



Kingdom Christian Education and the Global Church: Combating Heresies in the Age of Globalisation

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Abstract

This study aims to awaken the consciousness of Christians worldwide, called the global church, about the menaces of heresies posed by this present age of globalisation and how to combat them. The age of globalisation is known as the age of information technology, communication systems, transportation networks, and religious marketing. In this age, the world is brought into one tiny unit known as the global village, and the global church cannot pretend to be unaware. Today, practically every aspect of life is affected by globalisation. The globe has successfully become a global village where information and technology are available to everyone every day, hour, minute, and second. The emergence of this trend has increased the number of heretical teachings, both in the church and on social media platforms. This descriptive study relied mainly on secondary data collected from various journals, magazines, books, and websites. Therefore, the paper examines the meaning and conceptions of globalisation, kingdom Christian education, and the global church; the menaces of globalisation on the global church; the historical conception and overview of heresy; how to identify heresies in the church; and recommendations on how to combat heresies.

Keywords: kingdom Christian education, global church, heresies, globalisation, Christianity and the Christians.

Introduction

Christianity plays an important role in the process of globalisation and the global church is mandated to Christianise the world or globalise the message of Jesus Christ. This can only be made possible through the vehicle of kingdom Christian education by teaching and preaching to the whole world the word of God as

commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19–20; cf. Mark 16:15–16)¹. Thus, the global church has a greater role to play in the globalisation of Christianity. Such a role did not just start within the last few decades. Dele Alaba Ilesanmi (2023) argues that globalisation started with God when He blessed man and commanded him to multiply and fill the earth (Gen 1:28) and was validated and executed by our Lord Jesus Christ when He commanded His disciples to globalise the good news to the entire world (Matt 28:19–20; Mark 16:15–16). He argues further that the cerebral missionary giant, Paul, the Apostle, cashed in on Jesus' command by globalising Christianity through his missionary journeys in major cities of the ancient world before the invention of technology. This is what Ilesanmi called “embryonic globalisation”. Although Christianity has been permeating the world for centuries, José Casanova, a sociology professor at Georgetown University, noted that we are now aware of this globalisation and confronted with the challenge of surviving in a pluralistic society. This awareness, according to him, is that we are all members of a single, global humanity who share the same time and space. Casanova argued, when he was interviewed, that the Christian church has been a carrier of globalisation for 20 centuries.¹

Globalisation is a broad term for processes involving changes in politics, society, economy, technology, and culture. It includes the extent of political ideology and practices consistency as well as the geographic range of cultural symbolism (Clark, 1997). Given the foregoing, one could argue that globalisation defies an easy and straightforward description. Clark has also noted changes in the volume and scope of international exchanges as indicators of globalisation. No doubt, this age of globalisation has brought about an upsurge in heretical teachings. Hence, this paper is set to create awareness of the menace of heresies and how to combat them.

Meaning of Globalisation

Globalisation, according to Ilesanmi (2023), “is a biblical concept, a theological phenomenon, and a divine idea from the beginning of the world”. He argues that globalisation is not a human idea but God's idea to fulfil His purpose of saving the estranged world—the lost souls. He defines globalisation as a theological phenomenon and biblical idea of God's way of reaching out to lost souls to bring them into a right relationship with Himself through our Lord Jesus Christ. Ilesanmi emphasises that Christianity is a global faith, and globalisation is not a new concept in Christianity. He asserts that our world is increasingly a global community. This small, global community is facilitated by rapid technological development and technology is now called “a global village.” Ajaiyi (2004) defines globalisation as the increasing interaction among and integration of the activities, especially economic activities, of human societies around the world. In his view, Ugabi (2010) opined that the concept of globalisation has continued to arouse heated debate among socio-cultural exchanges between individuals, groups, and nations around the world. Ezeanyika S.E. (2004:127) defined globalisation as the widening, intensifying, spreading up, and growing impact of international interconnectedness and interrelationships. Kiely (1995:207, cited in Reginald Amaechi, 2020, & Ilesanmi, 2023) defines globalisation as “a world in which societies, cultures, politics, and economics have, in some sense, come closer together”. He further states that the concept can be seen as an “intensification of worldwide social relations that link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring miles away and vice versa. More so, Geoffrey Peterson and Peter Gill (1993:81, cited Anthony Giddins G.) see globalisation as the increasing integration of world economic activities made possible by improvement in technology and improved means of communication, resulting in the situation in which the national state becomes increasingly debilitated and subsumed under market forces (see Amaechi & Ilesanmi). Amaechi came up with the view that globalisation is a movement towards a global economy in which national boundaries cease to matter. He explains further that this corresponds to an unprecedented concentration of space and time through the development of new means of communication and information technologies across the world. He stresses that it aims at creating new avenues for the regulation and functioning of a social order that goes beyond that of the nation-state.

