

# Jansenism in the Modern African Church: The Indigenous Pentecostal Church Tradition in Nigeria

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## Abstract

Jansenism is a seventh-century religious movement within the Roman Catholic Church, named after a Dutch theologian Cornelius Jansen, whose work *Augustinus* (1640) reviewed the major thoughts of Augustine's theology. Jansenist teachings were associated with harsh moral rigorism against the Jesuits' Molinist thoughts. It was first condemned by Pope Innocent X in 1653, and finally in 1713 with many French migrants finding refuge in Holland from persecution. However, having retained traces of its teachings in the same Catholic Church that condemned them, Jansenist thoughts have found flourishing ground in the modern churches of Africa, especially among the African indigenous Pentecostal denominations in Nigeria. This indigenous Pentecostal tradition comprises the African Independent Churches, the *Aladura* movement, and the African Pentecostal movement, whose belief and practices are in line with the five pillars of Jansenism. This work, therefore, proposes that the reality of history lies with the future; whose interpretation of the past is proved by modern reality, and not by the ancient traditions.

**Keywords:** Jansen; Jansenism; Africa; Modern Church; Christianity

## Introduction

Through the ages, the history of Christianity vis-à-vis the church has remained a chronicle of scandals, abuses and a struggle for reform which has spanned through many centuries of the Christian church. In the view of modern church historians, church history can also be re-written as a chronicle of reforms. This is because—in the history of the church—there has never been a century when genuine reformist ideas ever ceased the struggle to prevail (Tillich 1976, 20). It would be out of the question to attempt in a single volume, let alone in an article, a detailed description or account of the various kinds of reforms that have been advocated and executed in the course of over two thousand years of Christianity. One should also consider the focal points of every reform agenda as the reform of individual persons, reform of ecclesiastical and liturgical abuses, and reform of life in general (Tillich 1976, 20–22).

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The reformation period saw the formation of many types of council in an attempt to control the split in the church, yet the demand for general council never stopped. It was in response to this that the Council of Trent was convened (1562), but instead of being a universal council, it turned out to be a council for counter-Reformation. At Trent, session of the council was held through several decades, with many interpretations excluding the Protestant reformers (Tillich 1968, 21). As Tillich maintains, history compels us to hold on to abiding issues, and rescues us from the contemporary and the transient. This view emphasises the significance of this work in an attempt to explore the effectiveness or usefulness of Jansenism in modern church history. Today it is observed that most of these teachings and individuals—condemned as dissenters from the ancient Catholic tradition as heretics—are being celebrated by the modern church and Christianity with the Council of Trent standing unquestionably as the biblical praxis.

In view of the above, this paper contends that Jansenist tendencies exist not only in the modern Catholic Church, both in terms of moral and sacramental “rigorism” and their views on grace and salvation, but in many modern church denominations and traditions—especially among the orthodox, Pentecostal and charismatic movements, the evangelicals, independent church denominations and other brands of new Christian religious movements in Nigeria in particular, and Africa in general. This calls for the reappraisal of Jansenism and a review of its basic tenets in relation to the contemporary church in modern Christianity.

According to *Catholic Encyclopaedia* (Knight 2012), Jansenism was a theological (turned political) movement, primarily in France, that emphasised original sin, human depravity, the necessity of divine grace, and predestination. The movement originated from the posthumously published work of the Dutch theologian, Cornelius Jansen, who died in 1638. It was first popularised by Jansen’s friend, Abbot Jean Duvergier de Hauranne, of Saint-Cyran-en-Brenne Abbey. After Duvergier’s death in 1643, the movement was led by Antoine Arnauld. Through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Jansenism was a distinct movement within the Catholic Church. The theological centre of the movement was the convent of Port-Royal Abbey, Paris, which was a haven for writers, including Duvergier, Arnauld, Pierre Nicole, Blaise Pascal, and Jean Racine.

