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## REINVENTING NOLLYWOOD CHRISTIAN GENRE FILMS AS MEDIA FOR INCULCATING MORAL VALUES IN NIGERIA: A CRITICAL READING OF LANCELOT ODUWA IMASUEN'S PRIVATE SIN

Dr. Barclays Foubiri AYAKOROMA, Department of Theatre & Cultural Studies, Nasarawa State University, Keffi (NSUK), Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *Nollywood, the Nigerian film industry, has come a long way, pioneering with Igbo language genre films. The industry started producing English language films to enhance its patronage before producing along the line of generic trend. There have been epics/historical films, prostitution and ghetto life films, films delving into traditional beliefs, love and romance, crime/gangsterism, thrillers, Christian genre, gender issues, comedy, political issues, and horror films. The various genres provided frameworks upon which producers capitalised to further the boundaries of Nollywood. Little wonder then that the industry has cultivated some financial success formulae, which include a good story, capitalising on the star system (using popular 'selling faces' at that time, at whatever cost even if they are not playing lead roles), an established director, and the prevailing trend. In the generic development, the Christian genre films have been seen as veritable instruments for evangelism. In the main, they aim at preaching the word of God to win souls, to bring backsliders to the Christian fold again, and to increase or strengthen the faith of believers who may be in the valley of indecision. Unfortunately, current developments in Nollywood have not raised the ante in this direction, as opposed to the early productions. Through a critical reading of Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen's Private Sin, the paper submits that, the film is a veritable attempt at strengthening the value system; that there is need to reinvent the production of Christian genre films that would help enhance moral rectitude among Nigerians.*

**Keywords:** *Reinventing, Nollywood, Christian Genre Films, Media, Inculcating, Moral Values*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian film industry, Nollywood, has come a long way, pioneering with Igbo language genre films before producing English language films to enhance its patronage. It was later to start producing films following a generic trend. Consequently, there have been



epics/historical films, prostitution and ghetto life films, films delving into traditional beliefs, love and romance, crime/gangsterism, thrillers, as well as Christian genre, gender issues, comedy, political issues, and horror films. The emergent genres have provided frameworks upon which producers capitalised to further the boundaries of Nollywood. Little wonder then that there evolved some financial success formulae in the industry, which include a good story, the star system (using popular 'selling faces' at that time, at whatever cost even if they are not playing lead roles), established director(s), and following the prevailing trend. In the generic development, the Christian genre films were seen as veritable instruments for evangelism. In the main, they aimed at preaching the word of God to win souls, to bring backsliders to the Christian fold again, and to increase or strengthen the faith of believers in the valley of indecision. Unfortunately, current developments in Nollywood have not raised the ante in this direction, as opposed to the early film productions. In this study, it is posited that Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen's *Private Sin* is a veritable attempt at strengthening the moral value of Nigerians; and that there is need to reinvent the production of Christian genre films that would help enhance moral rectitude among the citizens.

## 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

It is pertinent, first, for us to briefly define the following: *reinventing*, *Nollywood*, *Christian genre films*, *media*, *inculcating*, and *moral values*. This is in order to properly situate the conceptual framework of the study.

**Reinventing:** To reinvent means to recreate, re-strategise, refocus, rethink or come up again with an invention or idea. This is through a period of painstaking story of the existing situation which needs updating.

**Nollywood:** This is the name that the contemporary Nigerian film industry has come to be identified with. From its experimental, humble beginning in 1992, with Kenneth Okonkwo's *Living in Bondage*, a Nek Video Links production, Nollywood has grown to be acclaimed as the second largest film industry in the world, providing employment for over a million youths. From the original Enugu production base, Lagos, Owerri, Calabar, Jos, Abuja, Ibadan, Asaba, and many other cities, have provided locations for various film locations over the years. Incidentally, it has given rise to other 'woods': Kannywood (Kano), Yoriwood (Ibadan), Edowood (Benin), Callywood (Calabar), Asawood (Asaba), and so on. No matter the



perspective from which the industry is viewed, there is no arguing the fact that it has become a veritable medium in propagating the various cultures of Nigeria, even in the Diaspora. It has also contributed invaluablely to the growth and development of the film industries in Ghana, Kenya, Cameroon, Gambia, South Africa, and other African countries.

**Christian Genre Films:** These are films that promote themes that bother on Christian religion.

**Media:** According to *The New Webster's Dictionary of the English Language*, the media is something through which a force is transmitted; the material that an artist works with; a substance through which a culture can be grown (621). In the context of this paper, the emphasis is on how Christian genre films could be used as corrective measures in the face of moral depravity in religious circles.