Kingdom Christian Education, the Global Church and Globalisation

It is important to know that “the global church” here refers to the worldwide people of God, the community of those people who have been redeemed by the work and blood of Jesus Christ. This transcends ethnic, cultural, and racial lines. These are all the redeemed, saved, and forgiven children of God

¹ All Bible quotations, except where otherwise stated, are from the King James Version.

who believe in Christ Jesus all over the world. The global church can also be called the worldwide group of Christians or the universal church. The Greek word for “the church” is called *ecclesia*, meaning a company of called-out ones—the congregation of Christian believers who have been called out of the world. What is Kingdom Christian education? There is a need for concept clarification here. The terms “Kingdom Christian education”, “Kingdom education”, and “Christian education” mean the same thing in this paper. It is the type of education that is Christian and kingdom-based; it is an education that is Christ-centred, Holy Spirit-controlled, Bible-based, learner-related, and life-applied. Ilesanmi (2021) defines Christian education as:

a process of initiating or introducing the heathen into the culture of the Christian faith, transforming and equipping him through the power of the Holy Spirit, with the sole aim of bringing him into the right relationship with God and his neighbours through Jesus Christ to impact his society with the instrumentality of the Bible.²

It should be noted that Christianity is a teaching religion. Christianity and education are inseparable entities. As Ilesanmi (2012) pointed out, Christianity and Western education are Siamese or conjoined twins...³ He further highlighted that religion is the mother of education, while Christianity, as a form of religion, breastfeeds formal education that grows up to be a potent ally of religious reformation and human development in all spheres of life.⁴

In his book, *Globalising True Education: A Divine Mandate*, Ilesanmi (2021) states that the work of true (Christian) education is not different from the work of redemption:

True education was initiated by God through Christ, while false education was initiated by Satan through Adam and Eve. Redemption came as a result of the false education received by Adam and his wife, which led to their fall. The work of true education is not different from the work of redemption. Redemption came after the fall of man at Eden School. The purpose of redemption is to reconcile the falling world to God to achieve the divine purpose (2 Cor. 5:19).

Ilesanmi asserts that “true education is not redemption but the vehicle of redemption. True education is not Jesus Christ but the instrument used by Jesus to convey His message to the world.” It is practically impossible to initiate or introduce the heathens into the culture of the Christian faith, transforming and equipping them without education. Thus, the work of redemption cannot come without Christian education or true education. It is imperative for Christians or the global church to obey the mandate given to us, as believers and disciples, by our Lord Jesus Christ, as clearly stated in Matthew 28:18–20:

¹⁸ And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

¹⁹ Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded

Similarly, Jesus mandated the church, or rather the global church, in Mark 16:15 to go into the entire world and preach the gospel to every creature. In other words, the message of our Lord Jesus Christ should not be limited to our immediate environment, but rather, it should be globalised. The global church is commanded, and she must pursue it until the earth is full of the knowledge of the LORD as the water covers the sea (Isa. 11:9) and till the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is what Ilesanmi called *Globalised Education*⁵. Since the message or the word of God is truth (John 17:17), the global church should do nothing less than make the whole world know the truth through true Christian education. This can be made possible by globalising the message of Jesus Christ. This is the major role of the church—the global church.

² Ilesanmi, D. A. An evaluation of accountability in Christian education in the redeemed Christian church of God, Nigeria. Dissertation submitted to Northwestern Christian university, USA toward fulfilment of requirements for the degree of doctor of philosophy, 2021.

