

The Role of Personal Integrity in Soulwinning: A Systematic Review of the Theological Literature

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KEY WORDS

| Evangelism | Church Growth | Christian Character |
| Discipleship | Spiritual Development | Christian Leader |

ABSTRACT

Soulwinning is amongst the believer's most important responsibilities. Its effectiveness, however, depends on the perceived integrity of the message and the messenger. Understanding this nexus is critical for improving the results of soulwinning and growing the Church locally, nationally, and globally. Using a systematic review of the theological literature, this paper sheds light on this nexus.

Twenty-six articles were selected for review based on their availability, language (English), relevance and year of publication (2010-2020). The thesis offered by these articles were summarized, synthesized, and the results utilized to articulate key insights on the role of personal integrity in soulwinning.

Five components of integrity and seven postulates of the pathways from integrity to soulwinning and Church growth were identified from the systematic review. The study reveals that all five integrity components: namely behavioral, sexual, financial, scriptural, and statistical integrity, are important for soulwinning, for discipleship and for long-term mentorship. Believers who incorporate these five components into their day-to-day life will be more result oriented soulwinners than those who possess little or none of these characteristics. The seven postulates presented offer valuable insights for further work on the subject.

INTRODUCTION

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20.¹

Popularly referred to as the Great Commission, soulwinning is amongst the most important tasks Christ commissioned for the Church (Matthew 28:18-20). Soulwinning is the act of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ in communities with the aim of converting the audience into Christianity.² It consists of in-

and outside-church components. In-church, soulwinning consists of creating a clean, credible, upright and comfortable environment for parishioners to worship and grow. Outside the church, it consists of presenting the gospel of Jesus Christ to unbelievers and facilitating commitments to Christ by individuals who accept the message. In other words, it is nudging others (unbelievers) to change their opinions, beliefs, and practices, which they have built over time, and embrace newer ones. In both in- and outside-church contexts, the audience must perceive the message and the cues they are receiving authentic, credible, and believable, that is, as having integrity. In addition, they must also perceive the messenger (soulwinner) and the delivery approach reliable, credible, and respectful. Reliability, credibility, respectability,

witness, or Church-volunteer-worker.

1 Unless otherwise stated, all Biblical citations are taken from the New King James Version(R). Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, used by Permission. All rights reserved.

2 A soulwinner is any Christian who shares the Gospel in communities. He/she is also known as evangelist, Christ

authenticity are all synonyms for integrity. For example, in an outside-church context, when the soulwinner comes across to an unbeliever as credible, believable, and respectful, the unbeliever is likely to accept the message and make the expected change. This change means the unbeliever has to quit his/her familiar traditions and embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ by becoming a born-again believer. This is akin to a sales representative convincing a customer to buy a new product. The customer must be convinced that the salesperson is credible and the product, authentic, before investing time or money in it. Applied to the in-church context, a church populated with trustworthy persons are more likely to support and encourage new members and visitors to stay on to becoming members than a church that is filled with mendacious individuals.

The argument in this paper is that integrity, which captures the authenticity of a message and the believability, dependability, reliability, trustworthiness of the messenger is a key catalyst in soulwinning. Examining this linkage is important given the rapid declines in congregational size facing the Church in the USA today. Over the last 10 years (2009 to 2019), the proportion of US population self-identifying as Christian declined from 77% (2009) to 65% (2018/19); a decline of 12 percentage points. The proportion identifying as atheist, agnostic or as nothing over the same period grew by 10%, from 16% in 2009 to 26% in 2018/19 (Appendix 1). Not only is the number of Christians in the population declining, participation in religious programs is declining as well. For instance, the proportion reporting that they attend religious services once or twice per month declined from 52% to 45% between 2009 and 2018/19. The number attending religious services a few times a year or never increased from 47% in 2009 to

54% over the period 2018/19 (Appendix 1)³. As a result of these declines, many churches have closed, about to close or functioning at half capacity. These closures and the declining size of the population identifying as Christian is partly due to ineffective soulwinning because soulwinning is a key determinant of church growth. Therefore, any effort to increase church size and growth must focus on it because an increase in its effectiveness will accelerate growth. The thesis of this paper is that a better understanding of the linkage between integrity and soulwinning is likely to yield or strengthen interventions for effectuating church growth at the community, national, and global levels.

The specific objective of this paper is to examine this linkage by reviewing relevant theological literature on the topic and, utilizing the review, discuss:

- current definitions and understanding of the subject matter;
- components and nuances of integrity;
- axioms of the nexus between integrity and soulwinning, and
- venture explanations for filling gaps in our knowledge of the subject.

DATA AND METHOD

The study metadata were obtained from a systematic review of the theological literature. Articles were obtained by a systematic search of theological databases, (the Atla Plus and the Christian Periodicals databases).⁴ These were

3 Pew Research Center: Aggregated Pew Research Center Political Surveys conducted 2009-July 2019 on the telephone. Available at <https://www.pewforum.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2019/11/Detailed-tables-for-upload-11.11.19.pdf>

4 Per the description offered by the Falwell Library, Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA., The Atla Religion Database with Atla Serials Plus (Atla Plus) documents

first accessed in April of 2020. The search was updated between February and April, 2021. The key search terms were: 1) integrity, 2) soulwinning, 3) evangelism, 4) church growth, 5) witnessing [that is the one-on-one preaching of the Word of God at the community level), and 6) integrity and (soulwinning or evangelism or witnessing or church growth) as one term. The following delimiters were set:

- The articles must be published in English
- It must have been published between 2010 and 2020, and must
- include at least one of the keywords in the title

The timeline, 2010 to 2020, was considered long enough to include recent and important publications on the topic as well as a review of others published in earlier periods than the dates specified, which would have historically addressed the topic. It is also narrow enough to permit an analysis of the content of these papers. A broader time-period would make the data wieldy and difficult to articulate into concrete findings.