**Inculcating:** *The New Webster's Dictionary of the English Language*, states that, to inculcate means to teach; to impress upon the mind, by constant repetition and emphasis (490). This entails regular sensitisation of the citizenry for them to change their mindset. The fact is that human beings are always resistant to change; it takes a while for them to adapt to new ideas, and the level of acceptability is very much dependent of the level to which such ideas are impressed upon their minds.

**Moral Values:** In the first place, according to *The New Webster's Dictionary of the English Language*, moral has to do with the principles of right and wrong and the distinction between them (649). On the other hand, value is "the measure of how strongly something is desired for its physical or moral beauty, usefulness, rarity, etc., especially expressed in terms of the effort, money etc. one is willing to expend in acquiring it, retaining possession of, or preserving it" (1087). By moral values, the focus in the discourse is on the rectitude in the Nigerian value system; it examines the principles of conduct as they relate to the behaviours of Christians.

### 3. ON CHRISTIAN GENRE FILMS AND NOLLYWOOD

The term, genre, cannot be simply described as the classification of films according to certain characteristics because its usage is determined, to a large extent, by the purpose of the film. In a study on the application of genres in the contemporary Nigerian film industry, Nollywood, we charted a trend from a historical survey of the rise and development of the industry (Ayakoroma, *Trends in Nollywood...* 89-108). To better appreciate the perspective



from which we are approaching this study, let us briefly highlight the trend. Pioneering with Igbo language genre films, the industry started producing English language films before following a generic trend with epics/historical films, prostitution and ghetto life, traditional beliefs, love and romance, crime/gangsterism, thrillers (suspense/drama), Christian, gender issues, comedy, political, and horror. The various genres provided frameworks on which producers had capitalised to further the boundaries of Nollywood. Little wonder then that the industry has, over the years,

evolved some perceived formulae for financial success, which include a good story (which is not out of place), capitalising on the star system (which entails using popular selling faces at that time, at whatever cost even if they are not playing lead roles), an established director, and the prevailing genre (Ayakoroma, *Trends in Nollywood...* 53).

There is no gainsaying the fact that, Christian genre feature films are seen as veritable instruments for evangelism. In the main, Christian films are aimed at preaching the word of God to win souls, to bring backsliders to the Christian fold again. They are also aimed at increasing or strengthening the faith of believers, who may have been 'between opinions.' We have posited elsewhere that, Mike Bamiloye of Mount Zion Faith Ministries contributed immensely to the production of Christian video films on commercial basis. Unfortunately, he did not make much impact largely due to the fact that, the productions were more of video recordings of religious story lines; they were not artistically, professionally packaged. Furthermore, the video films were more of family productions, as his family or congregation members made up the casts predominantly. Helen Ukpabio of Liberty Gospel Ministries appeared to have suffered the same fate until she collaborated with Teco Benson, who directed most of her successful her productions. The breakthrough in the collaboration was the pacesetter, *The Price* (Benson, 1999), starring Richard Mofe-Damijo (RMD) and Eucharia Anunobi (Ayakoroma, *Trends in Nollywood...* 94-95).

The success of *The Price* was such that every producer/director became *born again* and took delight in ending film productions with the catch phrase: *To God be the Glory* before rolling end credits. As a point of fact, apart from *The Price*, there were other Christian video films like, Kenneth Nnebue's *End Time*. Somehow, *End Time* catapulted Clem Ohameze to stardom with his brilliant interpretation of the role of Pastor Weaver; Christian Onu's *Church*



*Committee and Christian Marriage*; and Simi Opeoluwa's *Church Business*. Other Christian genre films like, Steve Lukas' *Keeping Faith*, Lancelot Imasuen's *Private Sin*, and Jeta Amata's *Rapture*, are some of the productions that made impact during this period. As noted elsewhere, *Rapture* became a subject of controversy between the Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC) and Ukpabio as the Commission was of the view that the film parodied the Catholic faith. Ukpabio defied the commission by releasing the film and opting to pay the stipulated fine; but somehow, the judgement of the court was in her favour (Ayakoroma, *Trends in Nollywood...* 94-95).