³ Ilesanmi, D. A, Christianity and Ekiti Educational Development 1895-1943, (MA Thesis submitted to The Redeemed Christian Bible College, 2012) 1

⁴ Ibid., 5

⁵ Ilesanmi, *Globalising True education: A Divine Mandate*, 2021

Ilesanmi (2023) argues in his work, *Christianity and Globalisation: An Impact Review*, that the mandate given to the children of God in the Bible is a mandate to multiply and fill the earth and subdue it (Genesis 1:28). He opines that to corroborate God's idea of globalisation, for the first time in human history, Jesus used the word "globalisation" or *globalisation* when He commissioned His disciples – the Great Commission – to go into all the nations of the world and make disciples (Matt 28:19–20). In other words, Ilesanmi argues further that "to globalise or to interconnect is to bring the entire human race together in good relationship with the cosmic Creator—God—through the gospel message of Christ". This is what he called "globalisation or global salvation". He emphasises that "Go and teach all nations" is *global- salvation, globalisation or globalisation*. He, Ilesanmi, explains further that:

Jesus mentioned the word "globalisation" for the second time in the book of Mark when He said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (16:15). "Go to all the world" is globalisation. The gospel message is a connector that weds the entire world spiritually and makes it a spiritual global village. "Preach the gospel," not the economic system, not any ideology, but the message of Christ Jesus. All that man needs for his survival is in the gospel of Christ, such as salvation, good health, wealth, power, wisdom, knowledge, understanding, protection, and so on. Thus, in both the Old and the New Testaments, God commissioned His people to have a global perspective long before the invention of technology, which is now a means of globalising or connecting the world⁶.

Menaces of Globalisation on the Global Church

No doubt, globalisation has both positive and negative effects on the global church and Christianity. Christianity is a religion based on the person and teachings of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Today, Christianity is the world's most widespread religion, mainly divided between the Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Orthodox churches (Merriam, 2011). In his recent research work titled *The Changing Faces of World Christianity in the 21st Century*, Ilesanmi (2023) observed:

Christianity is gradually being threatened in the religious marketplace. It is rather appalling and poignant that the nations at the cutting edge of Christianity are now gradually losing their grip. Indeed, studies have shown that the West has lost its grip on classic Christianity. The spiritual power has changed hands; Christianity's centre of gravity has moved from the Global North to the Global South; and the Global North is increasingly becoming the epicentre of secularism and moral decadence.

This is one of the menaces or threats of globalisation to Christianity and the global church. There is no doubt about the fact that globalisation has posed serious threats to Christianity and the global church when what Christians get from the internet provokes corruption, adultery, murder, and other vices like nudity, pornography, drugs, and sexual promiscuity. In his view, Ezekiel Odeyemi (2012) says that the history of the church has been bedevilled with volatile and high-tension situations orchestrated by satanic manipulation to undermine Jesus Christ and God's redemptive plan for the entire world. He argues that dangerous elements have infiltrated the congregation of God's children, peddling horrendous teachings intended to derail the faith of the believers and threaten the cohesion and existence of the true church. Most Christian families find it difficult to control what their children see on the internet. Ekeke (2007) noted that it is very difficult for working-class Christian parents to be able to censure what their children see and control their behaviours that were copied from the internet and videos, especially when the internet is well accessible through mobile phones. In this regard, globalisation influences Christianity and the global church negatively.

What is more, Odey and Bebia observed that Christians are more and more susceptible to al-Qaeda attacks because of globalisation. For example, the USA attacked the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. They argued further that the internet is a veritable tool for recruiting potential jihadists to execute suicide bombings in Iraq, Afghanistan, East Africa, and Nigeria. They stressed that it is easy for the flow of subversive religious literature to cross borders. Even weapons and ammunition cross the borders of some countries so easily

⁶ Ilesanmi, D. A. Christianity and Globalisation: An Impact Review. In: Mature Journal of International Institute of Christian Theologians, Scholars, and Professionals. Vol.1 (2). 2023. See this work for better understanding.

because of the present global information network. Every day, some social or online preachers are serving the children of God with “junk food” (heresies) without censure or impunity. The global village has become a cesspit of global pollution. The globalisation (globalisation or Christo-globalisation) goal of God has not been fully realized; it is still a far cry from its intended purpose. It is, therefore, imperative to obey the mandate Jesus gives in the books of Matthew and Mark to all His disciples, including the contemporary global church, and the Christians, by illuminating the entire world with the word of God. Time is running out! There is no time to wait! There is no time to waste! Let the church start now! Teaching the world through the word of God and the observance of all things Jesus has commanded the church will help, to a greater extent, combat heresies in the body of Christ, which this author calls the *global church village*. The Global Church Village (globalisation or Christo-globalisation) is the interconnectedness and interrelatedness of worldwide Christians for the intensification and proclamation of the gospel message of Christ and for the salvation of humanity through technological platforms with the instrumentality of the Bible.