Table 1 presents the search results by keyword and the number of articles obtained for each keyword. As shown in the Table, there were 104 articles written on integrity between Year 2010 and 2020 per the Alta Plus and CPI databases. Only one of these treated the subject of evangelism, soulwinning, witnessing or

full-text journal articles, book reviews, and collections of essays across all fields of religion and theology, including Biblical studies, world religions, church history, and religious perspectives on social issues from 1949 to the present. The Christian Periodical Index (CPI) indexes Christian magazines and journals with strong emphasis on evangelical perspectives, from the mid-1970s to the present. Both of these databases were accessed from the Falwell Library of Liberty University in April, 2020 and between February and April, 2021.

Church growth (Table 1, #6). We selected all 104 articles on integrity for manual inspection of their titles and abstracts to find out if there were articles, other than the one in #6 (Table 1), which focused indirectly on soulwinning or witnessing or evangelism or Church growth, but which were omitted by the electronic search. Thirty articles were obtained at this first step, 14 from Atla Plus and 16 from the CPI database. Next, we manually inspected all the titles obtained independently for evangelism, witnessing, soulwinning and Church growth for evidence that they also captured the subject of integrity directly or indirectly. Only one article was identified at this point. This was added to the pile on integrity in step 1, making 105 articles in all. Of these 105 articles, 31 addressed the issue of evangelism, soulwinning, witnessing and/or church growth (Figure 1). Next, we pulled all 31 articles for more detailed review of their abstracts and, for articles which had no abstract, we skimmed the text to see how much attention was given to the subject matter of interest. Five articles, which appear to contain the relevant key terms but do not treat the subject of integrity in any substantive way or treated it in contexts other than Christian religious practices or settings were dropped (Step 2). This step left us with 26 articles (Figure 1). These 26 articles were studied, summarized, synthesized, and analyzed to identify the general themes emerging from the review as well as the axioms on integrity's role in soulwinning (step 3). The analysis is presented in the results section of this paper. Summarized as postulates, the axioms are important guides for further research on the subject.

All the 26 articles on integrity were published in peer reviewed sources with the exception of the sermon by Pastor E.A. Adeboye, which

was secured in electronic form.⁵ This sermon is an authoritative statement on the linkage between integrity and soulwinning and is used as the theoretical base for this work. Four documents, three of which were published in the gray literature were included in the review. Information from these documents were used to illustrate the devastating effects of the lack of integrity on the Church and/or Christian ministers. A listing of the articles is presented in the bibliography.

RESULTS

In this section, definitions and components of integrity per the literature are presented. Based on this metadata, we discuss the axiom of the nexus between integrity and soulwinning. Next, we illustrate how all the integrity components individually and collectively contribute to explaining soulwinning and, ultimately, church growth. The final section, the conclusion, presents the summary of the findings and their implications for further work.

DEFINITION OF INTEGRITY: WHAT EXACTLY DO WE MEAN BY INTEGRITY?

A few definitions of integrity emerge from the literature. Pastor E.A. Adeboye⁶ defines it simply as "...saying what you mean and meaning what you say," be it in the secret or in the open,⁷

5 This sermon was first preached at the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) Overcomers House, Bristol, UK, 2014; available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H08H37Vq_vY. It was preached, again, in Nigeria in 2017, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJIijg219LU>. Pastor E.A. Adeboye is the General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God with Parishes in over 196 Countries.

6 Pastor E. A. Adeboye, "Integrity," Sermon.

7 Vickie Hughes, "Authentic Leadership: Practices to Promote Integrity," *Journal of Christian Nursing* 35.2

and irrespective of whether doing so brings pleasure or pain. The goal is to please God by living according to biblical standards (see also Matthew 5:37; James 4:1). This lifestyle is described as godly and charitable,⁸ light giving,⁹ honest, not corrupt, hypocritical or dubious.¹⁰ In this view, a person of integrity affirms the tenets of the scripture (see Numbers 23:19, James 5:12, Mathew 5:37). When behavior departs from this standard, the individual comes across as fake.

A second definition offered by Moss¹¹ highlights the missional and charismatic attributes of integrity. In his view, integrity is responsible and purposeful behavior. Informed by past images and experiences, a man of integrity is sacrificial, sincere, candid, with a commitment to producing good in himself and in others. Persons of integrity are true to themselves and loyal to their soul. Again, that loyalty is based on Scriptural learnings.

A third set of definitions place integrity at the institutional or community level. Dreyer¹² defines it as the 'Church being Church', that is, real and charismatic and not a charlatan or materialistic organization. Living with integrity, according to Dreyer, is obeying God and listening to the teachings and Word of Jesus Christ. This view is consistent with that provided by Scott¹³ and Resane.¹⁴ Shambare and

(2018): E28-E31

8 Heather Thompson, "Integrity & spiritual life," *The Expository Times* 12 (2010): 403-404.

9 Lanser Scott, "Digging Integrity," *Bible & Spade* 30.3 (2017):57.

10 Kelebogile Resane, "Servant Leadership and Shepherd Leadership: The Missing Dynamic in Pastoral Integrity in S/A Today," *HTS Theological Studies* 76.1 (2020): a5608.