The point established in *Trends in Nollywood: A Study of Selected Genres* is that the transition from Igbo to English language films opened a wide vista for artists of other ethnic extractions, apart from Igbo and Yoruba, to have breakthroughs in the industry and eventually gained prominence. It is also posited that since the Igbo traders provided the economic base for the industry to thrive, it has been easier for artists of Igbo origin to gain stardom (Ayakoroma, *Trends in Nollywood...* 97). This is understandable because of the ethnic factor in the Nigerian polity. Other trends in the industry delineated include, the rise of directors, plagiarism in screen plays, stereotyping, improved artist fees, formation of guilds system, development of an iconography, marketing and distribution strategies, piracy and censorship, co-productions, and popularization of film awards. Others include employment opportunities, generation of revenue for broadcast and advertising industries, and production approaches, among others (Ayakoroma, *Trends in Nollywood...* 97-108). Consequently, it could be argued that, for an industry that has grown to be worth about ₦100 billion, serious attention to issues of application of genre, strategic marketing, and professional practices would go a long way in improving standards in the burgeoning industry in Nigeria, which has the prospects of surpassing crude oil in the area of foreign earnings.

#### **4. THE ROLE OF CHRISTIAN GENRE FILMS IN INCULCATING MORAL VALUES**

In the bid to inculcate moral values in the citizenry, Christian genre films should aim at projecting the following, among others:

- a) Encouraging hard work in life;
- b) Stressing the need for honesty in whatever we do in life;
- c) Teaching people to be altruistic in service;



- d) Encouraging prospective couples to receive fatherly blessings in marriage;
- e) Enjoining Christians to avoid the sin of adultery;
- f) Cautioning believers to curb excessive love for money;
- g) Warning Christians to be wary of the dangers of superstitious beliefs;
- h) Teaching believers to know that “prayerlessness in Christian life means powerlessness in life”; and
- i) Making believers to realise that true repentance is an essential in Christian living

It is necessary to relate the above trajectories to Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen’s *Private Sin*, the film under study. First, a brief look at the plot structure will be salutary.

## 5. ABOUT THE FILM, PRIVATE SIN

*Private Sin* is a film produced and directed by Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen. Born on Wednesday, 21<sup>st</sup> July, 1971, in Benin, Edo State, Nigeria, Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen (LOI) has become one of Nigeria’s leading film producer/directors and screenwriters. He waded into the Nigerian film industry, Nollywood around 1999, as a producer/director, based on his professional training at the University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. He was among the very enterprising young students that made the Certificate in Theatre Arts (CTA) programme of the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Port Harcourt, very alluring.

In 2008, *Nollywood Babylon*, a documentary film co-directed by Ben Addelman and Samir Mallal, produced by AM Pictures and the National Film Board of Canada, in association with the Documentary Channel, followed Lancelot (as he is popularly called), while he was shooting *Bent Arrows*, said to be his 157<sup>th</sup> film. According to *Wikipedia*, the film, *Bent Arrows* was released into the market in 2010 (<https://en.wikipedia.org>). Apart from *Private Sin*, the film under study, some of the films Lancelot has produced and directed include, *Yesterday*, *The Soul That Sinneth*, *Aziba*, *Diehard*, *The Pope Must Hear This*, *The Last Burial*, *Issakaba series*, *August Meeting*, *The GSM Connection*, and *Critical Decision*. Others are include *Masterstroke*, *Moment of Truth*, *Games Men Play*, *Yahoo Millionaire*, *Home in Exile*, and *Invasion 1897: The Deposition of the Last African King*, among others.

The film, *Private Sin*, tells the story of Pastor Jake Briggs (played by Richard Mofe-Damijo, popularly known as, RMD), a vibrant man of God and General Overseer (GO) of Foundation Light Church. Unfortunately, there is a “but” in his life. His challenge is that he has a



troubled marriage – his wife, Faith (Genevieve Nnaji) has not been blessed with any child. He is also not happy that is father, Chief Briggs (Olu Jacobs) has married a young wife. Incidentally, his mother-in-law, Mrs. Ejiofor (Patience Uzokwor) counsels Faith to get a boyfriend to get her pregnant and give the child to Pastor Jake, warning that she does not want to lose Jake as a son-in-law. Meanwhile, there are female gossips in the church, who maintain that, Faith had plotted her way into the church, joined the choir and seduced Pastor Jake into marrying her.