Jansenism was opposed by many in the Catholic hierarchy, especially the Jesuits. Although the Jansenists identified themselves only as the religious followers of Augustine of Hippo’s teachings, Jesuits branded them with the term “Jansenism” to identify them as having Calvinist affinities. The apostolic constitution, promulgated by Pope Innocent X in 1653, condemned the five cardinal doctrines of Jansenism as heresy, especially the relationship between human free will and efficacious grace, where the teachings of Augustine—as presented by the Jansenists—contradicted the teachings of the Jesuit school. Initially, Jansenism leaders endeavoured to accommodate the pope’s pronouncements while retaining their uniqueness, and enjoyed a measure of peace in the late seventeenth century under Pope Clement XI. However, further controversy led to the apostolic constitution “*Unigenitus Deifilius*”, promulgated by Pope Clement XI in 1713, which marked the end of Catholic toleration of Jansenist doctrines.

## **Origin of Jansenism**

The origin of Jansenism can be traced to the friendship of Jansen and Duvergier, who met in the early seventeenth century as students of theology at the University of Leuven. Duvergier was Jansen's patron for a number of years; securing Jansen a job as a tutor in Paris in 1606. Two years later, he secured him a position also as a teacher at Bishop's College in Duvergier's home town of Bayonne. The duo studied the church fathers together with special focus on the thoughts of St Augustine of Hippo, until both left Bayonne in 1617 (*Catholic Encyclopaedia*, Knight 2012). Duvergier later became the Abbot of Saint Cyran Abbey in Brenne and was known as the Abbot de Saint-Cyran for the rest of his life. Jansen returned to the University of Leuven where he completed his studies at doctorate level in 1619 and became professor of exegesis. However, both continued their correspondence on Augustine's teachings until Jansen became the Bishop of Ypres in 1636 upon the recommendation of King Philip IV of Spain.

Jansen died in the 1638 epidemic and on his deathbed he committed a manuscript to his chaplain, ordering him to consult with two of his sponsors: Liberty Froidmont, a professor of theology at Leuven; and Henri Calenus, canon at the metropolitan church, for the publication of the manuscript at their own decision. He added that "if, however, the Holy See wishes any change, I am an obedient son, and I submit to that church in which I have lived to my dying hour, this is my last wish." This manuscript was published in 1640 as Augustine's thought and also formed the basis for the subsequent Jansenist controversy which consisted of three volumes:

1. Described the history of Pelagianism and Augustine's battle against semi-pelagianism.
2. Discussed the fall of man and original sin.
3. Denounced a "modern tendency" (unnamed by Jansen but clearly identifiable as Molinism) as semi-pelagian.

## **Life and Work of Jansen**

Cornelius Jansen, the subject of this article, according to Knight (2012), was born in October 1585 of a Roman Catholic family in the village of Accoi, near Leerdam Holland; and died at Ypres on 6 May 1638. His parents, although in moderate circumstances, secured him an excellent education. He was first sent to Utrecht and in 1602 he was enrolled at the University of Leuven, where he entered the College du Faucon for the study of philosophy. After two years' solemn promotion, in 1604 he was proclaimed first out of 118 competitors. To begin his theological studies, he entered the College Du Pape Adrien VI, whose president, Jacques Jansen, imbued with errors of Baius and eager to spread them, was to exert an influence on the subsequent course of his ideas and works. It was also said that Jansen loved the Jesuits, but the refusal he encountered for unknown reasons, seemed not to be altogether unconnected to the aversion he later manifested for the celebrated society and for the theories and practices it advocated. He was also associated with a young and wealthy Frenchman, Jean du Verger de Hauranne, who was completing his study of theology with the Jesuits, and who had a subtle and cultured mind; but he was relentless and prone to changes due to his ardent and intriguing character. Not long after his return to Paris towards the end of 1604, Du Verger was joined there by Jansen, for whom he had secured a position as tutor. About two years later he attracted

him to Bayonne, his native town, where he succeeded in having him appointed as director of Episcopal College. There, during 11 or 12 years of studies ardently pursued on the early church fathers and principally on St Augustine, the two friends (Jansen and Du Verger) had time to exchange thoughts and to receive daring projects. In 1619 Jansen received the degree of Doctor of Theology, and afterwards obtained a chair of exegesis. The commentaries which he dictated to his pupils, as well as many writings of a polemical nature, brought him deserved renown within a short time (*Catholic Encyclopaedia*, Knight 2012).