However, Christianity, through globalisation has reshaped the world. For instance, in theological issues, globalisation has, in no small way, helped in transforming the African cultural hermeneutics among Africans and Africans in diasporas (Onunwa, 2007, cited in Elizabeth A. Odey & Boniface E. Bebia, 2011). African hermeneutics is interpreting the Bible in an African social context. It makes the gospel message easy to preach across the world without stress; it makes it accessible and cost-effective.

Historical Conception and Overview of Heresy

Conception and Meaning of Heresy

A basic definition of heresy, according to *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, is “adherence to a religious opinion contrary to church dogma.” A second definition is “dissent or deviation from a dominant theory, opinion, or practice.” That’s a good starting point for us. These definitions identify two key elements: a dominant position and a contrary position. With regard to religion, any belief or practice that goes against the official position of the church is considered heretical. According to dictionary.com, the following is a breakdown of the common definition of “heresy”: when opinion or doctrine is at variance with the orthodox or accepted doctrine, especially of a church or religious system; the wilful and persistent rejection of any article of faith by a baptized member of the church; it could also mean any belief or theory that is strongly at variance with established beliefs, customs, etc.

The Greek word “αἵρεσις”, (which implies a self-chosen opinion) is where the word “heresy” is rendered in the New Testament. Additionally, the sects that espouse these views are referred to by this name. Heresies have thus come to be characterized as doctrines and behaviours that drastically depart from acknowledged orthodoxy (mainstream beliefs). However, there is a difficulty in defining orthodoxy, which is the ideal in Christian theology and behaviour, from which heresy would be considered to be a divergence. The reason for this is that every denomination believes its doctrines and beliefs to be orthodox, and it considers any other groups that hold a different or divergent perspective to be heretical. Then, what exactly qualifies as biblical heresy? What is the benchmark by which all orthodoxy-related concepts and beliefs must be measured? Odeyemi (2012) sees heresy as an opinion or belief that runs contrary to established teachings or customs. He explains that a heretic chooses to believe or follow a set of teachings discrete from what a group subscribes to. John W. Ritenbaugh, as cited by Odeyemi, explains the meaning of heresy as the translation of the Greek *hairesis*, which means “choice” or “selection,” which has both secular and biblical history. Until its biblical use, heresy had no evil connotation. The term “heresy” is often used in the Bible to refer to a party or a philosophy with which a person has chosen to identify or ally himself. This Greek word “hairesis” is frequently translated as “sect” in the Bible. For example, in the Acts of the Apostles, the writer, Luke, applies it to the Sadducees (5:17) and the Pharisees (15:5; 26:5). In the same vein, the outsiders used *hairesis* in the book of Acts to identify the church of God as a sect that acts incongruously with the customs of the land (24:5, 14; 28:22). In Galatians 5:19–21, Paul mentions *hairesis* as one of the works of the flesh. He reiterates that the people who practice such things as heresy will not inherit the Kingdom of God (5:21).

Any theory, belief, or practice within the church that considerably departs from the basic apostolic faith is considered heresy from the perspective of the apostles. The gold standard by which all ideas and beliefs must be measured is the faith that the first apostles of the Lord once and for all communicated to Christians. The New Testament records the entire body of doctrine that the original apostles of the Lord handed down to us, including the doctrine of the Godhead, the incarnation, salvation by faith in Christ Jesus, a sanctified and godly walk in Christ for the saved, the resurrection, and the final judgment. The foundation of Christianity is this initial apostolic faith. So, any departure from this is considered heresy.

