

An Examination of the Doctrine of Eternal Security in the Context of Calvinist and Arminian Arguments Among Nigerian Christians in the 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

The doctrine of Christian Eternal Security promoted by Calvinist and Arminian is not new to the Christian church. It has been in operation since the apostolic age. Many scholars have written about the significance of holiness in Christian living, however, the examination of the arguments of the Calvinists and the Arminians on the doctrine of eternal security, which is the onus of this paper, has not been given adequate attention among Nigerian Christians in the 21st century; this has largely led to many errors and heresies in the church. Eternal security is a doctrine providing believers with absolute assurance of their inevitable final salvation at some points in their lives. The current prevailing form within the church gives the hope for unconditional eternal security being taught in some churches, encouraging Christians to indulge in sin, participate in corrupt practices without any remorse or fear of feeling of guilt. Such Christians; believe that no matter what they do, their salvation is still secure. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Findings show that many Christians are ardent believers in the doctrine of eternal security; furthermore, this has led to gross errors, misconducts, complacency and conformity to worldly practices by some contemporary Christians. In conclusion, this belief is contrary to the teachings of Christian theology which emphasizes the place of holiness and holy living all through life in a faithful relationship with God and attainment of eternal life and that the conditional security and not eternal security doctrine is the only way to eternal life.

Keywords: Arminian, Calvinist, Conditional Security, Doctrine of Eternal Security, Heresies, 21st Century Christianity in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

No doctrinal debate has been more “intense” than the debate over whether the believer’s eternal security is conditional (associated mostly with Arminianism) or unconditional (the Calvinist view), David Kowalski (2013). Both views are important as they have to do with the perseverance of the saints. Historically, the church has never been free from daunting challenges from within and without. The challenges from without are largely associated with persecution of the church by people of other faiths, political leadership and socio-economic subjugation. The challenges began initially with ravenous persecutions before the internal challenges of heresies from within the body of Christ which the most hurting. The 21st century church in Nigeria and other countries of the world has not been without challenges which include, persecution, leadership ineptitude, profanity, promotion of false prophecies, conformity to worldly standards, immorality, corruption and promotion of heretical teachings. One of such teachings widely promoted in the contemporary church is the doctrine of eternal security, which encourages complacency within the church.

Christian eternal security has been a controversial issue in the church since the earliest time. There are two main schools of thought on this issue. There is the group which believes in unconditional security otherwise known as “once saved, forever saved”. This belief seems to encourage careless living among Christians. There is the notion that once one proclaims Jesus as Lord and Saviour even if one afterwards commit sin, one’s salvation is still secured. This view is that once you are saved you are always saved. Nothing can ever end your relationship with God, “Once a son always a son”. Keith Drury (2013) said, “To those who believe the doctrine of unconditional security nothing could make Christians lose their salvation. If a little boy prays to receive Christ in a Good News club at eight years old, he is permanently grafted into God’s family. His sonship is permanent and unalterable no matter what he does from then on”. When a person is justified it is once for all. The entire convert’s sins - past, present, and future are forgiven. Future sin is irrelevant to his salvation. They have all been forgiven in advance by Christ’s death over 2000 years ago. As far as his salvation goes, sin is irrelevant.

The other group believes that Christian security is conditional; a Christian needs to continually abide in Christ and live a holy life, devoid of unrighteousness, in order to receive God’s blessings and eternal salvation. This paper focuses its argument on the five schools of thought of both Calvinism and Arminialism.

Phases of Conditional Security

Conditional security in Christ Jesus which began in eternity according to the predetermined plan of God and extends into the eternal future has three observable phases/tenses in the Bible. Understanding this biblical truth can relieve a lot of tension from the standpoint of security and enable the believer to relax in the Lord and His grace while simultaneously moving forward in spiritual growth.

The Salvation Past

Writing to his converts in Ephesus, Paul reminds them twice that “You have been saved” (Eph. 2:5-8). The more recent versions of the Bible are usually more precise, as in this instance, in accurately translating the grammatical terms. In this same Epistle, the apostle makes reference to a point in past time when his readers came to faith in Christ “And you also were included in

Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed....” (Eph. 1:13).