Incidentally, Pastor Jake returns home on lunch break only to see Faith drinking brandy at home. While he marvels at her level of depravity, she retorts: “Why won't I drink when you frustrate me?” This troubled marital life drives Pastor Jake into a sorry state. Eventually, he loses concentration while driving on the road, nearly causing an accident. The ravishing young lady, who nearly bumped into him and was angry at first, consoles him, on seeing his distressed condition. Theirs was love at first sight as she takes the consolation to the net level – a love affair that lifts the spirit of Jake. Unknown to him, the young lady happened to be Evelyn (Stephanie Okereke), the new young wife of his father. He eventually meets her at his father’s house, on the invitation of his father, Chief Briggs (Olu Jacobs), and complications set in. This was just as Mrs. Ejiofor (Patience Uzokwor) insists on that Faith should an extra-marital relationship in order to get pregnant, warning: “Don't fold your hands and watch your roof burning.”

Meanwhile, Chief Briggs organizes a cocktail party, which further brings Jake and Eva closer. Faith interrupts their chat at the cocktail and later confronts him at home having sensed his lust for Eva at the party. The web around Jake and Eva tightens as Chief Briggs travels and requests that Jake should visit Eva to be checking on her. Somehow, there is feeling of guilt on both sides; and Jakes comes to the realisation that he has sinned again God and his father. Consequent on the foregoing, Jake’s productivity declines in the office, as noticed by his friend and colleague, John (Ben Nwosu).

Faith, on the other hand, also complains to the mother, who reasons that it is because she has not given him a child, warning that he may bring in another woman. She thus insists that Faith should get a man to get her pregnant. At this point, Faith opens up, disclosing that, she does not think Jake is sterile. She confesses that she had an abortion while in school and that her womb had been removed. Though it is a shocking revelation, her mother insists



that she should keep it a secret and continue as if all is well. She further avers that they will do everything possible to keep the marriage. The suggestion is for them to visit a *babalawo*, Baba Ikotun, for a charm so that Jake will not look at any other woman. She maintains that the native doctor did it for Mama Bose. Faith abhors the idea of going to a juju man, a stance that makes her mother angry.

Jake gets a late night distress call from Eva for assistance, saying she slipped and fell. In spite of protests for Faith, Jake leaves to give Eva the much-needed assistance. The massage turns to romance. There are montages of a quiet beach scene and full blown romantic love sequences with Faith and Eva. Jake admits that, this is an act that is “so wrong but it feels so right. I will never let you go. Faith will not let me go. She will never allow it. I was led by the flesh. My dad could kill us”. Unfortunately, Jake cannot disentangle himself from this unholy love affair, the web of sin. Thus, in the face of his dwindling performance in ministry, Pastor Jake is confronted by his associate pastor, Emeka (Emma Ayalogu). He tells him that he needs his support, as he has a problem with his wife. According to him, he needed to step aside, so that he could devote himself to prayers and fasting. The pastor counsels him to “learn to make people have faith in you as a leader.” But on hearing Jake’s decision to go away for a period, Faith reacts: “Going away to where? To the mountain top? I will not sit down and watch you walk out of my life....” Mama’s reaction was no less:

Did I not tell you? You refused to act. We have people like Baba. He will still do something. Go to see your father-in-law....

Meanwhile, Jake and Eva are in a fix because of the complex nature of their relationship. Eva says: “We have to stop. I am sorry Jake. I never meant any of this to happen. We need to confess to our partners.” In the process of praying to renew their spiritual antennas, the prayer turns to an embrace. Just then, Faith walks in and sees them in the act. To Faith, Eva was a dog, for having it with father and son. But to Jake, it is his fault, and that he takes full responsibility for their actions. Faith vows to fight Jake.

On the pulpit back to the church, in the next sequence, Jake confesses his sin, saying:

I have sinned against you and against God. At the moment of great weakness, I opened the door for the enemy. Contrary to popular belief, all is not well with my matrimonial home. I met and fell in love with another man's wife. Pray for me so that God will forgive me.



Members of the congregation see it as a device of the devil to divide the church. On the other hand, back home, there is quarrel over the confession. Faith maintains that since it is confession time, Jake should tell his father that he is having an affair with Eva. She ignores his plea to keep his father out of it and goes to the house. She meets Eva and says she had come to tell her father-in-law. Eva pleads with her. However, a timely phone call saves the day, and Faith promises to return some other day.