According to C. George Boeree (2004), heresy is a belief that deviates from some standard, official belief. "When religious authorities decide that a belief is heretical, they usually take active efforts to eradicate the belief, usually including the removal of the offending believers (by excommunication or worse)" It is believed that one man's orthodoxy is another man's heresy. He asserts that the twin problems of the nature of the Trinity and, more specifically, the nature of Jesus Christ were the focus of the majority of Christian heresies. According to all Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant churches, the official position on these matters is as follows: Jesus Christ was one person who was both human and divine. God is a trinity, consisting of three persons but one essence. It was deemed immaterial because these two claims are not especially reasonable. The trinity was considered enigmatic and a question of faith rather than logic. Boere identified eight heresies, such as Sabellianism, Docetism, Monophysitism, Adoptionism, Apollinarianism, Arianism, Socialism, and Nestorianism. Other heresies that are not concentrated on the problems of the Trinity and the nature of Christ are Donatism, Pelagianism, Gnosticism, Manicheanism, Bulgarianism.⁷

In his view, Mike Leake explains that heresy is not the same as error; it is the choice to abandon the widely accepted teaching on an essential doctrine and embrace one's own view; it is to "preach another gospel", as Paul stated in Galatians 1:9: "As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed," and technically speaking, something is not a heresy just because the church deemed it so. It is heretical because it is a teaching that has abandoned the "pattern of sound teaching". He further identified four heresies that are yet to die today: first, *The Heresy of Judaizers*: "Good deeds or efforts contribute to salvation." The Judaizers were one of the first groups of heretics. The majority of heresies result from an effort to reconcile biblical paradoxes. They start out well-intentioned but end up going further than they should. The appropriate question was initially posed by the Judaizers regarding the compatibility of Judaism and Christianity. These lifelong Jews questioned how the Old Testament regulations applied to non-Jewish followers of Jesus when uncircumcised Gentiles started joining Christ and claiming the promises to Israel. Did they need to adopt Jewish practices and undergo circumcision to be on an equal footing with the Jewish Christians? The Jerusalem Council responded to this well-intentioned query in Acts 15. The response was that Christ was putting aside the Old Testament because He had fulfilled it. Leake explained the fundamental problem of this heresy: the Judaizers believed salvation required something other than unity with Christ. Recent research by Lifeway and Ligonier found that 36% of self-identified evangelicals thought they were "partially contributing to earning my place in heaven" via their good deeds. The Judaizers shared this opinion as well. Any ideology that says our efforts or good deeds help us go to heaven is squarely in the Judaizer camp. Second, *the heresy of Docetism/Gnosticism*: "Christ only appeared to be human." Gnosticism was a different early heresy. Although Gnosticism took many different forms, Docetism is one of the most harmful and is still around today. The early Christological heresy of docetism held that Christ was only human in appearance. The core of Gnostic thought held that everything in the physical world was bad and everything in the spiritual world was good. Therefore, the idea that God would literally take on human flesh was absurd. Because the physical had no bearing on the eternal, this concept also encouraged either extreme asceticism (punishing the flesh) or licentiousness. Most people think that when he wrote 1 John, the apostle John had a docetic version of Gnosticism in mind. The position of the Bible is very clear here:

Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world (1John 4:2-3).

⁷ See the comprehensive work here: Boeree, C. G. Early Christian heresies. 2004
<http://webspace.ship.edu/cgboer/heresies.html>

It should be noted that, as explained by Leake, both our spiritual and physical aspects are important. Nowadays, it's probably more frequent for people to contest Jesus' deity than his humanity. However, the Gnosticism/Docetism dualism is still very much present. Docetism is strongly influenced by Christian science and the New Age, yet the truth is that whenever we elevate the spiritual above the material or physical, we are also succumbing to these theories' dualism. Our bodies have value. The world is important. Denying this would be equivalent to supporting early Gnostics above Scripture. Third, *Prosperity Gospel Heresy*: the text where Paul makes fun of those in Corinth who have "already become kings" in the ancient form of this modern heresy, which didn't really have a name, is 1 Corinthians 4:8–13. The Corinthians were of the opinion that they were living in the blessings that are reserved for the future, or, to borrow a phrase, that they were to start living their best life now. They held true beliefs but applied them at the wrong time. Thinking that's only true in the age to come. This quote from prosperity gospel teacher Kenneth Hagin would have been right at home with the Corinthians:

I believe that it is the plan of God our Father that no believer should ever be sick...It is not—I state boldly—it is not the will of God my Father that we should suffer with cancer and other dread diseases which bring pain and anguish. No! It is God's will that we be healed.