Jesus Christ has already finished the work of salvation on the cross over 2000 years ago. He has rescued us from the penalty of sin. A penalty must be paid for the sins of mankind since ‘All have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory (Rom. 3:23)’. We have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ (Rev.1:5). We have also been declared righteous before God (2 Cor. 5:21). To be saved is to be “included in Christ” to be in Christ” Every human being now living dwells in the spiritual realm of one of two categories: he is either in Christ or outside of Christ.

The Salvation Present

Salvation is not only a historical experimental event in the life of every believer, but it is also a present reality in the pilgrimage of each persevering Christian. As long as we are still living in a body of flesh and blood with a sinful nature (Rom.7:7-25). We are still prone to sin because of our sinful nature. We can only overcome our sinful nature by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ in the present provides strength to overcome the power of sin. The Holy Spirit enables us to have victory over sin if we allow Him to control our lives (Rom.8:11-13). In as much as we yielding ourselves to God, He is giving us victory every day. The believer has been saved; he is also being saved. “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing but to those of us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18). Whereas conversion to Christ takes place at a point in time when someone trusts in Christ as his or her Lord and Saviour, therefore, his or her salvation is maintained moment by moment, by the merciful God through the Jesus Christ.

The Salvation Future

The one who has come to faith in Christ has been saved, is being saved, and shall be saved. In what sense can it be said that salvation is yet future for the believer? Whereas past and present tense salvation deals with our standing before God as well as our fellowship with God, there yet remains for the believer the final deliverance from the surrounding presence of sin and the out-poured wrath of God. Challenges and problems are parts of this world. However, God promises a glorious day of freedom –the day Jesus Christ will deliver humanity from sin and its horrible effects on the world (Rom. 8:18-21). Paul says, “.....because our salvation is nearer now than when we first saved” (Rom. 13:11). The Christian’s salvation will not have been completed until Jesus Christ returns for His bride. God’s redemption plan includes far more than justification and the forgiveness of sins. It involves more than His present and powerful ministry administered even now by the Lord Jesus Christ. There yet remains a day for God’s people when they will be saved finally and finally and everlastingly by the return of the Lord Jesus for His son. Every justified Christian has received eternal life (John 3:16.)

UNCONDITIONAL SECURITY

Calvinists maintain that God selected certain individuals before the world began and then draws them to faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. They believe that when Jesus said, “No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent Me draws him” (John 6:44), Jesus was saying that men had to be drawn to him by God before they would believe. Calvinists have long taught that when the Apostle Paul wrote, “God hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4), he was indicating that God actually chose believers in Christ before the world was founded. According to Calvinism, God begins a good work in some and then

continues it. They attempt to prove that with the text from the book of Philippians where the apostle Paul writes. “he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day for Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

Kelvin Hall (2004) says, Salvation is accomplished by the almighty power of the triune God. The father chose a people, the Son died for them; the Holy Spirit makes Christ’s effective by bringing the elect to faith and repentance, thereby causing them to willingly obey the Gospel. The entire process (election, redemption, regeneration) is the work of God and is by grace alone. Thus God, not man, determines who will be the recipient of the gift of salvation. Furthermore, the Calvinist believes that man has no part in his own salvation, that God is supremely sovereign. If man did have a role in salvation, he would detract from the supreme power of God. “Calvanism” usually refers to the specific doctrines of God, sin and salvation as included within the Reformed theology. Historic, classic, main-stream Calvinism is organized in the following five points:

Five Points of Calvinism:

Total Depravity: The idea that the entire human race is totally depraved as a result of Adam’s sin. This depravity is “inherited” by all mankind, under this concept God actual holds pre-born humans accountable for sin Kelvin Hall (2004). Total Depravity is probably the most misunderstood tenet of Calvinism. When Calvinist speak of human as “total depraved”, they are making an extensive, rather than an intensive statement. The effect of the fall upon man is that sin has extended to every part of his personality, his thinking, his emotions, and his will. Not necessarily that he is intensely sinful, but that sin has extended to his entire being.

Chip Denief R (2013) opines that, mankind is not born in a state of inherited depravity. Mankind is not born into total depravity, though he does become depraved (in various degrees) through his own life choices and experiences. Man is not eternally secured, since salvation is not imposed upon man in some irresistible manner-it is a free gift of God in response to our faith and obedience.