11 David M. Moss, "Shadowboxing with integrity," *Pastoral Psychology* 67 (2018):399.

12 Wim Dreyer, "Church, Mission and Ethics. Being a Church with Integrity," *HTS Theological Studies*, 72.1 (2016): a3163.

13 Scott, "Digging Integrity," 57.

14 Resane, "Servant Leadership and Shepherd Leadership," a5608.

Table 1: Items selected at the 1st search by database

| Search Terms | Atla Plus | CPI | Atla Plus & CPI |
|--|------------|------------|-----------------|
| Integrity | 68 | 36 | 104 |
| Evangelism | 136 | 447 | 583 |
| Witnessing | 38 | 17 | 55 |
| Soulwinning | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Church growth | 43 | 82 | 125 |
| Integrity AND (evangelism or witnessing or soulwinning or church growth) | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 286 | 583 | 869 |

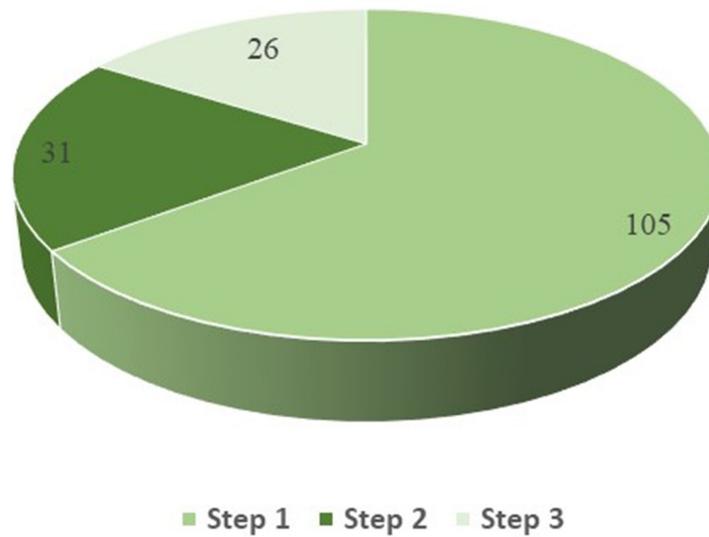


Figure 1: Total Number of Articles Reviewed

Kgatla¹⁵ applies the definition in the context of nation building. They stated that integrity is the Church's ability to stay relevant, delivering its missional and strategic/contextual objectives without fear of castration, trepidation, or persecution, even when those risks exist. To be a Church of integrity in their view, the Church must be able to embrace opportunities and risks associated with its mission and deliver impact at the societal level. Delivering impact at the societal level is, especially, considered important because the Church is not just a religious organization, but a community-based organization that is uniquely equipped with spiritual power and social intelligence for nation building, including helping a country in crises to heal or engendering neighborly solidarity in periods of political unrest. The ability to do this work without abandoning the traditional role of preaching the Gospel is, according to these authors, integrity.

Based on the foregoing, we define integrity, in this study, as behavior/action that is characteristically truthful, scriptural, charismatic, reliable, coherent, knowledgeable, and charitable. An organization/church is one of integrity in as much as the members display these attributes.

Integrity behavior can be learned because the virtues, which constitute it are measurable, objective, observable, and teachable. Time is, however required for learning the virtues.¹⁶ Individuals and organizations can improve integrity-worthiness over time.¹⁷ Other factors,

such as geography (residence) and 'integrity density,' may influence integrity-worthiness among individuals or institutions. Integrity density refers to the total number of integrity worthy people in an area compared to the total population of the area. Individuals or organizations living in areas saturated with people of integrity may be more likely to learn integrity much faster and deliver more integrity-worthy behavior overtime than those in low integrity areas. If being truthful, coherent, reliable, consistent, knowledgeable and charitable are desired elements of integrity-worthy behavior, then behavior which exhibit these virtues will be a key for soulwinning. Individuals/institutions of integrity are, therefore, more likely successful soulwinners than those of little or no integrity. To produce action integral to church growth, however, the individual must have control over their behavior, value the desired action, have the skill or knowledge to execute the desired action, and be able to monitor, evaluate and learn from the action. Using the lessons learned, he/she must be able to modify or reinforce the behavior to create the desired outcome. This [integrity] framework largely captures the rubric of the social cognitive theory¹⁸ and is efficacious for elaborating how to grow the Church system.

Components of integrity

Integrity is a vital force in church growth. The Church grows by adding new members while retaining the old or by adding new members at a rate much greater than the rate at which it is losing members. Integrity is critical to these processes. Five components of integrity, which emanate from the systematic review

15 Blessing Shambare, and Salaedo T. Kgatla, "Church, Mission and Reconstruction: Being A Church with Integrity in Reconstruction Discourse in Post-Colonial Zimbabwe," *Hervomde Teologiese Studies* 74.1 (2018):1-12.