Knight (2012) states that the writings of Jansen were not at first intended for publication; in fact they were published posthumously in his honour. They are concise, clear and perfectly orthodox in doctrine. The principal ones are: *Pentatechus, sive commentarius in quinque libros moysi* (published in 1639); *Analecta in Proverbia Salomonis, Ecclesiasten, Sapientiam, Habacuc et Sophoniam* (published in 1644); *Tetrateuchus, seu commentarius in quatuor Evangelia* (published in 1639). Some of these exegetical works have been printed more than once. Among his polemical works are *Alexipharicum civibus Sy vaeducensibus propinatum adversus ministrorum fascinum* (published in 1630); then in reply to the criticism of the Calvinist Gisbert Voet, *Sponggia notarum quibus Alexipharicum aspersit Gisbertus Voetius* (published in 1631).

### **Jansenism: A Movement in the Roman Catholic Church**

Thomson (2014, 60–72) states that for Catholics, practical Christianity means bringing people to feel the power and meaning of the ceremonies and teachings of the church. In the twentieth century, this was done by simplifying and translating the mass, so that it would come alive in the congregation. In the earlier centuries it was done by providing special ceremonies and activities which would have a religious meaning for the people individually. This included: the offering of prayers with the help of the rosary; wearing articles which had been specially blessed; and new forms of devotional service, such as the adoration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, or of the reserved sacrament (i.e. the blessed communion bread left over after the mass). He also argued that Catholic theologians tried to answer those who argued for a natural or rational religion for all men. However, these centuries were not blessed with profound theologians. The best answer to unbelief was the life of true believers. Although many things were wrong with the life of the church in these centuries, it continued to nourish believers. Two good examples of the faith of the church, apart from Jansen, were a French man (Vincent de Paul) in the seventeenth century and an Italian (Alphonsus Liguori) in the eighteenth century, both of whom were declared bishop and saint.

#### **St Vincent de Paul (1580–1660)**

Vincent, a French Roman Catholic reformer was born in a peasant family. After studying theology, he was captured by pirates and lived as a slave in Tunisia for two years. He decided that the best way to express his faith, and to witness to the love of Christ, was to do charitable works among the unfortunate (prisoners).

Vincent's second idea was that any renewal of the church must start from the renewal of the life of the parish. He became famous for his work in rapidly bringing a neglected parish back to radiant Christian living. To make his work permanent, he founded two new religious orders. The first, founded in 1625, was commonly known as the *Lazarists*. This was an order of priests whose two main tasks were to train priests and to conduct mission in country parishes. The other religious order, which St Vincent founded in 1633, was the *Sister of Charity*. The order consisted of "religious sisters" who did not remain in their convent, but went out to care for the poor and the sick. Many church people were offended by the sight of sisters wandering about the world, but they made a great witness for the caring love of God for his people. Vincent was a royal counsellor to the French King Louis XIV during his boyhood, and organised relief work during the civil wars which occurred during that period.

### **St Alphonsus Liguori (1696–1787)**

Worthy to mention as one of the Roman Catholic reformers, was Alphonsus Liguori, an Italian Saint of Naples (1696–1787), who was also involved in the religious movement of the Roman Catholic Church. He belonged to a noble family, and was brilliant. He became a doctor of law at the age of 16, and had an impressive legal career. However, he lost a case as a result of confusing the law of two different Italian states, and this led him to reconsider the purpose of his life. He joined a religious order, and through this he learned of horrifying conditions in which many people of Naples were living. He founded an order, the *Redemptorists*, to conduct mission among the poor and to proclaim Christ who came to redeem the poor and the lowly. St Alphonsus was a very dramatic "missioner who used to preach on the four last things" (death, judgment, hell and heaven), holding a skull in his right hand and standing by a grim painting of the suffering of the sinner in hell; he taught confidence in God (1 Peter 1:21), the God who is always ready to be merciful. He was influenced by the Jesuits and wrote a famous book called *Moral Theology*, which continues to influence Catholic ideas about ethics of the church; that the Church should be careful not to discourage its people by too harsh discipline because it can keep them from communion. Priests should always take a charitable view of sins, and encourage sinners to repent and receive the sacrament again. The physical and moral life of the country districts of southern Italy led him to become bishop of a new and very poor diocese, and to devote himself to its renewal. In the later part of his life he was crippled with rheumatism, and had to devote himself mainly to writing. He wrote works encouraging devotion to the Virgin Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He was an obedient son of the church. As he lay dying, he was informed that, because of groundless jealousy, the pope had condemned his order of *Redemptionists*. The dying man was said to have responded: "The Pope's will is God's will. Lord, I wish all that you wish, I desire only what you desire."