Unconditional Election

Chuck Smith (2013) opines that, the Calvinists believed that foreknowledge is based upon the plan and purpose of God, and that election is not based upon the decision of man, but the “free will” of the creator alone.

Limited Atonement

Chuck Smith (2013) further said, The Calvinist believed that Jesus Christ died to save those who were given to him by the father in eternity past. In their view, all for whom Jesus died (the elect) will be saved, and all for whom he did not die (the non-elect) will be lost.

Irresistible Grace

According to Chuck (2013), The Calvinists believed that the Lord possesses irresistible grace that cannot be obstructed. They taught that the free will of man is so far removed from salvation, that the elect are regenerated (made spiritually alive) by God even before expressing faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. If a totally depraved person was not made alive by the Holy Spirit, such a calling on God would be impossible.

Philip (2008) speaks about certain grace that is irresistible. He states “The Free Grace doctrine views the person’s character and life after receiving the gift of salvation as independent from the gift itself, which is the main point of differentiation from the traditional Calvinist view, or,

in other words, it asserts that justification (that is, being declared righteous before God on account of Christ) does not necessarily result in sanctification (that is, a progressively more righteous life). Philip (2008) further quotes Charles Stanley, Pastor of Atlanta's Mega Church First Baptist and a television evangelist, who has written that the doctrine of eternal security of the believer persuaded him years ago to leave his familiar Pentecostalism and become a Southern Baptist. He sums up his deep conviction that salvation is by *faith alone in Christ alone* when he claims, "Even if a believer for all practical purposes becomes an unbeliever, his salvation is not in jeopardy....believers who lose or abandon their faith will retain their salvation.

The doctrine sees the work of salvation as wholly monergistic, which is to say that God alone performs it and man has no part in the process beyond receiving it, and therefore, proponents argue that man cannot undo what they believe God has done.

Perseverance of the Saints

Chuck Smith (2013), speaking about the fifth point of Calvinism states that the Calvinists believed that Salvation is entirely the work of the Lord, and that man has absolutely nothing to do with the process. The saints will persevere because God will see to it that he will finish the work he has begun. The doctrine of Perseverance of the Saints is distinct from the doctrine of Assurance, which describes how a person may first be sure that they have obtained salvation and an inheritance in the promises of the Bible including eternal life. One has to be sure of salvation before thinking of perseverance. No perseverance without the assurance of salvation. According to Nathan J. Archer (2015) who made reference to Hodge Charles opines that, The Reformed tradition has consistently seen the doctrine of perseverance as a natural consequence to predestination. According to Calvinists, since God has drawn the elect to faith in Christ by regenerating their hearts and convincing them of their sins, and thus saving their souls by his own work and power, it naturally follows that they will be kept by the same power to the end. Since God has made satisfaction for the sins of the elect, they can no longer be condemned for them, and through the help of the Holy Spirit, they must necessarily persevere as Christians and in the end be saved. Calvinists believe this is what Peter was teaching in 1st Peter 1, verse 5 when he says, that true believers are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation". Outside Calvinist denominations this doctrine is widely considered to be flawed.

Calvinist also believes that all that are born again and justified before God necessarily and inexorably proceed to sanctification. Failure to proceed to sanctification in their view is considered by some as evidence that the person in question was never truly saved to begin with. Proponents of this doctrine distinguish between an action and the consequences of an action, and suggested that after God has regenerated someone, the person's would have been changed, that "old things passed away" and "all things are become new", (2 Cor. 5:17), and he or she will therefore persevere in the faith.

Nathaniel J. Archer (2015) made reference to Hodge Charles who said that Perseverance...is due to the purpose of God (in saving men and thereby bringing glory to his name), to the work of Christ (in canceling men's debt and earning their righteousness), to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (in sealing men in salvation and leading them in God's ways), and to the primal source of all the infinite, mysterious, and immutable love of God. On a practical level, Calvinists do not claim to know who is elect and who is not, and the only guide they have is the verba; testimony and good works (or "fruit") of each individual. Any who "fall away" (that is, do not persevere in the Christian faith until death) is assumed not to have been truly

converted to begin with, though Calvinists do not claim to know with certainty who did and who did not persevere.