16 Griffin, Jerry. "The Integrity of Authority & Identity." *Chaplaincy Today* 26.2(2010): 36-37.

17 Griffin, "The Integrity of Authority & Identity," 36-37.

18 Wayne W. Lamorte, *The Social Cognitive Theory* (2019), Internet Article, accessed on May 21, 2021, available at <https://sphweb.bumc.bu.edu/otlt/MPH-Modules/SB/BehavioralChangeTheories/BehavioralChangeTheories5.html>.

are behavioral, sexual, financial, scriptural, and data/statistical integrity. There are four others: personal, organizational, pastoral, and vocational integrity, which are mentioned in the literature.¹⁹ Structurally, these integrity types are same as the five components identified earlier, but for their labels. For instance, personal integrity encompasses all five components. Organizational/pastoral integrity illustrates the outcomes of all five components at the organization level. Vocational integrity refers to proficiency in the delivery of technical or professional responsibilities, a dimension of behavioral integrity, akin to scriptural or statistical integrity. In the following paragraphs, we present a more detailed description of the five integrity components.

Behavioral integrity is the consistency between what an individual says and do and what the audience think. Since the Bible is the standard for behavior among believers, behavioral integrity deals with the correct application of the Word of God in day-to-day life. This is a key to attracting others to the message of the Cross. The Scripture states that individual Christians are the epistle that others read (2 Corinthians 3:2). Unless the behavior of Christians is consistent with what they profess, they will have difficulty in representing Christ to the World, no matter their oratory skills. Inconsistencies between words and deeds brought down the ministry of Reverend Jim and Tammy Bakker in the late 80s.²⁰ Consistency between words and action is important. This is what is intended when the Bible tells believers to produce the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). To produce the [nine] fruit of the Spirit is

19 Brown, J.O. 2015. The Importance of integrity on Christian Leadership: Giftedness + Integrity = Productivity. Dissertation Notices. *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* 9.1 (2015): 115

20 <https://abcnews.go.com/US/scandals-brought-bakkers-uss-famous-televangelists/story?id=60389342>

to be a person of integrity, that is to meet the expected behavior in the purest sense.

Sexual integrity describes a state of sexual chastity, marked by the complete absence of lust or incontinence in the management of sexual desires. The lack of it produces corruption, immorality, indiscipline and adherence to substandard behavior.

Financial integrity describes the ability to use money wisely, according to divine guidance, and with complete absence of any form of infidelity. Financial fraud constituted 15 of the 24 inditements handed to Reverend Jim Bakker in 1988 and for which he was convicted in 1989.²¹

Scriptural integrity is competence in knowing, teaching, sharing and doing the Word of God. Scriptural integrity is a key to growing the Church as the lack of it, in the word of Reverend Billy Graham, promotes sensationalism, excessive emotionalism, anti-intellectualism, and controversy. The Bible says that those who know their God shall be strong and do exploits. Soulwinning is a type of exploit, akin to pulling out those who want to be burnt from the fire (Jude 1:23). It requires power, the type endowed by the knowledge of the Word of God and by the Holy Ghost.

Finally, data/statistical integrity is the readiness to use data correctly with complete absence of intentional falsification or exaggeration.²² Intended or unintended falsification of data is problematic, the former is, however, much more difficult to correct than the latter. While the latter is inadvertent and can be corrected by training and skills building, the former is egoistic and requires a behavioral transformation, which may take months or

21 <https://abcnews.go.com/US/scandals-brought-bakkers-uss-famous-televangelists/story?id=60389342>

22 William Martin, "Lead us Not into Scandal. (Integrity)." *Christianity Today* 62.3 (2018): 81-91.

even years to achieve. It is also potentially the most egregious of the two because people are not likely to recover from its effect in a hurry. Although documented example of intentional use of false data among the clergy are hard to come by, argument presented in the interview with Reverend Billy Graham, published by Martin, 2018, indicates that the *Modesto Manifesto* was developed by the Reverend and his team to avoid this pitfall to which many televangelists have fallen.

Evidence presented in the literature indicates that the lack of integrity can seriously debilitate whole congregations, organizations, and individuals.²³ The experiences of Reverend Jimmy Swaggart present good illustration of this danger.²⁴ He was defrocked in 1988 by the Assembly of God Church Presbytery following an accusation of involvement with a prostitute in 1987. Although the truth of the accusation remains unknown, since the Reverend never confessed to the specific sin, his ministry nevertheless suffered a major blow as a result of the accusation. Following an implication in another accusation of involvement with another prostitute and in same sex relationships in 1991, his nationwide ministry downsized to just one center in one State – the Family Worship Center, based in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. His weekly broadcast, which formally aired on over 250 TV stations in the USA alone, downsized to being broadcast on only one network, the SonLife Broadcasting Network (SBN) nationally. The enrollment at his Bible College declined from roughly 1500 students in 1987 to 350 students by 1991. The Ministry has not yet recovered fully from these shocks. For instance, the Bible

College is still trying to obtain accreditation and many of the programs that were canceled in the 90s have not been reinstated.²⁵

The Catholic Church provides another example of a Church that has been rocked by accusations of sexual and financial impropriety, involving members of its Clergy. In 2001 alone, evidence presented by Formicola²⁶ indicates that the Church paid three billion dollars in hush monies to victims of sexual abuse involving the Church's clergy. In several cases, the Church had to sell off Church property, seek loans, or declare bankruptcy to pay off these monies, according to this author. For instance, in Fairbanks, Alaska, Formicola cited data that showed that the Church had to sell its Conference Center and the home of the Bishop of the Diocese to pay victims. Also in Wilmington, Delaware, the Bankruptcy Court held a local parish, the Diocese and a religious order jointly liable for compensations totaling five million (\$5million) Dollars. These payments introduced modifications to the Churches administrative structure, which brought untold pains and fears to the church hierarchy at the Diocese's level. These fears, per Formicola, include:

- the fear of losing government assistance for charitable, education and health services;
- the fear that the State judicial apparatus might challenge the Canon law upon which the Church's autonomy rested, permitting greater State intrusion into the Church's ownership and management of property, and

23 Bill Newton, "Looking for Integrity," *World* 26 (2011): 48-49.

24 Wikipedia, "Jimmy Swaggart." Accessed on April 25, 2021. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jimmy_Swaggart, 2021..