### **The Five Propositions (Pillars) of Jansenism**

The teachings or theology of Jansenism is technically summed up in five propositions, popularly known as the five pillars of Jansenism, taken from his book *Augustinus* (1640). The sense of these propositions is that without a special grace from God, the performance of His commands is rather impossible to man, and that the operation of grace is irresistible; hence man is the victim of either a natural or a supernatural determinism, limited only by not being

coercive. This theological pessimism was expressed in the harshness and moral rigorism of the movement. The first generations of Jansenists were the disciples of Saint Cyran, Jansen's friend and collaborator; they included the Convent of Port-Royal. In 1653, Pope Innocent X condemned the five propositions that summarised Jansen's position, as heretical. However, the Jansenists initially sought to evade this papal condemnation by admitting that the propositions were indeed heretical, but declaring them to be unrepresentative of Jansen's true doctrines. Unfortunately for them, this distinction was disallowed by Pope Alexander VII in 1656. In 1668 the Jansenists were persuaded into submission, although they continued to gain sympathisers, as they were mostly persecuted in France but tolerated in Holland.

Bettenson (1947) systematically summed up these five pillars of Jansenism thus:

1. Some commandments of God to men wishing and striving to be righteous are impossible with regard to the present strength that they possess; and they lack the grace by which they may become possible.
2. Interior grace is never resisted in the state of fallen nature.
3. For merit or demerit in the state of fallen nature, freedom from necessity is not required in man but freedom from compulsion.
4. Semi-pelagians admit the necessity of prevenient interior grace for single acts, even for the beginning of faith; and they were heretics in this, that they wish grace to be of such a kind as human will can resist or obey.
5. It is semi-pelagian to say that Christ died and shed his blood for all men.

### **Jansenist Theology**

According to Livingstone (1977, 269), who summarises the five Jansenism propositions, they essentially mean that without a special grace from God, the performance of His command is impossible to mortal man, and that the operation of grace is irresistible; hence man is the victim of either a natural or supernatural determinism, limited only by not being coercive. This theological pessimism was manifested in the general discipline and the moral rigorism of the movement. Ferguson and Wright (1996, 63) succinctly put these propositions to have affirmed that: God's command cannot be fulfilled without God's grace; grace is irresistible; falling man is free from coercion, not from necessity; the semi-pelagian's error was denied of the irresistibility of grace; it is semi-pelagian to say that Christ died for all mankind (Aquina, in *Stain Glass: Janesism Wikimedia* 2015, 8–9).

It should be noted that even before the publication of this book on Augustine, Duvergier and his followers publicly preached Jansenism, while Jansen in a particular reading of Augustine's idea of efficacious grace, stressed that only a certain portion of humanity were predestined for salvation. Jansen insisted that the love of God is fundamental and that only perfect contrition, not imperfect contrition (or attrition) could save a person (and that in turn, only efficacious grace could tip that person towards God and such contrition). This debate over the respective roles of contrition and attrition was one of the major motives for which Duvergier was imprisoned in 1638 by the order of Cardinal Richelieu. Having been released after Richelieu's death in 1642, Duvergier died shortly thereafter in 1643.