Nathan J. Archer (2015), referred to Hodge Charles, in support of Calvin's position states that all who are truly born again are kept by God the Father for Jesus Christ, and can neither totally nor finally fall from the state of grace, but will persevere in their faith to the end, and be eternally saved. While Reformed theologians acknowledge that true believers at times will fall into sin, they maintain that a real believer in Jesus Christ cannot abandon one's own personal faith to the dominion of sin. They base their understanding on key scriptural passages such as Christ's words. "By their fruit you will know them and "He that endures to the end will be saved. Similarly, a passage in 1 John says, "This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God. The person who has truly been made righteous in Jesus Christ did not simply have faith at some point in life, but continues to live in that faith ("the righteous will live by faith). This view understands that the security of believers is inseparable from their perseverance in the faith.

CONDITIONAL SECURITY

Chuck Smith (2013) discusses five points of Arminianism of conditional doctrine of security. He states further that Arminianism is a moderate theological revision of Calvinism and laid emphasis on the following:

Free will

Chuck Smith (2013) states that Arminius believes that the fall of man is not total. He maintains that there was enough good left in man for him to will to accept Jesus Christ unto salvation. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved Mark 13:13. However, this is very true since he that stand to the end will be saved. To believe in Jesus and stand firm to the end will take perseverance because our faith will be challenged and opposed severe trial will sift true Christians from fair-weather believers. A believer is secured as far as he/she wills it. He/she may decide in his/her free will to lose his/her salvation, or fall out of grace, by committing sin.

Arminianism believes in partial depravity. Although human nature was seriously affected by the fall, man has not been left in a state of total spiritual helplessness. All men are born with "original sin" but without "original guilt". Sin is genetic, transmitted but not imputed. God graciously enables every sinner to repent and believe, but He does not interfere with man's freedom. Each sinner possesses a free will, and his eternal destiny depends on how he uses it. Man's freedom consists of his ability to choose good over evil in spiritual matters; his will is not enslaved to his sinful nature. The sinner has the power to either cooperate with God's spirit and be regenerated or resist God's grace and perish. Faith is man's contribution to salvation.

Conditional Election

Arminius believed that election was based on the foreknowledge of God as to who would believe. Man's "act of faith" was seen as the "condition" or his being elected to eternal life, since God foresaw him exercising his "free will" in response to Jesus Christ. In the view of Arminianism; God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world was based upon his foreseeing that they would respond to his call. He selected only those whom he knew would of themselves freely believe the gospel. Election therefore was

determined by or conditioned upon what man would do. The faith which God foresaw and upon which he based his choice was not given to the Sinner by God (it was not created by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit) but resulted solely from man's will. It was left entirely up to man as to who would believe and therefore as to who would be elected unto salvation. God chose those whom he knew would of their own free will, choose Christ. Thus the sinner's choice of Christ, not God's choice of the sinner, is the ultimate cause of salvation.

Universal Atonement

Arminius held that redemption was based on the fact that God loves everybody, that Christ died for everyone, and that the father is not willing that any should perish. The death of Christ provided the grounds for God to save all men, but each must exercise his own "free will" in order to be saved. In the view of Arminianism, Christ's redeeming work made it possible for everyone to be saved. Although Christ died for all men and for every man, only those who believed on him are saved. His death enabled God to pardon sinners on the condition that they believed, but it did not actually put away anyone's sins. Christ's redemption becomes effective only if man chooses to accept it. Christ suffered for everyone but did not become a substitute for all people, or no one would go to hell. Christ's suffered for our sins but never was he punished for our sins. Christ suffered for everyone so that the Father could forgive the ones who repent and believe.

Obstruct-able Grace

Arminius believed that since God wanted all men to be saved, he sent the Holy Spirit to "woo" all men to Christ, but since man has absolute "free will", he is able to resist God's will for his life. He believed that God's will to save all men can be frustrated by the finite will of man. He also taught that man exercises his own will first, and then is born again.

Arminianism claims that through prevenient or preparatory grace, which is given to all people, man is able to cooperate with God and respond to him in salvation. Prevenient grace reverses the effects of Adam's sin, giving man free will. The spirit calls inwardly all those who are called outwardly by the gospel invitation; He does all that he can to bring every sinner to salvation.