25 Prostitute Says Swaggart Had Sex with Her," May 24, 1988. Accessed April 25, 2021 and May 5, 2021. <https://apnews.com/article/5729a4678a80264fe7f8c64808e30e53>.

26 Jo R. Formicola, "Recalibrating U.S. Catholic Church – State Relations: The Effects of Clerical Sexual Abuse," *Journal of Church and State* 58.2 (2015): 317-328.

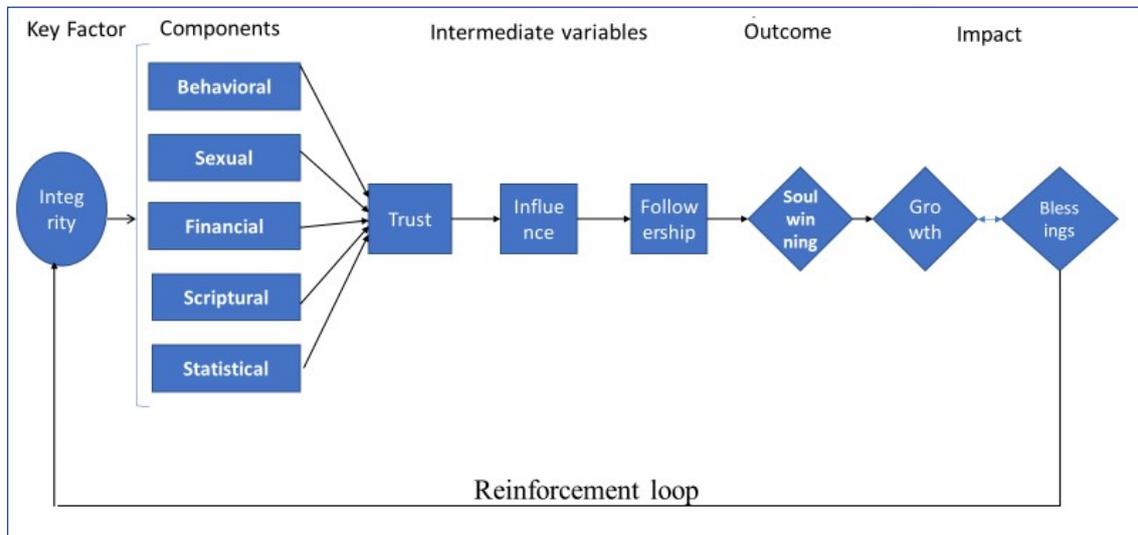


Figure 2: The pathways from integrity to soulwinning and church growth

- the fear of the State regulating the Church’s use of charitable donations.

These fears appear to have materialized overtime, according to Formicola²⁷. The superiority of civil authorities over the Canon law in matters involving sexual abuse by the clergy has increased. Areas, which were traditionally under ecclesiastical control have now been brought under State oversight. Litigations of cases of sexual abuse, involving the Church’s clergy and staff, have also become more aggressive. Victims can now litigate cases in both criminal and civil Courts, something that would have been impossible in the pre-scandal period. Along with these changes, settlements have grown larger and larger,

27 Jo R. Formicola, “Recalibrating U.S. Catholic Church – State Relations: The Effects of Clerical Sexual Abuse,” 317-328

threatening the financial stability of the Church. Sexual scandal is like wildfire; it can take down any organization or individuals. Integrity is, therefore, indispensable for believers who want to run a successful Christian race and for career gospel ministers who wants to finish strong.

Each of the five components has an independent effect on soulwinning and Church growth. The axioms of these effects are elaborated next.

EXPLAINING THE AXIOM OF THE NEXUS BETWEEN INTEGRITY AND SOULWINNING

In this section, based on the metadata presented, we elaborate the axioms of the nexus between personal integrity and soulwinning. Integrity is explicated by its five components: behavioral, sexual, financial, scriptural and

data/statistical integrity. The effects of these components on soulwinning and Church growth is illustrated graphically as shown.

Adapting the thesis presented earlier by Pastor E. A. Adeboye,²⁸ we postulate that integrity has no direct effect on soulwinning, but works indirectly through trust, influence, and followership to effectuate soulwinning, which then leads to church growth. This means that individuals or churches wanting to improve the outcome of soulwinning can work on building their trustworthiness and influence with the result that individuals who find them credible, reliable, and relatable are likely to follow them.

Church growth results in blessings for the Church and for the individual soulwinners. Being in God's will is a blessing for the soulwinner. On top of that, he/she is blessed materially by the prosperity and good success that obedience to God draws into his life. The Church at large is blessed by increasing physical and material resources received from expanding attendance. These blessings further stimulate growth when they are ploughed back into Church development. However, blessings may be received independent of Church growth, such as when individuals, who are not members of the Church, make huge donations to the Church. Such donations can stimulate growth if invested in Church programs. Such growths are, however, sporadic; growth is more sustainable when initiated internally as shown in Figure 1.

Let me illustrate this change by demonstrating how each of the five integrity components work through the intermediate variables to produce converts and church growth.