Pastor Jake is pensive and praying; and there is a phone call from Eva. What are you trying to do to me? "Chief has never touched me. He said he married me for a purpose." She wonders how she can tell Chief she is pregnant. Dr. Phillips calls Chief and congratulates him. He suffers a cardiac arrest. In his death-throes, he asks if Eve was pregnant; and whether he was not entitled to know. While she agrees to confess, she could not do that as he dies. Somehow, two weeks after the demise of his father, Jake feels as if the world is closing in on him; as if God has abandoned him. But Pastor encourages him, for him to stop tormenting himself, as "whatever has happened has happened". He visits Eva and she is angry with him for not visiting her since after the death of Chief Briggs. "You are there with your wife and I am alone", she says, adding that, she cannot forget the past as she is carrying Jake's baby. Just then, there is a phone call that Faith and her mother were involved in an accident. Mrs. Ejiofor had died and Faith was in a very critical condition – she has had spinal cord injury. She is eventually discharged from hospital in a wheelchair, paralysed.

Eve packs to leave and stumbles on a letter from Chief Brigg and a video cassette. In the video recording, he discloses that he had married Evelyn for Jake, counselling that young men should "listen to fathers when choosing a spouse," because "a good relationship could start on a wrong foundation." Jake returns home to meet Faith crying and insisting that he should take her to church as she needed to get out the burden in her heart. In a special service, Faith ministers in song before giving her testimony – a true confession. She testifies that she had come to church, as an unbeliever, determined to make Jake her husband. She narrates how her mother had tried to make her have an affair; and that she became desperate and was on the way to a native doctor to prepare a charm when the fatal accident occurred. She counsels the congregation that, "If you are in the church for the wrong reasons, learn from me." She eventually dies after the service. The film ends on a



happy note, because while Jake was by this father's graveside, meditating alone, Eva comes to meet him and there is a re-union.

## **6. CHARACTERISATION IN PRIVATE SIN**

At this juncture, it is pertinent to briefly examine the major characters in the film. This is because they are the media through which the message of the film has been communicated to the audience.

### **6.1. The Character of Pastor Jake**

He is a vibrant pastor, who is the toast of the town. His ministry prospers because of the instant miracle mentality of Nigerians. Unfortunately, he married Faith following his head, not his heart. He is strong-willed and hard working. When Faith pressurises Jake to buy property in England, saying she did not want to stay in his father's house in London any longer, he refuses bluntly. He would not succumb to the idea of using proceeds from the church tithes and offering to buy property in London, even when she compares him with other pastors, who had done that, which is a grievous sin in the sight of God.

Jake is not worried so much about the childlessness of their marriage and continues to believe God for a miracle. His human nature manifests due to the nagging nature of Faith; and it weighs him down. It drives him into falling for the things of the flesh – a chance meeting with Eva in his dejected state, which leads to a sizzling romance. His lust for Eva is such that he runs straight to see Eva in the middle of the night, when she phones to tell him she had had a domestic accident. He confesses to her that he does not love Faith, adding that he did not wait on the Lord before rushing into the marriage.

However, Jake realised that he needed to concentrate on the church as it was still growing. When confronted why he had not visited his father's wife, he confessed that he felt like a fraud, standing before his congregation and preaching to them. On the other hand, when confronted by his associate pastor, Emeka, who had noticed that the anointing was no longer flowing in his ministrations, as it used to be, Jake pretended as if all was well, saying it had to do with stress of the ministry and running his father's business. Somehow, Jake realised that he needed to go through the refining process. This is just as gold goes through the furnace and comes out purified. As it were, fervent prayer and fasting are essential in reinvigorating the Christian spirit. For instance, after the baptism, Jesus Christ went to the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights to fast and prayer. The *Holy Bible* records that Jesus



told his Disciples: “These ones cannot come out except by prayer and fasting.” Also, before his betrayal, Jesus Christ went to the Mount of Transfiguration to pray. The latter scripture underscores the practice of servants of God “going on the mountain”; meaning, they are going for quiet, undisturbed, secluded, fervent prayers for God to intercede concerning whatever expectations they have.

To Jake, therefore, going to the mountain was a period of restitution to regain his pious Christian life, which had been tainted by his adulterous act. Of course, there is a biblical example in the life of King David. After sleeping with Uriah’s wife and sending him to the war front to die, David repented and asked God for forgiveness. He even asked God to wreak His vengeance on him, as he was the sinner. Somehow, Jake was also a pastor, who was quick to know when he had disappointed his congregation. Many a pastor would continue pretending that all was well and blame God for not producing the original ‘signs and wonders’ he was known for. He decided to quickly confess to avoid being blackmailed further by Faith. This, of course, is a blunt way to stop any blackmailer, because once you continue to dance to his/her tunes, the aggression continues.