Preservation of Saint through Faith

If man cannot be saved by God unless it is man's will to be saved, then man cannot continue in salvation unless he continues to will to be saved. According to Arminianism, those who believe and are truly saved can lose their salvation by falling to keep up to their faith, willful disobedience, unconfessed sin, backsliding, etc Backsliding is reversible, but apostasy (denial of Christ) is not reversible. Free will allows those who choose "to be in Christ" to also choose "to be out of Christ" thus losing all the benefits of salvation. Salvation is conditional from beginning to end.

Argument for and against the doctrine

Brent Barnett (2009) compares the five points of Calvinism against Arminianism on the doctrine of Christian security. He compares the two positions as they concern the following:

Total Depravity of Free Will

The Calvinist view Man's depravity, as a result of the fall, he does not possess free will because he is bound to Satan who takes man captive at his will. All men are born into this world spiritually dead in trespasses and sins so that their dead human spirits are irresistibly drawn to the god of the dead. Man is depraved in the sense that he is dead, blind, deaf, unteachable in

the things of God and ruled by Satan through his perverse heart and corrupt soul. Consequently, it takes much more than the spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ-it takes regeneration by which the spirit makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature. Faith is not something man contributes to salvation but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation. It is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God.

Whereas, the Arminian Views **that** Man's depravity, as a result of the fall, is not total but partial. Man has not lost the faculty of self-determination, nor the ability to freely will that which is good in the sight of God. Man is the author of repentance and faith unto salvation since the human will is viewed by the Arminian as one of the causes of regeneration, if man truly wills to cooperate with the Holy Spirit. The sinner needs the Spirit's assistance, but he does not have to be regenerated by the Spirit before he can believe, for faith is man's act and precedes the new birth. Faith is the sinner's gift to God; it is man's contribution to salvation

Unconditional or Conditional Election

The Calvinist's views of election is grounded entirely in the free will of God and His purpose for those whom He chose "in Christ Jesus" before the foundation of the world. His foreknowledge is based upon His purpose is the manifestation of His sovereign will. Since man is incapable of giving himself life, opening his own eyes, or teaching himself spiritual truth, God must elect to act on man's behalf. The work of regeneration, therefore, must precede faith and repentance, and is the work of God. He must "open the heart" and cause His elect "to will and do" that which is pleasing to Him, otherwise none would believe.

Whereas, the Arminian views of election is conditioned upon man's good works of repentance and faith in Christ. If this is true, then election is based upon God's foreknowledge of who will respond to the offer of the gospel and freely will to exercise his faculty of self-determination, and be saved. Man's good works of repentance and faith must precede God's good work of regeneration. He must "make a decision for Christ" and let Jesus come into his heart, for God will not violate the will of man by giving life or opening the heart, without man's permission.

Limited or Universal Atonement

The Calvinist Views Atonement as being for the elect only, since Christ died only for those who the Father gave Him to be His bride. Only the saints or elect ones are ever said to be "beloved of God", for they alone are the objects of His saving grace. The Calvinist reasons that if Christ dies for all, then all will be saved. If only the elect are to be saved, then Christ died for them and them alone. Although it is true that the blood of Christ is surely sufficient in value to atone for all, still it is obviously efficient only for those who are saved by His unmerited favour.

Whereas, the Arminian views atonement as a universal accomplishment, since Christ died for all persons, indiscriminately. The blood of Christ makes atonement for sin in the sense that it is the basis for offering pardon, but does not accomplish pardon unless man freely wills to accept pardon. (Atonement is a term, which is used broadly to include redemption, remission, propitiation, reconciliation, and all else accomplished by Christ on the cross). The Arminianism insists that it was accomplished for all mankind, indiscriminately.

Irresistible or Obstructable Grace

The Calvinist view is that since it is the will of God that those whom He gave to His dear Son in eternity past should be saved, He will surely act in sovereign grace in such a way that the elect will find Christ irresistible. Regeneration (the work of God) just precede true repentance

and faith. Dan. 4:35-All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: He does according to His will in the army of heaven and *among* the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, “What have you done?” Isa. 46:9, 10- Remember not the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. Declaring the end from the beginning. And from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, ‘MY counsel shall stand, And I will do all my pleasure, Isa. 55:11-So shall my word that goes forth from my mouth: It shall not return to me void. But it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. Jn. 6:37- “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out.