Jansen insisted on justification by faith without contesting the necessity of venerating saints, of confession, and frequent communion. As a result, his opponents (mainly the Jesuits) condemned his teachings for their alleged similarities to Calvinism. But unlike Calvinism, Jansen rejected the doctrine of assurance and thought that even the justified (saved) could lose their salvation. More than the council of Trent (1545–1563), Blaise Pascal attempted to conciliate the contradictory positions of Molinists (Jesuits) and Calvinists by affirming that both positions were partially right.

Jansenism was declared heretical as stated by subsequent Roman Catholic doctrine, in denying the role of free will in the acceptance and use of grace. Jansenism asserts that God's role in the infusion of grace cannot be resisted and does not require human assent. Catholic doctrine, in the catechism of the Roman Catholic Church, is that God's free initiative demands man's free response; that is to say that humans freely assent or reject God's gift of grace. It is noted, however, that Cornelius Jansen's work, *Augustinus* (1640) revived a form of what is known in history as Augustine's theology (Forget 1976).

The first generation of Jansenists were disciples of Saint Cyran, Jansen's friend and collaborator and the entire content of Port-Royal. After Saint Cyran's demise in 1643, Antoine Arnauld took over the leadership of the Jansenists. Following the condemnation by Pope Innocent X in 1653, of the five propositions that summarised Jansen's position, the Jansenists tried to evade the sanction by admitting that the condemned propositions were heretical, but declaring them to have represented their position. As a result, they were finally condemned in "*The Bull Unigenitus*" in 1713, and this was followed by the persecution of Jansenists in France. However, in Holland Jansenism was tolerated and this led to a schism after the consecration of an Old Catholic Bishop of Utrecht in 1724 (Livingstone 1977, 269). In the eighteenth century it can be said that despite the reticence and equivocation which was allowed to continue, the "Peace of Clement XI" found a certain justification for its name in the period of relative calm which followed it, and lasted until the end of the seventeenth century. Many churchmen got tired of the incessant strife in Christianity and this weariness favoured the cessation of polemics.

### **Convergence of Jansenism in Modern African Church History in Nigeria**

Indigenous Pentecostal church tradition in Africa here refers to the African church groups or denominations that broke away from the early missionary churches. Like the early Pentecostal movement in America, this church tradition arose as indigenous revivalist movement in different parts of Africa in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The motivations for the rise of such indigenous Pentecostal traditions were for independence and freedom; political, social, cultural and spiritual. They sought for a contextual Christianity in leadership, worship, liturgy and spirituality. As the wind of Pentecostalism swept across the mainline missionary churches, so did the indigenous Pentecostal denominations or church traditions occupy the African Christian religious scene from the nineteenth century.

In Nigeria, the churches that are classified within this tradition include the African Indigenous Churches (AICs); the *Aladura* churches popularly known and called the “*White Garment*” brand of churches such as Cherubim and Seraphim church; Celestial church of Christ; and the Sabbath movement, among others. Other African Pentecostal denominations in this classification that are purely African in leadership, propagation and financial sponsorship, and which also came from the mainline or missionary denominations especially in Nigeria, include: The Lord’s Chosen; Deeper Life Bible Church; The Living Faith Church (Winners Chapel); and The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), among others. Some common traits or characteristics cut across these categories of church denominations; their worship is fully contextualised in an African way of life, their liturgy allows for congregation participation in language and spiritual expression as Africans.

There is a resurgence of Jansenism among these modern African churches in Nigeria. In the first place, as Jansenism in her rigorism as a reformist movement appeared in the Roman Catholic Church in the seventeenth century, in the same way these modern African churches began as reform movements in the mainline or missionary churches that preceded them, such as in the Catholic Church, the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Baptists and the Methodist Church denominations in Nigeria. Just as Jansenism and its theological ideas that were condemned by the Catholic Church of its time, so were these modern African churches nicknamed, persecuted in some cases and condemned by the established denominations.