The issue is that such reasoning is only accurate in the age to come, as Paul explained to the Corinthians. Without a cross, there is no crown. This contemporary version of an old doctrine is fatal. When promises that God never made do not come true, it hurts the people who are already suffering, diminishes the gospel, and encourages cynicism. And fourth, *the Heresy of Pelagianism*: "God responds to us and not the other way around." Pelagianism is a form of Christianity that asserts that man can obtain salvation through his efforts and rejects the idea of original sin and the necessity of grace. Pelagianism is a heresy from the time of Augustine that refuses to die. Pelagius was bothered by a quote by Augustine, who said, "Grant what Thou commandest, and command what Thou dost desire." Pelagius believed that such teaching was leading to immorality. He believed Augustine was so exalting divine sovereignty that he was denying human responsibility. The flawed logic of Pelagius here is that he taught that there is no such thing as original sin and that we are born with a clean slate, which is similar to that of 17th-century English philosopher John Lock, who asserted that at birth the human mind is a "blank slate" in his widely accepted theory, *Tabula rasa*. The existence of free choice in people was not denied by Augustine. People are capable of doing anything they want. However, as a result of the fall of humanity, evil will always be desired, apart from grace. Augustine used Philippians 2:12–13 to support his understanding of grace. God is at work in us "both to will and to accomplish," according to Scripture. Pelagius struggled with grace, but not in the traditional sense. He was unable to accept the essential grace. Pelagius was adamant that God does not answer to us, but the other way around. Evidently, according to Leake, 83% of self-identified evangelicals concur.

Historical Overview of Heresy

Historically, the primary tool used by the early church to deal with heretics was excommunication. But between the 12th and 13th centuries, the Inquisition was established by the church to deal with heresy; heretics who refused to recant after being tried by the church were handed over to the civil authorities for punishment, usually execution.⁸ Although heresy has existed throughout history, the Catholic Church took tremendous action to combat it in the 12th century. The dissenting voices of other Christian organisations became more problematic as the Catholic Church's influence grew throughout Europe. Informers were encouraged by Pope Alexander III (1162-63), who wanted the church to find proof of heresy. An edict by Pope Lucius III in 1184 mandated that a heretic who had been found guilty be punished by secular authority. The church escalated the severity of the sentence for heresy during the following several decades, eventually making it a death sin under Pope Gregory IX. The Inquisition, a unique court with the power to determine both intents and actions, was established during this time, with the Dominicans serving as its primary agents. Those identified as heretics were then ordered to do penance, which might consist of mandatory church attendance, pilgrimage to a shrine, loss of property, or imprisonment. Heretics who refused to repent were sentenced to death. The Inquisition continued in most areas of Europe until the 15th century.

⁸ See <https://www.britannica.com/topic/heresy> for better understanding

Obviously, the gauge for “heretical” teaching varies according to the established orthodoxy of the day. Any group or individual who differs from another group can technically be called heretical. In Acts 24:14, Christians are called heretics by the Jews. The “heretics” of the Middle Ages were only heretical in that they disagreed with the Catholic Church, not because they held unbiblical doctrines. The Spanish Inquisition executed over 14,000 people, many of them for simply possessing a Bible. Thus, biblically speaking, it was the established church itself that was heretical during the Middle Ages. Regarding biblical Christianity, what is heresy? Second Peter 2:1-2 says:

1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

Paul reproaches the church in 1 Corinthians 11:19 for harbouring heresies among them—heresies that caused schisms inside the body. These verses discuss both the denial of the teachings that God has revealed and the division of the body He has constituted as heresy in the church. Both of these harmful, destructive behaviours are categorically condemned by Scripture. Additionally, see Jude 1, 1 Timothy 1:13–14, 2 Timothy 1:13–14, and 1 John 4:1–6. What is the Bible's position on heresy? A guy who is a heretic should be rejected after the first and second warnings, according to Titus 3:10. Translations in other languages include “divisive person,” “factious man,” and “person who stirs up division.” The appropriate reaction when a member of the church breaks from biblical doctrine.⁹

During the Apostolic Age

The Christian faith was a reforming faith when the apostles first shared it with both Jews and pagan people. No reformation in the history of the church has ever been carried out without encountering considerable obstacles. Paul's day held this perspective. Everywhere the apostle founded a church, some professed to be believers while bringing heresies that, if believed, would eventually strangle the love of the truth. John's advice for those who come across heresy is contained in 2 John 7–11.

