerian government officials could be described as religious without being pious. Cornelius was a Roman centurion which means an army officer, in charge of six hundred men. He was a leading soldier and well respected by the Jewish people not because of the military power and ammunitions but because of evidential piety and good reputation.

This paper is poised to be bring out the cardinal qualities of Cornelius- the centurion which serves a model for Nigerian government officials, military inclusive.

The Nigerian leaders are calling for piety of citizens because of incessant cases of intimidation, corruption even in Nigeria counts (Angbule, 2024). The Nigerian labor and civil society movement were worried that the government deployed armed military operative at the negotiation meeting, saying it was suspicious, intimidating, and coercive in nature as there was no reasons for that action on labor leaders meet with government team (Tolu-Kolawole, 2024).

Similarly, a survey conducted by united nations office on drugs and crime (UNODC, 2019) posited that " out of all Nigerian citizens who had at least one contact with a public official in the 12 months prior to the 2019 survey, 30.2 percent paid a bribe to or were asked to pay a bribe by, a public officials".

The survey further revealed that although bribe is reducing, but "those who did pay bribes continued to do so quite frequently in 2019, Nigerian bribe-prayers paid an average of 6 brides in the 12 months prior to survey, or one tribe every two months". (UNODC, 2019). Corruption in the public space is wide spread as (Ijewereme 2015) reported that government officials in Tafawa Balewa's government in the first Nigerian Republic looted public funds with impunity without army policy to halt the menace by the then government. Although the government of Nigeria has implemented certain policies and institutions such as war against indiscipline (WAI), Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), independent corrupt practices and other related offenses commission (ICPC), the monster named corruption in Nigeria has defied any treatment to tame it. This is the context in which the present study is being applied. The context of the study is obviously anti-piety. Hence, the study is apt and current need of the hour.

The text of study is Acts 10:1-22 which is studied as fellows;

Literary context is the passage before and the passage after the section being investigated. Literary context is crucial in textual interpretation because it provides relationship between words, flow-of–thought and accurate meaning of words for the present study the literary context is Acts 9; 36-43 and Acts 10;23-48. Luke the author of Acts knows how to knits his thoughts and events to form a synchronized reading. In Acts 9;36-43, Peter raises Dorcas at Joppa who was full of good works and charitable deeds who became sick and died. But the widows who benefited from Dorcas' good works and charitable deeds could not allow her removed from them by death. So they called Peter and stood by him (Peter) weeping showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was alive Peter filled with compassion knelt down and prayed, called Dorcas to arise and she arose and was presented to the women by Peter. Then Acts 10:23-48 was the conversion of Cornelius the centurion as it were by Peter who had been invited by Cornelius through the direction of God. Peter said that God shows no partiality but whoever fears him and works righteousness is accepted by him. This is indicative of the fact that God is catholic in accepting the gentiles like Cornelius in the commonwealth of Israel and into his kingdom economy. Between these two sections lie the passage being investigated which is Acts 10:1-22. In this passage is another person who was devout feared God, gave alms to the people and prayed to God always. It is a literary tailoring for Luke to craft in a pious woman Dorcas and pious man Cornelius in his master piece. Immediately, the reader observes Lukan gender sensitivity in documentation of items and events. While Dorcas was raised (healed) from physical sickness, Cornelius was as it were saved from spiritual sickness-sin.

Historical cultural/setting of the text:- The historical cultural background /setting of the Acts 10;1-22 describes the continuation of the book of Luke and shows the early church's growth and expansion within the Roman empire. Geographical and culturally Acts locates audiences in the eastern Mediterranean of first century world of the Roman Empire. Acts attempts to answer a theological question of how Jesus Christ, the promised messiah to the Jews became a universal messiah in overwhelmingly non Jewish church – the gentiles. This is why it was written for Christian community outside of Palestine having being addressed to a man named Theophilus (Acts 1;1).

It is in this historical cultural background/setting that Luke inserted the episode of Cornelius signifying the turn to gentile mission. This beginning of the gentile mission presented a devout and pious man called Cornelius that begs our study of his model of piety for what it offers the Nigerian government officials in the present day intimidation, extortion, nepotism, corruption of all colours in the public space.