Apart from rigorism, liturgical reform was an aspect of Jansenism which is also found in the modern African churches under review. Contextualisation, which has remained one of the major reasons for the cessation of the indigenous African churches, was also noticed in the Jansenist movement of the seventeenth century. This was reflected in the national autonomy that characterised Jansenism in France. The modern African churches—in their search for independence and freedom—remain autonomous from the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the missionary churches; hence, they have adopted the principles of self-supporting, self-propagating and self-actualising.

However, the most outstanding similarity between Jansenism and the modern African church here presented is in the fact that Jansen in all his personality, theological differences and ecclesiastical repudiation of the Roman Catholic Church, still found himself part of the Roman Catholic Church. Hence at death, his last wish for the publication of his most controversial work showed him fully obedient to the “Holy See”, the pope and the Roman Catholic Church (*Catholic Encyclopaedia*, 8, Knight 2012). Today, the teachings and influence of Jansenism are still found in the Roman Catholic Church who once repudiated him. In this same regard, most founders of these modern African churches in Nigeria still keep faith and membership with the missionary churches in their villages, which they call their *home church*. For any celebration that must be done in their native home, like death as Africans, it should likely be done in such a home or family church. In this way, the reality and influence of the modern church in Africa discussed here, have undisputedly permeated through the missionary churches—especially in Nigeria where all the characteristics of the modern African church



patterns are visible in language, liturgy, rigorism, independence, and miraculous experience, among other.

The *Bull Unigenitus Dei Filius* marked the official end of toleration of Jansenism in the church in France in particular, although quasi-Jansenists would occasionally stir in the following decades. By the mid-eighteenth century, Jansenism proper had totally lost its battle to be a viable theological option within the Roman Catholicism. However, certain ideas associated with Jansenism remained in circulation for much longer; for instance the Jansenist idea that the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist (Holy communion) should not be received very frequently and that reception of such required much more than freedom from mortal sin, remained influential until it was finally phased out by Pope Pius X, who in the early twentieth century endorsed frequent communion as long as the communicant was free from mortal sin.

Today, some modern churches in Africa, especially in Nigeria, are superficial in the way they prepare and celebrate their communion. While some paradigmatically allow their communion celebration with emphasis on repentance of their members, communions generally in the modern churches are not frequently celebrated except for the Catholics, and this aligns with Jansen's theological ideology. The localisation or indigenisation of sacramental symposium (mass) in the modern church in Africa is another characteristic of Jansenism. In this, sacrament and services are now celebrated in local African languages as opposed to Latin or English, which were once the traditional languages of the Roman Catholic Church and other missionary churches in Nigeria earlier used in church liturgy as the language of the divine (Ayegboyin and Ishola 2013, 12–31).

*Religious Rigorism* is another characteristic of Jansenism which was once repudiated for its recaptured rejection of certain earthly pleasures in the modern church. In the Irish church, for example, “the continuing war against the body was a bitter and brutal one. Spiritualities from Gnosticism to Jansenism abound far into the twentieth century; intent on the suppression of physical needs, physical pleasure, physical joy, and physical reality” (*Irish Catholicism*, Robert, n.d., accessed 26/11/2016). Rigorist behaviour in the modern African churches seemed to be domesticated in a few church denominations, especially in Nigeria. Our submission may not be totally accurate, but observers have highlighted a few of these churches that abhorred certain pleasures. These include churches like Chosen in Nigeria, where members are identified by pullovers with *Chosen* printed on, signifying the spiritual bullet proof; and the Deeper Life Bible Church a few years ago, where television was perceived as satanic (and ridiculously called the “Devil’s box”) (Gifford 1993, 161–183). There are those who move barefoot like the “white garment brand of churches in the category of African Indigenous Churches. These seemed to recapture Jansenism in outlook and even theology” (Omoyajowo 1982, 162–164).