The Period of the Church Fathers

During this period, eleven different beliefs and doctrines were spread during the early centuries of Christianity, including Nestorianism, which claimed that Christ had two natures and was two people when He was born and that divinity later united with humanity; Eutychianism, which claimed that Christ had one nature compound; and Apollinarianism, which denied the perfection of the divine.

Around the Middle Ages

As the idea that the Catholic Church was the divinely designated repository of salvation truth developed, the significance of heresy became more important. The church would be destroyed by heretics until they were also eliminated since anyone who did not hold that belief was a heretic. Heretics were believed to have destroyed the doctrine. A Catholic official asserts, “To undo the creed is to undo the church.” The integrity of a religious society's guiding principles matters more to its cohesiveness than strict obedience to its moral precepts. Because losing faith, which strikes at the core of spiritual existence, is often fatal, religion often serves as a means of atoning for moral offences.

Before and after the Reformation

One of the leaders of the Reformation, Martin Luther, was charged with being a heretic by the Catholic Church. When his opponents used custom and tradition or the claims and authority of the pope, Luther responded with the Bible—and the Bible alone. They were unable to respond to these arguments, and the slaves of formalism and superstition screamed out for his blood, just as the Jews had done with Christ. The Roman zealots yelled, “He is a heretic.” “To permit such a horrible heretic to live an additional hour is high treason against the church,” the Bible says. Let the scaffold be built for him right now!”

⁹ see The Moody Handbook of <https://www.gotquestions.org/heresy-definition.html>

The Protestants would soon follow in the footsteps of the Papacy. Dissenting churches faced persecution in England. The state church oppressed Anabaptists, Quakers, and Puritans. Up until the end of the seventeenth century, persecution continued there. The case of Mistress Trask, the wife of a "heretic," is cited in an admonition for Quakers and Sabbatarians. This author from 1635 said that his wife, Mistress Trask, spent fifteen or sixteen years in prison due to her beliefs regarding the Saturday Sabbath; during that time, despite her great need, she refused to accept any help from anyone, claiming that it was written: "It is more blessed to give than to receive". Similarly, "Thou shall lend to many nations and shall not borrow". She therefore believed that asking for money or borrowing it would be disrespectful to her head, Christ.¹⁰

How to Identify Heresy in the Church

To identify heresy or heretic teachings, we need to revisit the Garden of Eden event. From the way Satan, the old serpent, beguiled Eve (Gen 3:1–9), certain characteristics of heresy are noticed here:

- It appeals to the flesh (2 Tim. 4:2; 2 Peter 3:3).
- It challenges the authenticity of the word of God (Gen 3:1–7).
- It leads to false teaching and pernicious ways. (2Pet 2:1-2)
- It changes the truth to a lie (Rom 1:25), perverting the gospel's truth for material gain and other demonic ends.
- It leads to deception and half-truths (2 John 7).
- It prevents people from retaining God in their knowledge (Rom 1:28).
- It impoverishes the laity while the clergy live big (1 Peter 5:2–3).
- It turns the righteousness of God into unrighteousness.
- It produces temporary gratification.
- It does not rely on the Holy Spirit.
- It causes and promotes division among the believers.
- It separates the creatures (the believers) from their Creator (God).
- It could lead to a movement but will not produce true believers.
- It feeds on the ignorance of the believers.
- It downplays end-time warnings (2 Peter 3:3–4).

To be able to identify heresies, serious, personal, group, and daily Bible study must be promoted and encouraged in churches.