### **6.2. The Character of Faith**

She is an opportunist, a pretender, who schemed her way into Pastor Jake’s life because he was from a very rich family and was doing very well in business. She joined the choir to surreptitiously seduce him; and she succeeded in her scheme. Her types abound in the many Pentecostal churches, where the modes of Christian worship – dressing, greeting, singing, dancing, and praying – are seen as more permissive and fashionable. Faith, as a pastor’s wife, had no reservations in not only pressurising him to buy a property in England, saying she would not want to stay in his father's house in London any longer. Instead of being a source of encouragement and support to Jake, she even advised that he should use the proceeds from the church tithes and offerings to buy the property; and she went on to compare him to other pastors, who had done that successfully.

As a housewife, Faith is care free; she prepared pizza for lunch for her husband, after she had burnt the lunch she was preparing. At a time Jake was in a hurry to meet his meeting appointment, she played pranks with him, putting the car key in her bra, seductively, for him to take it. She claimed that the doctor had said there was nothing wrong with her, when in actual fact she had some skeletons in her cupboard, which had caused her barrenness in



spite of three years of marriage. Although a supposedly born-again Christian, who led choir ministrations, Faith spent time drinking brandy at home. Even when Jake was astounded at her level of depravity, she retorted: “Why won't I drink when you frustrate me?” She knew that she was not going to have a baby because of an earlier abortion that had complications, but she hid that medical condition from Jake. The implication here is that the marriage was built on a foundation of lies. Little wonder then that she agreed to follow her mother to consult the native doctor for some charms to bewitch Jake. This was the journey that brought her downfall and eventual death.

Faith is a very sharp and observant person. She was quick to see through Jake’s lust for Eva. It beat her imagination that Jake wanted to run straight to see Eva in the middle of the night. However, she could also be seen as loving and kind-hearted in the sense that she resisted her mother’s counsel, first to have a boyfriend to get her pregnant; and secondly, to visit the *babalawo*, to prepare a charm that would make Jake not to look at any other woman. When the pressure from her mother was getting too much, her love for Jake made her to confess, saying he was not sterile; and that they had not got a baby as a result of an earlier abortion she had, which had affected her womb. Unfortunately, as a girl who was very much attached to the mother, she listened to the advice to hide that fact away from Jake. As it were, after fatal accident, she felt remorse and insisted on confessing to the whole congregation, to sound a warning to all those who went to church for the wrong reasons or with ulterior motives. Incidentally, her death cleared the perceived huddles against Jake and Eva coming together without hindrances, morally and scripturally. One could thus posit that, Faith was the sacrifice for Jake and Eva to live happily thereafter.

### **6.3. The Character of Chief Briggs**

A former ambassador from Rivers State, Chief Briggs is the father of Pastor Jake, who had made an impact in business. He is reputed as one of the giants in corporate Nigeria. He was a man who stood tall at 64 years old, looking as a 40 years old person. He had given so much to society and Jake, as a son, who described him as, ‘a good father and loving husband’. He was sceptical of Jake’s going into full time ministry (pastoral work), but insisted on Jake running his businesses. He did not approve of Jake’s choice of Faith, in the first place, and was never relented in letting him know that, saying she was “a problem” to Jake. He loved his son, Jake, and wanted him to have a happy married life.



While apologising to Jake for not telling him before marrying Eva, Chief Briggs claimed that the marriage was a way of helping her. Of course, this was not true as he actually married her for a purpose – to take the place of Faith in Jake’s life. To him, Eva was a wonderful girl, his little angel, the sweetest thing, the best thing to happen in his life since he lost his wife, Jake’s mother. He implored Jake to ‘give an old man a chance’ to be happy, saying his (Jake’s) approval meant a lot to him. He arranged for Jake and his wife to come over to his place for dinner and plays along. He was a man who had lost interest in politics, because of his abhorrence of the high level of corruption and arrant display of ill-gotten wealth by the country’s politicians. In line with his well-laid out plan, he wanted to know Jake’s impression about Eva and vice-versa. “What do you think of my princess? ... What do you think of my son?”

Briggs is also a fine actor. This is in the sense that he pretended to be angry when Jake expressed reluctance in acceding to his request for him to visit Eva during his absence. Unknown to both of them, all he was doing was to bring them together, so that they could fall in love gradually. As fate would have it, he did not know that, a chance meeting on the highway had already provided the impetus for a sizzling love affair. Briggs is also a man who was prepared to face death any moment. Thus, he prepared for the evil day, by recording his ‘will’ for both Jae and Eva.