Behavioral integrity, which is the attainment of congruence between what one thinks, say and do and how others view those utterances

28 Pastor E. A. Adeboye, "Integrity," Sermon.

and actions, is critical for soulwinning.²⁹ Those able to achieve this congruence are likely to come across to the target audience as credible, reliable, and worthy of fellowship than those who are incongruent in what they say/do and how others perceive them.

Defined as maturity in the deployment of sexual feelings, sexual integrity is a key measure of Christian character. There is a large role for the Church in reinforcing sexual integrity among the congregation. Soulwinning does not end with getting people into the pews, but includes, for every believer, a guarantee of good spaces to grow, flourish, and develop Christlike character. The lack of an appropriate context can cause believers to develop feelings of rejection and cynicism, which they may compensate by engaging in sexual vices.³⁰ Du Plessis stated that those who will empower others to do the right things must first be empowered themselves. In other words, the would-be soulwinners must be integrated into Christ by possessing the relevant competencies.³¹ Principal among these is the:

- Knowledge of the Word of God;
- Knowledge of human dynamics;
- Knowledge of the scriptures and relevant ecclesiology, and
- Knowledge of both the ecclesiastical and societal environment and dynamics.

Given how rapidly and deep sexual sins can destroy the moral authority of the Church,

29 Inference based on the definition provided by Pastor E.A. Adeboye's and consistent with the Scriptural definition of personal integrity in Matthew 5:37.

30 Linda A. Du Plessis, "Principles of the Pastoral Guidance Process to Women on Matters Related to Human Vulnerability and Personal Integrity," *HTS Hervormde teologiese Studies* 71, 2(2015):1-6.

31 Du Plessis, "Principles of Pastoral Guidance ...," 1-6.

churches, which facilitate the acquisition of sexual integrity, are likely more effective in retaining converts than their counterparts, which ignore it. Similarly, individuals who possess skills in managing their emotions and sexual feelings are likely to be more effective in winning souls and enabling Church growth than their counterparts, who are incontinent in the deployment of sexual feelings.

Financial integrity is defined as possessing credibility in handling and managing money.³² It is an important skill that individuals in the church and the community must have. For Church-based leaders and workers, the types of beliefs they hold about money is important because there are right and wrong beliefs about money. The wrong beliefs, according to Rodin,³³ include:

- Belief that money is detached, amoral and unconnected to spiritual responsibility
- Belief that money is an index of Church and ministerial success just as it is a measure of organizational success in the business world
- Belief that prosperity is synonymous with having a large wealth and financial control
- Belief that ownership rather than stewardship mentality is Christian leadership

Adherence to wrong beliefs can cause individuals in leadership to pursue wealth and

32 Martin, "Lead us Not into Scandal. (Integrity)," 81-91. Scott Rodin, "In the Service of One God Only: Financial Integrity in Christian Leadership," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 37(2013): 46-56.

33 Rodin, "In the Service of One God Only: Financial Integrity in Christian Leadership," 46-56.

ignore spiritual growth. Pursuit of money can cause the Church to grow weak, inconsistent, and ineffective. Rodin advised that the best way for believers wanting to overcome the temptation to idolize money is to die to lusts and pride and see money as a vehicle for expanding Kingdom goals rather than as a weapon of ministerial superiority.

Described as competence in knowing, teaching, and doing the Word of God, scriptural integrity is pivotal for soulwinning and Church growth. Scriptural infidelity can come from intentional manipulation of the Word of God for personal interest or from deficits in the knowledge of, and/or obedience to, the Word. This is why the Scriptures urge all believers to diligently study the Word so that they are competent in it and able to present it confidently to all audiences as well as reap the blessings therein for themselves (2 Tim 2:15, Josh 1:8). An individual who is knowledgeable in the Word of God will be potent in presenting it with simplicity and clarity, which, in turn, will generate trust and commitments in the target population. But the Word poor is brutish and superficial; he is unable to convince even the most sympathetic audience of the relevance of the Word or the actions elicited. Whatever the source, incompetence in presenting the Scripture compromises its potency, undermines its purity, and dilute its ability to convert souls unto Christ (Psalm 19:7).

Closely related to scriptural integrity is the use of honest statistics. Dishonest statistics, which is the intentional deployment of incorrect data in performance reporting, is the enemy of soulwinning and Church strength. Lying about Church statistics creates an atmosphere of suspicion and discomfort around ministerial efforts when the lie is

discovered. Those who report inaccurate statistics are likely ineffective, unattractive, and poorly trusted by their constituents. The converts and the church's influence of such individuals will decline over the long haul as illustrated by the examples provided earlier in this paper.

Although these integrity components have independent effects on soulwinning, a soulwinner who combines all five in day-to-day life is at a higher level of readiness to win souls and grow the Church than those who possess little or none of the five attributes. Defined as integrity worthiness, individuals at the highest level of integrity readiness have sharper antennae, with zero tolerance for immorality and indiscipline; they are quick to avoid every appearance of impropriety. An example of a worker of high integrity worthiness was the biblical Joseph, according to the story told in Genesis 39. He was sold as a slave to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. In Potiphar's house, he was acclaimed for his diligence and trustworthiness [behavioral integrity], which made Potiphar to appoint him as the manager over his estate. Joseph eschewed the promptings by Potiphar's wife to engage in infidelity with her [sexual integrity]. He did so because of the fear, and the knowledge of the Word, of God he possessed [Scriptural integrity]. As the Prime Minister of Egypt, he managed the resources of the entire nation throughout the seven years of plenty, the seven years of famine, and in the following periods, spanning his entire lifetime, without misreporting stock, sales or flow of resources [financial and statistical integrity]. As a result of his integrity, he was trusted and exalted by those he worked for and was well respected by all peoples, evidencing growth and blessings.