Recommendations on How to Combat Heresies

Odeyemi asserts that heresy is a neighbour to apostasy, and this culminates in homosexuality and lesbianism. This is why there are homosexuals and lesbians in the Church of God today who parade themselves as Christians. It could be right to ask the following questions: How are Christians supposed to handle heresy within the church? Or how did the early church combat heresies in the Bible? What should we do about the heretics living among the children of God? The guidelines for dealing with unrepentant heretics in the church were established by the original apostles of the Lord. The present church can follow the examples or learn from the experience of the early church on how heresies could be dealt with. The following biblical steps can be followed:

1. The first Jerusalem council held a meeting to deal with a doctrinal issue, and a decision was taken at the meeting and communicated to the Gentile believers who were the target of the heretic Judaizers (Acts 15:1-31).
2. There is a need for regular teaching by the brethren. Paul and Barnabas were teaching and preaching to the believers ceaselessly (Acts 15:35).

¹⁰ See <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1954/02/pulpit-how-to-deal-with-heresies-part-ii> for better understanding

3. Constant follow-up visits by the believers are important to ensure that they do not derail from the doctrinal teachings of the church (Acts 15:36) and to strengthen and preserve them from doctrinal errors (Acts 15:41).
4. Heresies can cause division and crisis in the church. Therefore, there is a need to deal with them by writing to local assemblies. This is what the early church did (1Cor 1:11–13; 2:1–2; 3:1–3; Gal. 3:1–3).
5. There is a need for the church to warn church, Christian, or theological educators against heretic or false teaching (1Tim 1:3–7, 18).
6. The church should advocate intentional discipleship and/or mentoring as a way of dealing with wrong or heretic teachings (2 Tim 2:2; 4:2–5). This discipleship approach will help to produce good teachers of the word—people who will defend the true doctrine of the church. Paul and Timothy's discipleship approach is a typical example.
7. There is a need for the church to stop the mouths of vain talkers and deceivers—the false teachers. This was the assignment of Titus among the Cretans (Titus 1:9–11).
8. Worldliness must be confronted headlong by the church in this age of globalisation to reduce heresy. Worldliness is a sign of heretical teaching and the spirit of the antichrist at work (1 John 2:15–19).
9. It is recommended by the early church, which is also recommended today, that when someone departs from the original apostolic faith, he or she has to be rebuked and corrected in a prayerful yet strong manner while communicating the truth to that person in love. The heretic will be expelled from the church and disfellowshipped if his perversions of the truth continue after at least two such warnings from local church officials. Never should heresies be tolerated, allowed, or accepted for the sake of harmony or peace. Any harmony or serenity that compromises the gospel's veracity. The position of the Bible is that “A man that is a heretic after the first and second admonition rejects” (Titus 3:10); “Now I beseech you, brothers, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and avoid them” (Romans 16:17); it is believed that these heretics are not serving the Lord but their belly (Romans 16:18).
10. All Christians should devote more time to the study of their Bible to be able to identify heresies.

The fact remains that if heretics and dissemblers in the church are not dealt with properly, it is implicitly acknowledged that the adulteration and corruption of the faith they preach. Since it provides individuals with a false sense of hope for salvation, having no faith at all is worse than having a weak and corrupt faith. A corrupt faith produces a hybrid religion that is sterile and useless; in addition to being unable to protect its adherents from the effects of sin, mortality, and the punishment of hell, such a religion also makes fun of the true faith, gives sceptics cause to criticize religion, and discourages people from coming to the Lord. Heretics easily provide nonbelievers with a justification to criticize true religion as they rush to dismiss their hybrid and fake religion¹¹.

Conclusion

This paper has been able to discuss the meaning and conceptions of globalisation, kingdom Christian education, and the global church; the menaces of globalisation on the global church; the historical conception and overview of heresy; how to identify heresies in the church; and recommendations on how to combat heresies. It is important to know that as bankers are trained on how to identify fake currencies by being able to tell the original even in the dark, so should believers spot out heretics in the church, on social media, and at work. When the teaching of a man negates the written word of God, it is heresy. This identification of heresies will be practically impossible if believers fail to have a personal study of the word of God and understanding through the Holy Spirit. When you know the truth, you will not only be set free but also be able to smell heretical teachings far away and help others do the same. In this age of globalisation and uncensored social media accessibility, there is an urgent need for the global church to devise a means to combat the menace globalisation poses to the church.

¹¹ See https://originalapostolicfaith.wordpress.com/2022/02/03/___trashed-2/

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