#### **6.4. The Character of Evelyn**

Eva is a beautiful you lady, who bumped into Jake’s life, through a chance meeting; it was purely by accident. Her caring nature manifested when she saw Jake in a distressed state. The irony of the meeting was that, she ended up encouraging Jake, a pastor, to “remember there is God”. She ended up going out with him to make him happy. In falling in love with Jake, the weakness of a woman in her is revealed. Though she was supposed to married to Chief Briggs, she confesses that he had not slept with him, even for a day. The implication is that she saw in Jake an outlet to satisfy her sexual pleasures. Somehow, she was shocked on seeing Jake in the house, lying that he looked like her uncle who had died in the United States. This was all in the attempt to cover up their love affair. This was just as Jake warns that she should not let his father know the truth. She tells Chief Briggs that it was hard to believe that Jake was a pastor, saying he did not look like one. Incidentally, along the line, she is eaten up by guilt, knowing that Chief Briggs had done so much for her.



### **6.5. The Character of Mrs. Ejiofor**

Mrs. Ejiofor is the mother of Faith who tries every means to safeguard her daughter. She is a loving mother-in-law, who was happy that her daughter was married into a very rich family. She is always full of smiles once a fat cheque from Jake is handed over to her. To Mrs. Ejiofor, Jake was the person that was sterile since there was no history of barrenness in her family. Thus, she was ready to push her daughter to do anything to get pregnant – getting a handsome boyfriend to do the work or visit a native doctor (*babalawo*). When Faith recalls that she had had an appendix operation some years ago, which had affected her womb, Mrs. Ejiofor was angry that she had not told her. But she insists that the matter should be kept secret and that Faith should pretend that everything was alright. She counsels that they should go to Baba Ikotun to do a charm so that Jake would not look at any other woman. This was to forestall Faith being thrown out of her matrimonial home. Faith refusal at first angered her but her persistence made Faith to succumb, a mission that ended her life prematurely.

## **7. THEMATIC PERSPECTIVES AND THE INCULCATION OF MORAL VALUES IN PRIVATE SIN**

The themes inherent in Lancelot Imasuen's *Private Sin* include, hard work in life, honesty in life, being altruistic in service, the significance of fatherly blessings in marriage, having excessive love for money, the dangers of superstitious beliefs, the sin of adultery, prayerlessness in Christian life, and true repentance as a Christian, as highlighted below.

### **7.1 Hard Work in Life**

*Private Sin* portrays the essence of hard work in any endeavour in life. This is the ability to work on one's own volition, being focused and not being forced. The end result of every genuine hard-work or diligent service is good returns, because, as the *Holy Bible* says, "whatever a man sows, that also shall he reap". It is diligence that enables one to influence his subordinates' attitude to work, to justify his position, and be exemplary (Ayakoroma, *Theatre Management...*). Jake worked diligently in his pastoral work and his father's business. Unlike many other pastors, he did not depend on the tithes and offerings from the church. It explains why he refused to listen to Faith when she advised that he should use church funds to buy a property in London.



The conviction and commitment of Jake differ from the approach of Jimmy Okoye (Ramsey Noah) in *Church Business*. Jimmy lost his job through no fault of his, and the joblessness plunged him into abject poverty as he was no longer sure of a roof over his family. He became desperate after endless, fruitless job searches. When he saw that his friend, Mike (Ofia Mbaka) was doing well as a Pastor, he asked if he could join him in the ministry. His wife, Chioma (Genevieve Nnaji) was not comfortable about his intent, as she told him that he did not have the call of God. Despite her worries, he joined Pastor Mike in the church business. Eventually, he broke away and founded his own ministry with the help of an old friend. In the final analysis, Jimmy made into a deal with the devil and his life spiralled out of control. Thus, themes of corruption in the church, opening a church as a business, poverty and money rituals are reflected in the film, *Church Business*. The moral of the story is that, there is no shortcut to anything good in life. If you want to be wealthy, 'stinkingly rich', then you have to work hard for it.