In liturgy, the aspect of Jansenism in modern African churches in terms of language and congregational participation, singing and dancing are applauding. Even the mainline/misssionary churches have revisited their liturgy. For instance, in the Church of Nigeria Anglican communion, it was observed that:

In 1842 when the church missionary society re-introduced Christianity to Nigeria, the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* was brought to form the basis of Christian worship among the new converts ... However, since 1979 when the church became autonomous province, it became necessary to have a liturgy that will express its own cultural milieu ... It is clear that we have made profound changes aimed at bringing about a liturgy that will address the spiritual needs of our people. It is also expected that these changes will move all worshippers to participate more actively in the service. (Peter 2007, 111–IV)

Contextualisation was one of the early reasons why prophetic leaders seceded from mainline churches in Africa. There was a longing in the heart of Africans to find a mode of religious expression, especially in worship, that is psychologically and socially satisfying in the African way of life. Tasié (2011, 63) acknowledges the unrewarded efforts of Garrick Braide in contextualising or domesticating the Christianising processes, particularly in the Niger Delta. One may claim that the modern African churches are domesticated in the African milieu but not yet without foreign infiltration, especially in most of the African cities.

### **National Autonomy**

As national autonomy was one of the later characteristics of Jansenism in France, it is in that same trait that the national factor, or the the quest for freedom and independence, has since 1888 existed in the African churches. This led to the era of massive schism in the mainline or missionary churches in Africa. One of the major motivations for this agitation was that the Africans wanted a church where they are to be in charge and participate in the worship experience without foreign domination. It was as a result of this that the later part of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of a good number of African churches within some leading countries in Africa, namely Nigeria, Ghana and South Africa. In Nigeria, such African churches include: the Native Baptist Church in 1888; the United Native African Church in 1891; the African Church in 1901; the Christ Army Church in 1915; and the United African Methodist Church (Ayegboyin and Ishola 2013, 3–12).

It was this period and people who were seen as the African Jansenists that Obineche (2012, 25–48) refers to as “the initiatives of the mass movements of African proto-type prophets and Evangelists in the growth of African Christianity.” In Nigeria, Jansenists like those in the Garrick Braide movement were persecuted by the church of the day (the Niger Delta Anglican Church). Tasié (2011, 63) in this regard remarks that “Braide was even persecuted and prosecuted as a politically motivated and misguided Niger Delta upstart who, possibly, was agitated by the preponderance of missionary colonialists who virtually took all available ecclesiastical and civil job opportunities of their host African communities.”

In Liberia, William Wade Harris was one of the leading fore-runners (Jansenists) of the African church movements. His ministry proved successful in the conversion of souls; destruction of idols and fetishes; healing and deliverance in the African way; and expression of the orthodox missionary faith. Nevertheless, like the historic and heroic Jansen, the French administration feared that the Protestant missionaries from enemy nations, at the instance of the Second World War, might use the Harris crusade as a ploy to enter the Ivory Coast. As a result Harris was

condemned, incarcerated and demoralised till his death in 1929. The case was the same with the rise of Isaiah Shembe and his prophetic movement in South Africa. Under the Zionist movement he became an itinerant prophet/evangelist in his home land of Natal; preaching, healing and casting out demons by the power of the Holy Spirit without the use of orthodox medicine (Obineche 2012, 42–44).

The same persecutions take place in some modern African churches, for example targeting some innovations considered inimical to the mother church, such as prayer bands or groups and the *Born Againism* emphasis that characterised the African Pentecostalism in recent decades. Most of those suspended or condemned in this regard are today the general overseers, presidents and founders of their various churches in Africa. The modern church in Africa emphasised little of hierarchy and foreign aid initially; rather, they were mostly self-supporting, self-propagating and self-consecrating. However, we must affirm here that the character of autonomy in the modern churches—especially in Africa—has been considered alarming, unlike Jansenism when and where the pope was the supreme arbiter between God and man.