Exegesis of Acts 10:1-22

The exegesis of the text follows below

Citing of Greek text –

Verse 1: Ἀνὴρ δέ τις ἦν ἐν Καισαρείᾳ ὀνόματι Κορνήλιος, ἑκατοντάρχης ἐκ σπείρης τῆς καλουμένης Ἰταλικῆς,

Verse 2: εὐσεβὴς καὶ φοβούμενος τὸν θεὸν σὺν παντὶ τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ, ποιῶν τε ἐλεημοσύνας πολλὰς τῷ λαῷ, καὶ δεόμενος τοῦ θεοῦ διὰ παντός.

Verse 3: Εἶδεν ἐν ὁράματι φανερῶς, ὡσεὶ ὥραν ἐνάτην τῆς ἡμέρας, ἄγγελον τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσελθόντα πρὸς αὐτόν, καὶ εἰπόντα αὐτῷ, Κορνήλιε.

Verse 4: Ὁ δὲ ἀτενίσας αὐτῷ καὶ ἔμφοβος γενόμενος εἶπεν, Τί ἐστιν, κύριε; Εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ, Αἱ προσευχαί σου καὶ αἱ ἐλεημοσύναι σου ἀνέβησαν εἰς μνημόσυνον ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ.

Verse 5: Καὶ νῦν πέμψον εἰς Ἰόππην ἄνδρας, καὶ μετάπεμψαι Σίμωνα τὸν ἐπικαλούμενον Πέτρον·

Verse 6: οὗτος ξενίζεται παρά τινι Σίμωνι βυρσεῖ, ᾧ ἐστιν οἰκία παρὰ θάλασσαν·

Verse 7: ὡς δὲ ἀπῆλθεν ὁ ἄγγελος ὁ λαλῶν τῷ Κορνηλίῳ, φωνήσας δύο τῶν οἰκετῶν αὐτοῦ, καὶ στρατιώτην εὐσεβῆ τῶν προσκαρτερούντων αὐτῷ,

Verse 8: καὶ ἐξηγησάμενος αὐτοῖς ἅπαντα, ἀπέστειλεν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν Ἰόππην.

Verse 9: Τῇ δὲ ἐπαύριον, ὁδοιπορούντων ἐκείνων καὶ τῇ πόλει ἐγγιζόντων, ἀνέβη Πέτρος ἐπὶ τὸ δῶμα προσεύξασθαι, περὶ ὥραν ἕκτην·

Verse 10: ἐγένετο δὲ πρόσπεινος, καὶ ἤθελεν γεύσασθαι· παρασκευαζόντων δὲ ἐκείνων, ἐπέπεσεν ἐπ’ αὐτὸν ἔκστασις,

Verse 11: καὶ θεωρεῖ τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνεῳγμένον, καὶ καταβαῖνον ἐπ’ αὐτὸν σκεῦός τι ὡς ὀθόνην μεγάλην, τέσσαρσιν ἀρχαῖς δεδεμένον, καὶ καθιέμενον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς·

Verse 12: καὶ θεωρεῖ τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνεῳγμένον, καὶ καταβαῖνον ἐπ’ αὐτὸν σκεῦός τι ὡς ὀθόνην μεγάλην, τέσσαρσιν ἀρχαῖς δεδεμένον, καὶ καθιέμενον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς·

Verse 13: Καὶ ἐγένετο φωνὴ πρὸς αὐτόν, Ἀναστάς, Πέτρε, θῦσον καὶ φάγε.

Verse 14: Ὁ δὲ Πέτρος εἶπεν, Μηδαμῶς, κύριε· ὅτι οὐδέποτε ἔφαγον πᾶν κοινὸν ἢ ἀκάθαρτον.

Verse 15: Καὶ φωνὴ πάλιν ἐκ δευτέρου πρὸς αὐτόν, Ἃ ὁ θεὸς ἐκαθάρισεν, σὺ μὴ κοίνου.

Verse 16: Τοῦτο δὲ ἐγένετο ἐπὶ τρίς· καὶ πάλιν ἀνελήφθη τὸ σκεῦος εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν.