The preceding explanations are articulated

as seven postulates of readiness for soulwinning and summarize the key messages of this paper. These postulates are presented here:

1. Integrity has no direct effect on soulwinning, but works indirectly through trust, influence, and followership-building to effectuate soulwinning and, ultimately, church growth.
2. Behavioral integrity, which is the attainment of congruence between what you think/say/do and how others perceive you is critical for soulwinning.
3. Individuals and churches which prioritize sexual integrity are likely to be better soulwinners than those who take a laissez faire attitude towards it.
4. Money and the management of money is an important skill for soulwinners. Leaders who are trustworthy in the management of financial resources are likely strong and effective in soulwinning.
5. Lack of scriptural integrity produces unbelief in the receiving population and debilitate the readiness to accept the Word of God or the action elicited.
6. The deployment of dishonest statistics is the enemy of soulwinning. Believers and leaders who falsify performance reports are likely not well trusted and more likely ineffective in soulwinning than those who give honest reports.
7. Integrity worthiness, which is the amount of the five integrity components possessed by

individuals, is a measure of readiness to win souls. Individuals who score high on all five components will be more effective soulwinners than those who score low on all, or score zero on any one, components.

INTEGRITY FACILITATORS

When integrity leads to soulwinning, the church grows. Both the soulwinner and the Church are blessed. For one thing, Christ promised the soulwinner that He will be with him/her to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:20b). As the Scripture states, if God be for us, and we remain on the side of God, no one can be against us (Romans 8:31b). By strengthening integrity worthiness, blessings and the potential to receive it become motivations for soulwinning.

Strengthening personal integrity and accelerating the momentum for soulwinning requires moral and spiritual renewal³⁴. Inconsistencies between profession and action is a manifestation of deeply seated weakness in a Christian's life. Changing this attitude requires a fundamental change in the believer's practice, akin to the Biblical injunction to not conform, but to be transformed by the renewal of thoughts and minds (Romans 12:2). Routine assessment of performance is a key for this type of change.³⁵ Such routine performance assessment requires a constant reflection informed by feedbacks from colleagues, from the Scriptures (the standard guideline for Christian action), and any other Bible-based doctrinal guidelines provided to

individuals by their church. A good illustration of this type of evaluation is the creation story documented in Genesis 1 & 2. In that story, once God created a thing, He assessed it to see that the result was what He intended before creating another. He moved to create the next item only when He was satisfied with the quality of the previous creature. As His workmanship, believers too ought to learn from their past to organize their future. Obtaining feedback would require connecting/communicating with colleagues and being grounded in the Word of God and the relevant ecclesiastical guidelines. This knowledge will help to drive an already motivated soulwinner towards greater accomplishments.

Sound discipleship training is a facilitator for integrity. Robust Christian leadership must build on formal and informal discipleship training. The formal training, such as training received in Bible colleges, is a key to scriptural integrity, particularly for ministry leaders. Without this education, the use of continuous on-the-job pastoral training to fix integrity gaps will be ineffective. Hence, Reverend Wright³⁶ calls Christian leaders to provide sound discipleship education for their congregation and ensure that ordained ministers obtain good background training. Since disciples are the soulwinners,³⁷ good discipleship education is important to promote integrity both on the altar and in the pews.

The Church must provide congregants with the opportunity to receive good discipleship education and individual believers must make an effort to acquire it. Jesus said "... learn from me ... and you will find rest for your soul"

34 Vickie Hughes, "Authentic Leadership: Practices to Promote Integrity," E28-E31.

35 Rodin, "In the Service of One God Only: Financial Integrity in Christian Leadership," 46-56

36 Christopher J. H. Wright, "Humility, Integrity and Simplicity," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 39.14 (2015): 214-218.

37 Orin W. Cummings, "Vocational Integrity," *Source* 57.2 (2018):107-110.

(Matthew 11:29). The Apostle Paul said to his disciple, Timothy, “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” (2Timothy 2:2). To be effective, discipleship education must be of the right dose and type. Reverend Wright noted that using brief, on-the-job training to fill knowledge gaps among Christians, particularly, Christian leaders who lack the background theological training, is ineffective. He recommends a combination of some formal and informal education for every Christian leader, which includes soulwinners.³⁸ Every believer must know the Word of God sufficiently well to act truthfully, with integrity, and present the gospel with confidence in their communities. To this end, Jesus Christ deployed a variety of people-based approaches, ranging from didactic method (lecture-room type teaching approach), induction, mentoring, story-telling to supportive oversight to orient His disciples in the things of the Kingdom.

He utilized the didactic method to present new ideas or complicated concepts, such as when He taught the principles of the Kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 3-7). Induction is utilized to build confidence in the disciples. For instance, in Matthew 5:40-41, Jesus told the disciples that whoever receives them receives Him and whoever receives Him receives them. In this way, he tells the disciples that they have same power, same authority as He, God, and that they should see and carry themselves with confidence. Mentoring consists of learning by doing. Jesus deployed this approach many times when He sent the disciples out to the community to preach the gospel while he stayed behind to observe them (see Matthew 10:5-10 & 14-15). Stories are particularly effective means of communication because stories are not easily

forgotten. Jesus told the Apostles many parables and stories to ground them in the right way to approach the things of the Kingdom and how they must conduct themselves in private and public spheres. These include the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:18-23), the parable of the wheat and tares (Matthew 13:24-30), the parable of the hidden treasure (Matthew 13:45-46) and so on.