### **7.2. Honesty in whatever we do in Life**

This means one is sincere in his appearance and dealings with people. Honesty makes room for one to enjoy the trust and implicit confidence of others. It is honesty that makes one to ensure that public funds, property, and so on, are safe and used accordingly (Ayakoroma, *Theatre Management...*). Before his being entangled in the illicit love affair with Eva, Jake was an example of honesty. He did his pastoral work honestly just as he also managed his father's group of companies diligently. As far as he was concerned, the proceeds from the church tithes and offerings were purely meant to take care of the work of the ministry and not for personal aggrandisement.

### **7.3 Being Altruistic in Service**

Altruism entails consideration for other people, without any thought of self as a principle of conduct. In other words, one is not thinking of personal or self-interest, but of the common good. The bane of the Nigerian leadership over the years has been personal aggrandisement, selfishness of the part of leaders to the detriment of the underprivileged masses. Our politicians always think of enriching themselves and not improving the lot of those they represent (Ayakoroma, *Theatre Management...*). Chief Briggs displays a high level of altruism as a father. His fatherly love is exemplified in all his actions. For instance, he could not bear to see his son, Jake, unhappily married. Thus, he intentionally married Eva for



Jake, unknown to the duo. He believed that his plot will work, as soon as Jake meets Eva; and he tried everything possible to pull them together.

#### **7.4 Fatherly Blessings in Marriage**

Jake married Faith without the blessing of his father, because, as he confessed to his father, he was carried away by the things of the flesh. He realised, too late, that Faith had deceived him into marrying her. Unfortunately, he did not know the hidden side of their marriage – she was not going to give him any child, as her womb had been removed from an earlier abortion. Apparently, it is his father non-approval of the marriage that made him to marry Eva, believing that Jake will fall in love with her one day. This affirms the adage that, “what an old man sees sitting, the child cannot see standing on a rooftop”.

#### **7.5 Excessive Love for Money**

The *Holy Bible* says: “The love for money is the root of all evils.” Faith’s mother, Mrs. Ejiofor (Patience Uzokwor) is an example of mother-in-laws who like their son-in-laws solely because of money they get from them. In other words, money becomes the barometer to measure the acceptability or otherwise of a potential suitor. As far as Mrs. Ejiofor was concerned, her daughter could go to any length to keep Jake because she would not want to lose him as a son-in-law. This informed her counsel for them to seek assistance from a medicine man (*babalawo*), to get a charm that would have made Jake to be perpetually attached to Faith despite her barrenness.

#### **7.6 The Dangers of Superstitious Beliefs**

This is a malady that devils our society. Many people go to church during the day, behaving, singing and praying piously, only to go to the *babalawo* in the middle of the night, away from prying eyes. Thus, they play religion, as church-goers, not really convicted to live Christ-like lives that are worthy of emulation. Unfortunately, this is irrespective of the level of education such persons have acquired.

#### **7.7. The Sin of Adultery**

It could be argued that Jake was driven by his nagging wife, Faith to commit adultery. The fact is that many women drive their husbands into such immoral acts because of one problem or the other. However, he did not only commit adultery in sleeping with Eva; he committed incest for sleeping with his father’s wife. This is where the idea of sin comes in. But the question is: Why is the act of incest a private sin?



### **7.8. Prayerlessness in Christian Life**

One of the ways to avoid sin is engaging in prayers and fasting. It means that one must understand the ultimate purpose of prayer and fasting in the life of a Christian. For instance, the ministry of Jesus Christ went through several levels of change because he prayed and fasted always. There is a saying that, "a *prayerless* Christian is a *powerless* Christian." Jake gave in to the temptation of the flesh because he succumbed to the challenges militating against his marital life, as manifested in the 'cross' he had to carry, called, Faith. At the beginning of the film, Jake was portrayed as an anointed servant of God who was powerful in deliverance. But with time, he could not do exploits again because of the things of the flesh.

### **7.9. True Repentance as a Christian**

To repent is to go from one's old sinful ways. Jake repented when he came to the realisation that he cannot live perpetually in sin, having committed not only adultery, but incest. Faith also repented by confessing her sins at the end to the entire congregation before she died. The consolation is that they unburdened their heavy hearts and were relieved.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

In this study, it has been noted that, Christian films aim at preaching the word of God to win souls, to bring backsliders to the Christian fold again, and to increase or strengthen the faith of believers who may be in the valley of indecision. It is also posited that, current developments in Nollywood have not raised the ante in this direction, as opposed to the early productions. The submission here is that, Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen's *Private Sin* (2003) is a veritable attempt at strengthening the value system; and that there is need to reinvent the production of Christian genre films that would help enhance moral rectitude among Nigerians.

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