Verse 17: Ὡς δὲ ἐν ἑαυτῷ διηπόρει ὁ Πέτρος τί ἂν εἴη τὸ ὅραμα ὃ εἶδεν, καὶ ἰδού, οἱ ἄνδρες οἱ ἀπεσταλμένοι ἀπὸ τοῦ Κορνηλίου, διερωτήσαντες τὴν οἰκίαν Σίμωνος, ἐπέστησαν ἐπὶ τὸν πυλῶνα,

Verse 18: καὶ φωνήσαντες ἐπυνθάνοντο εἰ Σίμων, ὁ ἐπικαλούμενος Πέτρος, ἐνθάδε ξενίζεται.

Verse 19: Τοῦ δὲ Πέτρου διενθυμουμένου περὶ τοῦ �ράματος, εἶπεν αὐτῷ τὸ πνεῦμα, Ἰδού, ἄνδρες ζητοῦσίν σε.

Verse 20: Ἀλλὰ ἀναστὰς κατάβηθι, καὶ πορεύου σὺν αὐτοῖς, μηδὲν διακρινόμενος· διότι ἐγὼ ἀπέσταλκα αὐτούς.

Verse 21: Καταβὰς δὲ Πέτρος πρὸς τοὺς ἄνδρας εἶπεν, Ἰδού, ἐγώ εἰμι ὃν ζητεῖτε· τίς ἡ αἰτία δι' ἣν πάρεστε;

Verse 22: Οἱ δὲ εἶπον, Κορνήλιος ἑκατοντάρχης, ἀνὴρ δίκαιος καὶ φοβούμενος τὸν θεόν, μαρτυρούμενός τε ὑπὸ ὅλου τοῦ ἔθνους τῶν Ἰουδαίων, ἐχρηματίσθη ὑπὸ ἀγγέλου ἁγίου μεταπέμψασθαί σε εἰς τὸν ο ἶκον αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἀκοῦσαι ῥήματα παρὰ σοῦ.

Transliteration of Greek text -

Citing of the English text – Acts 10:1-22 – New King James Version

Verse 1: There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment,
Verse 2: a devout *man* and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always.
Verse 3: About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!"
Verse 4: And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, lord?" So he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.
Verse 5: Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter.
Verse 6: He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do."
Verse 7: And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually.
Verse 8: So when he had explained all *these* things to them, he sent them to Joppa.
Verse 9: The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour.

Verse 10: The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour.
Verse 11: and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth.
Verse 12: In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air.
Verse 13: And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat."

Verse 14: But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean."
Verse 15: And a voice *spoke* to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common."
Verse 16: And a voice *spoke* to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common."
Verse 17: Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate.
Verse 18: And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there.

Verse 19: While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are seeking you.
Verse 20: Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them."
Verse 21: Then Peter went down to the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius, and said, "Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?"
Verse 22: And they said, "Cornelius *the* centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you."

Structurization of the Text Acts 10;1-22. The Text of Acts 10;1-22 is analyzed according to the structure below:
1. Cornelius piety vv.1-2
2. Cornelius vision vv.3-7
3.cornelius sends for peter vv.8-21
4.cornelius good reputation v.22

Text analysis of Acts 10;1-22. Cornelius' piety begins with his identity and personality. There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band. Καισαρείᾳ Caesarea is an important town in early Christian history is located between Joppa and Dora about 68-95 miles from Jerusalem. It was one of the largest towns in Palestine chiefly occupied by gentiles but not without many Jewish inhabitants also (Bible hub, n.d.). It was where Cornelius as a gentile resided by the time he had the encounter with the angel of God. The name Cornelius has a Latin origin 'Cornu' meaning 'horn'. He was ἑκατοντάρχης centurion, "hundred commander" or officer commanding Roman century– a military unit originally consisting of 100 legionaries (AI overview,2025)

This information implies that Cornelius was a man of authority. It was reported by Walvoord and Zuck (1983) that the Italian regiment where Cornelius belonged consisted of 600 soldiers yet he was pious and feared God.