Whereas, the Arminian’s View is that It is the will of God that all men should be saved, but His will can be resisted by men since each has the faculty of self-determination. Since God loves all men, indiscriminately, He woos all men with His Holy Spirit, seeking to draw them to faith in Christ. The external call of the gospel is accompanied by universal sufficient grace, but it will not be found irresistible to all men but is Obstructable by men’s “free will.” Jn. 1:12- But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: Jn. 3:36-|He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” Jn 3:18-21 – “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. “For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

Perseverance of Saints

In the Calvinist View, the logical conclusion of Calvinism is that since “salvation is of the Lord”, and absolutely no part of it is dependent upon any condition found in the elect, but is wholly dependent upon the God who has willed to save those whom, He gave to His dear Son, salvation can never be lost. The saints of God will surely persevere because He has given them His promise that no creature can take them away from him (including themselves). We shall persevere because He wills to persevere! Jude 24-Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling. and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. Jude 1 – Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to those who are called, sanctified by God the father, and preserved in Jesus Christ.

Ezekiel. 11:19- “Then I will give them one heart, and I will pure a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, an give them a heart of flesh, Ezek 36:27- “I will put MY Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you will keep my judgements and do them.

Deuteronomy 30:6- “And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

1 Peter 1:5- who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Whereas, according to the Arminian view using Galatians 5:4- which reads “You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace”. Hebrews 6:4-6. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of

God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.

Implication for Nigeria Christians in the 21st Century:

In most Christian denominations in Nigeria, particularly, the new generational churches. Some Christians are of the opinion that their sins or inappropriate actions which may include sexual immorality, corruption, ineptitude action in leadership and general disposition to work are not enough to debar them from eternal grace and the salvation which has once been won for all in Christ more than 2000 years ago (Atowoju, 2010). To them their salvation is irrevocable. In the last three decades, Some Nigerian youths have openly express their membership of Secret Society, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender, and connection with fraudulent monetary practices (yahoo/ 419) in spite of their membership of various Christian denominations. However, the salvation proclaimed from the early church unto the contemporary time requires the embracement of what Apostle Paul called godliness and righteousness (Philippians 4:1-9). This position negates the doctrinal view of Calvinist unconditional eternal security.

According to Asaju (2024), amidst acute proliferation of Church denominations of different brands, in the 21st century, a lot of chaff has mixed with the good seed of the gospel. False prophets, peddling false doctrines and heresies, have infiltrated and dominated the church market; their polluted poisons are so toxic that they are killing genuine Christian faith and spirituality especially among the vulnerable younger generation. They lower Christian standards in faith and discipline, to the extent that many churches are now being regarded by the public, as commercial ventures. Founders and leaders of churches are accused of extreme flamboyant lifestyles and misplaced priorities in their conduct of church activities. The prophecy about the generation of ‘the end times’ having itching ears and giving heed to seducing spirits and false doctrines (2 Timothy 4:3) has been largely fulfilled in the contemporary generation. Heresies are often recycled/repackaged; yet, the fundamental motives remain the same, which is to challenge Christian truth and take man away from the path of salvation and righteousness.

Heresy is ordinarily a false doctrine, which contradicts orthodox and canonical Biblical teachings. Heresies go further than that; it is falsehood camouflaged as truth. It is an over-stretch of truth by way of addition or subtraction. Either way, when truth is tampered with, it becomes heresy.

... if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the Book of Life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. (Revelations 22: 18-19).

Historically, the vehicle often used to promote heresy, is philosophy (Atowoju, 2012). Religions operate by faith rather than human rationalization. Spiritual matters and realities are not contingent upon scientific enquiry nor human experimentations. “We walk by faith and not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). Tertullian was a foremost apologist who although fought against the use of philosophy to advance heresy, was himself actively involved in the Montanist heresy.