### **Miraculous Healing**

The healing miracle experience claim of Jansenists in the cemetery is one aspect that has seriously been reflected in the modern church thought with orchestrated exercises. It could be recalled that the cemetery of Saint-Medard was the scene of the exhibitions of the Jansenist Convulsionaries which were described as tumultuous and spiritually indecent in history. Here it is said that:

Several of the so-called miraculous cures were based only on testimonies which were false, interested, preconcerted, and more than once retracted or at least valueless ... the echoes of diseased and fanatic imaginations where the convulsions and the secours took place under circumstances which mere good taste would reject as unworthy of Divine wisdom and holiness. (Forget 1976)

It was hereafter that the question of reconciling the place of religion (spirituality) and science seemed no longer to be the focus. Only the Archbishop of Paris knew the scope used in falsifying the healing and miracles that was the standard in Jansen's time. Today, however, the modern churches—especially in Africa—believe that they have the mandate from God to heal all manner of sicknesses without the verification, approval or other sanction from any authority. For instance, some indigenous churches in Africa owe their origin directly or indirectly to the deadly influenza epidemic which spread through West Africa in 1918 (Ayegeboyin and Ishola 2013).

In contrast, African modern churches today pose themselves as the last hope of medical remedies in Africa, as all scientific cures for sicknesses and diseases are seen as acts of unbelief and faithlessness. The frightening ambiguity of today's church in Africa is evident in the attribution of every event in life to satanic works or human enemy, especially in persistent sicknesses. These modern churches in their invocation prayers, as led by their prophetic leadership, express some emotional spiritual influence and utterances such as “back to sender,

holy ghost fire, die by fire, O! Jesus, the blood of Jesus, among others.” Tasié (2011, 63–64) succinctly summarises this invocation thus:

I decree that as from today your sickness is healed in Jesus name. I decree that by this time next year all who are listening to me today will have their own houses in Jesus’ name. I declare and I prophesy in Jesus’ name.

For more efficacy, sometimes “men/women of God” ask their members to come with material items like coconut water, oil, sand, stone, handkerchiefs and other variance for prayers. They also visit different places for power, such as a river, cemetery, mortuary, mountains, and even attempt to have holy intercourse with their victims as a remedy to their sickness or problems. Among their notorious victims are women, mostly young girls. This reflects the same negative extremes of Jansenism in the modern church and Christianity, especially in Africa.

## **Conclusion**

Christian history has acknowledged the period from the middle of the fourteenth century to the middle of the sixteenth century as the most traumatic era in the entire history of Roman Catholicism. This was the period when Protestantism, through its definitive break with Roman Catholicism, arose to take its place on the Christian map. It was also the era during which the Roman Catholic Church, as an entity distinct from other “branches” of Christendom, even of Western Christendom, came into being. Since then, the spectre of many national churches supplanting a unitary Catholic Church became a grim reality during the age of Reformation. What neither heresy nor schism had been able to do before dividing Western Christendom permanently and irreversibly, was done by a movement that confessed a loyalty to the orthodox creeds of Christendom and professed abhorrence for schism. By the time Reformation was over, a number of new Christian churches had emerged and the Roman Catholic Church had come to define its place in the new order.

One of the famous movements of the Reformation era was Jansenism, which arose under the leadership of Jansen’s friend Jean Du Vergier, following the death of Jansen in 1638. Cornelius Jansen Otto (1585–1638), Bishop of Ypres, from whom Jansenism derives its origin and name, must not be confused with another writer and bishop of the same name Cornelius Gradavensis (1510–1576) Jansen, a Dutch Leerdam-born theologian, who inspired a reform movement in the Roman Catholic Church through his work *Augustinus* in 1627, which was published posthumously in 1640.

The Jansenists’ interpretation of the five propositions in Jansen’s work stressed the primacy of God’s grace in human redemption, for which they were banished and the work was consigned to the index of the prohibited books in 1643 by Pope Urban VIII for its attack on the ethics of the Jesuits. The effort of Jansenism to reform the Roman Catholic Church was the noblest ever made to the present and has remained a case for Church historians to examine in light of contemporary challenges facing the modern African church.

Jansenism was a factor in the formation of the independent Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands between 1703 and 1723, and is said to have continued to live on in some Ultrajectine traditions. Such has been the case in the modern African church denominations where the Reformation has taken extreme negative tones within the framework of the mainline churches (denominations). This article has established the aspects of Jansenism in the modern church with much reference to the African milieu. The religious rigorisms of some contemporary African churches, in terms of sacrament, healing, liturgy and church autonomy, are ubiquitous and share the similarities of Jansenism.

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