εὐσεβὴς καὶ φοβούμενος τὸν θεὸν pious and fearing God are linked with a connecting conjunction which means that the two words being connected have equal grammatical importance in the sentence. εὐσεβὴς is translated a devout man, one having deep religious feeling and or commitment, dedicated to belief in God. φοβούμενος means "reverential and righteous retribution. Both the verb *yare* and noun *yirah* forms of fear in the Hebrew infer "to fear, to respect, to reverence and fear of God in positive sense. So that εὐσεβὴς καὶ φοβούμενος τὸν θεὸν means that cornelius was devout and committed in the fear of God.

His devoutedness influenced and impacted positively on his entire family or household. Piety is often infectious and contagious. Cornelius must have been a proselyte of the gate who have abandoned polytheism and became a worshiper of the true God in the Synagogue (Bible Hub n.d).

Almsgiving is an important demonstration of love and compassion from the heart. Almsgiving was a common practice in ancient Israel and in the early church in Acts. Almsgiving is a show of benevolence, a charitable act to a person in need, Alms should be giving directly to the recipients and privately too. Alms should not be confused with tithes and offering which are giving to God (Also Brook,2007).

In the teaching of Jesus Christ, He equated almsgiving with righteousness when he said 'take care not to practice your righteousness in the sight of people, to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven' (Matthew 6;1, New America standard Bible,2020).

So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you ''(Matthew 6;2 NASB,2020) but when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing (Matthew 6;3 NASB,2020). Notice that this translation is consistent in rendering ἐλεημοσύναι as righteousness in 6:1 and giving to the poor in vv2-3. In verse 4, it renders ἐλεημοσύναι as charitable giving which also

indicates giving to the poor. In this manner, ἐλεημοσύναι which is translated both as righteousness and almsgiving is piety.

Again ἐλεημοσύνας and καὶ δεόμενος τοῦ θεοῦ is linked with connecting conjunctions καὶ meaning also that almsgiving and prayer/petition are of equal importance in this section of the passage. A document (study light. org, n.d.) has opined that almsgiving was highly appreciated by the Jews. To that end, Jewish documents Ecclus and Tobit have passages where both almsgiving and fasting are closing linked with prayer, Sir 7:10; Tob 12:8.

The subject of Cornelius prayer is not very certain. Yet it has been posited that the subject of his prayer might be to be guided into truth regarding his new found faith so that he can fully become a believer in Christ (Bible hub ,n.d). It can be inferred that fear of God, almsgiving and prayer are components of piety in the Cornelius discourse. In that wise therefore, Cornelius was a man of piety, who feared God, gave alms and prayed always are all in one package.

2. Cornelius' vision v. 3-7

Because of the piety of Cornelius, God gave him a vision informing him that his προσευχαί σου καὶ αἱ ἐλεημοσύναι σου ἀνέβησαν εἰς μνημόσυνον Prayer and almsgiving have come memorial to God. Μνημόσυνον - memorial in the Bible which means remembering is important word used to describe the act of God or people in not forgetting an event. In this case piety is a memorial act of worship that God and people do not forget. Here again prayer and almsgiving are seen by God as sacrificial components of piety. In this manner God has broken down barriers between Jews and gentiles by accepting the prayers and alms of a gentile as equal to the sacrifice of a Jew (constable, 2012). It must be remarked that Cornelius' piety was the determinant of his heavenly vision to send for Peter who was residing in Joppa at this time. Cornelius' piety imparted on his entire household as earlier noted in this study. That is why he called two of his εὐσεβὴς devout/pious soldiers to go to Peter. Prayers which is a component of piety of Cornelius is the hand that is linked to the vision. No prayer no heavenly vision. The two personalities, Cornelius and peter who were about 30 miles apart were given vision concerning the same matter in answer to their individual prayers. God can wrought impossible through the link of prayer. The birth of the gentile mission is born out of earnest prayer and God's given vision.

3**. Cornelius sent for Peter v 8-21**

As the devout messengers of Cornelius arrived Joppa, Peter was on the housetop praying. Προσεύξασθαι and fell into ἔκστασις Trace and saw heaven opened and descending to him vessel containing παντα all kinds of four-footed animals, reptiles and birds representing clean and unclean animals. This signifies a shift in the divine salvivic program. God's message to Peter is that God is catholic, his program is catholic and his kingdom is for believers from all nations; tribes and tongues.