The fifth method, supportive oversight, was deployed by Jesus to supervise the Apostles. For instance, although Jesus knew that Judas was unfaithful, He never exposed him, but prayed for him and extended to him all the privileges the others received (John 13:1-5, 12-15). He publicly acknowledged his disciples, went through same experiences with them and never challenged them openly. In this way, the disciples felt comfortable, protected and a part of Him. As a result, when Christ departed from the earth, the disciples were willing to die for His course. These approaches are needed today even more than before to build a Church, whose members are knowledgeable, committed, truthful and integral to the body of Jesus Christ.

A man becomes his thought because the mind is the seat of thoughts. Thoughts are the catalysts for action (Proverb 23:7). The heart is the wellspring of life (Proverbs 4:23). This means that the quality of human action is dependent on the quality of thoughts that propel it. Newton (2011, 49)³⁹ stated that heart issues can only be addressed by heart’s solutions, which are words systematically injected into the heart to direct it towards pure, honest, righteous thoughts (2 Pet 2:9). Mentorship and supportive leadership can improve this symbiotic relationship between thoughts and action and catalyze integrity if they succeed in helping congregants to script a correct narrative of themselves and of others.

38 Wright, “Humility, Integrity and Simplicity,” 218.

39 Newton, “Looking for Integrity,” 48-49.

The Church must help their members and leaders to achieve this objective.

INTEGRITY INHIBITORS

The main inhibitor of personal integrity is lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6). A study conducted among seminar participants at the Alpha and Omega Institute, Jamaica, revealed that, of the 20 Pastors and lay leaders, who participated in the survey, those who had challenges displaying integrity were those who 1) lacked requisite administrative and technical/tactical skills for the job, and 2) those who lacked the knowledge of the vision and mission of their organizations.⁴⁰

Lack of knowledge of the consequences of actions is another key element, which can prompt a believer to be inconsistent in what he/she says and does. Inconsistency is sin and the wage of sin is death (John 12:16; Eze 18:20a). Knowledge is critical to whether a person chooses to live, by embracing righteous lifestyle, or dies, by cuddling sin. God instructed Joshua after Moses passed the mantle of leadership to him to not part with the Book of the Law, but to meditate on it day and night and to do according to what is written in it in order to prosper and have good success (Josh 1:8). God knows that knowledge is the precursor for action. For example, pride promotes ego and, to sustain ego, some ministers deploy dishonest statistics to report performance. Others indulge in sexual sins because it is pleasurable. But when they understand, per the Word of God, that wealth (tangible or intangible) gained by dishonest

means will be diminished (Prov 13:11), they may be encouraged to opt out of sin. The examples given earlier from the Catholic Church and Reverends Jim/Tammy Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart ministries demonstrate the devastation that immorality and/or dishonesty can bring to a Church-based organization or individuals. A believer that is knowledgeable in the consequences of poor personal integrity will be less likely to be a hypocrite.

As said before, being well grounded in the Word of God and the relevant ecclesiology is not only critical to living a life of integrity, it helps the believer to present the Word to others in simple, clear, articulate manner. Shallow theology and poor knowledge of the relevant literature for ministry debilitates integrity. Hence Lomenick⁴¹ noted that integrity, including scriptural integrity, is essential for every believer, and given the level of pessimism and skepticism that saturate the times, integrity is probably more valuable now than before.

CONCLUSION

The main argument of this paper is that there is an effect of integrity on soulwinning and church growth that is not well studied. To understand the status of knowledge on this effect, we conducted a systematic review of twenty-six articles obtained from the theological literature. The study findings reveal that integrity has real implications for soulwinning and church growth. Church organizations interested in building membership, expanding membership, and accelerating growth must consider investing in, and promoting, integrity among the clergy,

40 J.O. Brown, "The Importance of Integrity on Christian Leadership: Giftedness + integrity = Productivity. Dissertation Notices. *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* 9.1 (2015): 115.

41 Brad Lomenick, "Lead with Integrity," *Outreach* 12 (2014): 120.

as well as in the laity. Also, individual believers who want to have a meaningful Christian life must prioritize personal integrity in their public and private lives.

Based on the reviewed metadata, we present seven postulates underlying the axioms of the nexus between integrity and soulwinning. An evaluation of these postulates will be beneficial for further clarifying the nature, patterns, and mechanisms of these effects. Such an evaluation may take the form of a large-scale survey, quasi-experimental studies, or simple qualitative case studies. Whatever its size, the study should be rigorous so that the findings can help to increase the understanding of the linkage between integrity and soulwinning as well as elaborate interventions for improving the outcomes of efforts to win souls and promote church growth.

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Appendix 1

| Elements | 2009 | 2013 | 2018/19 |
|---|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| % Christian | 77% | 73% | 65% |
| % Unaffiliated | 16% | 20% | 26% |
| % Attended service monthly | 52% | 50% | 45% |
| % Attended religious services a few times a year or who never attended a service | 47% | 49% | 54% |

Trends in religious affiliation among US adults

Source: Pew Research Center: Aggregated Pew Research Center Political Surveys conducted 2009-July 2019 on the telephone. Available at <https://www.pewforum.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2019/11/Detailed-tables-for-upload-11.11.19.pdf>