He warned about the need not to allow philosophy become the guide or determiner of revelation Truth. His treatise titled- Philosophy is the mother of Heresy argues as follows:

These are “the doctrines” of men and “of demons” produced for itching ears of the spirit of this world’s wisdom: this the Lord called “foolishness,” [and “chose the foolish things of the world” to confound even philosophy itself. For (philosophy) it is which is the material of the world’s wisdom, the rash interpreter of the nature and the dispensation of God. Indeed heresies are themselves instigated by philosophy. From this source came the AEons, and I know not what infinite forms, and the trinity of man in the system of Valentinus, who was of Plato’s school. From the same source came Marcion’s better god, with all his tranquility; he came of the Stoics. Then, again, the opinion that the soul dies is held by the Epicureans; while the denial of the restoration of the body is taken from the aggregate school of all the philosophers; also, when matter is made equal to God, then you have the teaching of Zeno; and when any doctrine is alleged touching a god of fire, ‘then Heraclitus comes in. The same subject-matter is discussed over and over again by the heretics and the philosophers; the same arguments are involved. Whence comes evil? Why is it permitted? What is the origin of man? And in what way does he come? Besides the question which Valentinus has very lately proposed — Whence comes God? Which he settles with the answer: From enthymesis and ectroma. Unhappy Aristotle! Who invented for these men dialectics, the art of building up and pulling down; an art so evasive in its propositions, so far-fetched in its conjectures, so harsh, in its arguments, so productive of contentions — embarrassing even to itself, retracting everything, and really treating of nothing! Whence spring those “fables and endless genealogies,” and “unprofitable questions,” and “words which spread like a cancer?” From all these, when the apostle would restrain us, he expressly names philosophy as that which he would have us be on our guard against. Writing to the Colossians, he says, “See that no one beguile you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, and contrary to the wisdom of the Holy Ghost.” He had been at Athens, and had in his interviews (with its philosophers) become acquainted -with that human wisdom which pretends to know the truth, whilst it only corrupts it, and is itself divided into its own manifold heresies, by the variety of its mutually repugnant sects. What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? What between heretics and Christians? Our instruction comes from “the porch of Solomon,” which had himself taught that “the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart.” Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition! We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ Jesus, no inquisition after enjoying the gospel! With our faith, we desire no further belief. For this is our palmary faith, that there is nothing which we ought to believe besides.

CONCLUSION

With all the evidences in this paper, the doctrine of eternal security is conditional. Apostle Paul says, “Wherefore, my beloved, ‘as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” Everybody must work out his or her salvation. Christian needed to be especially careful to obey Christ and continually doing what is right. Christian must be careful about what they believe and how they live, especially when they are on their own. In the absence of cherished Christian leaders, Christian must focus their attention and devotion even more on Christ so that they will not be

sidetracked. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he falls (1Corinthians 10:12). Christians in Nigeria need to hold the work of salvation with care.

Those who persevere in believing are true saints while those who fail to persevere may fall-away no matter the level of their spirituality. Hebrews 6:4-6 points to the danger of Hebrew Christians returning to Judaism and thus committing apostasy ‘ There are some believers today who renounce their Christianity or turn away from salvation. Either way, those who reject Christ will not be saved. Christ died once for all. He will not be crucified again. Apart from His cross, there is no other possible way of salvation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The church must teach the whole truth of the essentials of the Holy Bible. Christians need to examine themselves at all time so that they will not fall-out into sin and lose their salvation. Judas was one of Jesus twelve disciples who learnt at the feet of Jesus for years but still denied Jesus and fell away (Matt. 26:20-25).
- The church should educate her pastors, priests and Bishops to become ardent students of the Holy Bible. Christians should not be poor in reading and memorizing the Bible. Believers can deliberately turn away from Christ. The things of the world can cut them off from God’s forgiveness.
- Deliberate efforts should be made in training priests and all ministers about the details of other religions and faith systems. Exposing their falsehoods and the trap they pose to genuine seekers for God
- The church should develop strong, practical and faithful theology of Apologetics and equip all the youths and children and members, that is their mandate from God to defend the Christian truth and Faith. Jude commends Christians to contend for the faith.
- The church should indoctrinate the members to understand the fundamental spiritual and theological rudiments that constitutes the liturgy of the Anglican Faith and build in them confidence that our Church possesses all that matters for salvation and right living with God unto achieving salvation.
- Christian Catechisms should be expanded in view of new innovations in heresies.
- The Church needs to expose the falsehoods of the prosperity gospel being preached and popularized by some Pentecostal Churches and their proliferated agents. They steal members of other denominations in large numbers; they possess the majority of the younger generation, who are the leaders and owners of the church of tomorrow and who have the economic capacity to uphold the church of the future. If we remain lackadaisical, our church will go down; it is already going down.

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