A voice came to Peter telling him to arise, Peter; θῦσον καὶ φάγε! Kill and eat. But Peter replied surely not, by no means, emphatic denial. Μηδαμῶς by no means, not at all. οὐδέποτε ἔφαγον not even once, not even ever, never did I eat anything κοινὸν common-ritually impure ἢ ἀκάθαρτον or unclean. This means emphatic denial. The series of three visions by Peter signify completeness. The Message is obviously encoded beyond any doubt of confusion of its source or clarity. This is radical dismantling of variety of barriers; culturally, socially, religiously, ethically and perhaps dietarily. The idea of θῦσον καὶ φάγε signifies the slaying of animals for sacrifice. The gentiles and the Jews are obviously indicated by the unclean and clean animals that are by the ministry of the gospel of Peter and other apostles were to be offered as spiritual sacrifice to God (Clarke, 1832). God who is catholic is up against discrimination, prejudice, bigotry, racism but wants to build a kingdom of inclusiveness. Peter must cross boundaries to preach the gospel justly, without partiality.

As Peter was wondering about the intent of his vision, the men from Cornelius arrived his residence. Through inquiry, they located were Peter called Simon was lodging. The Holy Spirit confirming genuineness of the messengers said to Peter, arise go down and go with hem for I have sent them. Peter met them and said, I am he whom you seek. Why have you come? Peter asked them. The door to the

gentile mission is opening and Peter the apostle is leading the way. This is why Peter is the most cross-cultural missionary of the New Testament times and not apostle Paul.

4**. Cornelius good reputation V.22**

And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has μαρτυρούμενός τε ὑπὸ ὅλου τοῦ ἔθνους τῶν Ἰουδαίων being witnessed by the whole nation of the Jews, having a good reputation was given a revelation by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house to hear him. Cornelius having a good reputation or being witnessed by the whole nation of Jews for piety, goodness, righteous is incredible. We should be reminded that Cornelius the centurion in Acts 10 was not Jew by birth or nationality. Rather he was a Roman soldier who became acculturated into the Jews culture including the Jewish religion. Even as a stranger he earned good reputation to the extent that the Jews μαρτυρούμενός for Cornelius piety.

A pattern is emerging in the episode. Cornelius piety becomes a memorial in heaven. Cornelius' piety becomes a good reputation on earth. Cornelius piety moves God to give two separate visions about one thing to Cornelius and Peter simultaneously. Stressing that the gentile mission was ripped, urgent and crucial at that point in time-space. This posits that Cornelius received social commendation, acclamation, approval and acknowledgment from the masses, the Jewish for that matter.

Summary of the Findings

Major findings pertinent to the study include:

1. Piety is a scarce commodity in the Nigerian public space.
2. Piety is being advocated by Nigerians hence the clarion calls for it from her leaders.
3. Piety is a connection between God and humans in society.
4. Piety has fearing God (reverence), almsgiving and prayers (petitions) as components
5. Piety is contagious
6. Piety of Cornelius is confirmed as a memorial in heaven and witnessed by Jewish men on earth as good reputation.
7. So that by his piety, Cornelius became just before God and just before men.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper concludes that piety is societal and spiritual infrastructure that can usher in a just and progressive Nigeria. The study on piety of Cornelius (acts 10:1-22) model for government officials in Nigeria has been source of enlightenment. The background of the piece, conceptual framework, theoretical framework, methodology, context of interpretation which is Nigeria received attention in the study. Beginning with literary context, historical culture background/setting of the text of Acts 10:1-22 in different languages for better understanding, the exegesis was undertaken. The government officials would have helped to ensure a just and prosperous Nigeria should they become pious like Cornelius.

The study recommends as model from the piety of Cornelius to the government officials in Nigeria the following:

Government officials should emulate the piety of Cornelius with its components. Fearing God, almsgiving and praying always. Government officials should aid the people around them to embrace piety as it is seen in the household of Cornelius. So much so that even soldiers in his cohort were described by scriptures to be pious.

Government officials in Nigeria ought to have the public witness to their good reputation in the discharge of their formal and informal duties.

Government officials should understand that piety with all its components enumerated in this study is the only enduring memorial and legacy they can leave behind when they exit pubic space and this world.

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