



## Resilience Amidst Adversity: The Journey of the Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCOAN)

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this paper is to give a rich and detailed analysis of the Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCOAN), which is one of the most influential Christian ministries located in Lagos, Nigeria. This paper drills down into the church history, doctrine, administrative structure, financial practices and societal importance. It also presents such issues as the breaking conflicts, court cases, leadership issues, as well as the pandemic COVID-19. The problems are identified and appropriate recommendations given in response to the problems, which are given strengthened values on transparency, accountability, ethical behavior, compliance with rules and regulations, and adaptation to changes. This paper highlights that despite the challenges the church of all Nations (SCOAN) has a deep contribution to society by the spiritual guidance, humanitarian efforts and also economic contributions. The suggested strategies could increase the spiritual impact of the church while at the same time making it more steadfast and capable to growing. The paper highlights the critical role of flexibility and excellent leadership skills when heading an organization, which is a religious one, in the complex modern world.

**Keywords:** Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCOAN), Leadership Transition, Financial Transparency, Humanitarian Efforts, COVID-19 Adaptation

### 1. Introduction

The generic term African Indigenous Churches (AICs) referred specifically to those established mostly for and by Africans is also used to describe them as African Independent Churches (AICs) (Ayegeboyin, D. & Ishola, 1997, p.19). These churches are different from the ones made by missionaries from America and Europe in Africa. The landscape would be altered by 1888 through the creation of a Native Baptist Church in Lagos. This church split from First Baptist Church Lagos, a mission church which were founded Americans and entirely depended on their operation. The act of independence actually shows to other

churches, resulting in the founding of more new churches.

Since then, setting up of these churches the image of which spreads in different countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and notably in Nigeria, has become popular. The African Independent churches have grown to their extremes that some of them identify themselves as the Pentecostal Churches, Praying Churches, Prophetic Movements Churches among other. They have come out to be strong in the teachings of Jesus Christ in Africa and the world. This paper is devoted to the role of the Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCOAN), the church that over the last 20 years has had a significant societal impact.

### 2. History of the Founder

The head of synagogue church of Nation is Prophet T.B. Joshua. His date of birth was June 12, 1963, at Arigidi-Akoko, a tiny town in the state of Ondo, Nigeria. In his youth, a friendless Joshua was known for his devotion to God and spiritual matters, and he attended St. Stephen's Anglican Primary School in the village. Next, he shifted to Osun State of Nigeria where he studied at Anglican Grammar School. Having finished his secondary education, what followed was a brief period of lifetime working experiences in different occupations, such as poultry farming and construction.

In 1987, the Church of All Nations ministry was founded by Joshua. The church was composed of a small number of people at the beginning and then later on it gradually increased in size and popularity. SCOAN was what was known for an emphasis on healing, deliverance, and prophecy.

The TV program "Emmanuel TV" made Joshua famous internationally. The program was first broadcast in 2006 and was seen in over a hundred countries around the world which attracted people from diverse background. There were many people at the SCOAN who attended in the hope of spiritual direction and miracles.

T.B. Joshua, the prophet, throughout his ministry reported to have performed so many miracles which include, healing the sick, raising the dead people and deliverance people from bondage of evil spirits. These assertions attracted admiration and distrust from diverse populations.

Moreover, from the spiritual callings, Joshua was an active philanthropist. He launched a humanitarian group known as Partners of Emmanuel TV, being the umbrella organization where the poor who live in our society can turn for assistance. While the organization accepted a variety of causes including education, health and poverty, it focused on some issues.

On June 5, 2021, precisely at the age of 57, the Prophet T.B. Joshua died a natural death. The sorrowful news of his death brought about a sudden shock to those who loved him from all parts of the world. The mission of the Synagogue Church of All Nations is still on under the leadership of other ministers as they continue what had already been started by Joshua.

### 3. History of the Church

SCOAN, an independent charismatic church with its headquarters located in Lagos, Nigeria, is a Christian mega-church. The Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCOAN) was founded in 1989 by Temitope Joshua Balogun (Pastor TB Joshua) after a 40 days and 40 nights fasting (Joshua, 2006). GO belongs to T.B. Joshua. He believed that he was divinely ordained to start a church, thus the SCOAN Church ("The Synagogue" Church of All Nations). Initially, Joshua began to lead his ministry with a handful of people. Several events of nature like storms, floods and extreme weathers were responsible for destruction of the roof of the first church building, flooding away the second church building and collapsing the third church building, respectively.

The church started as a small group of people who first met in a temporary shelter under a canopy in the middle of the swampy area in Agodo-Egbe, Lagos, Nigeria, the church's aim and mission were simple and clear: him to seek and save is the lost (Luke 19:10). The church upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit moved to a large tract of land (Marcelinus) in Ikotun-Egbe; an outskirts of Lagos where multitudes meet to worship the Almighty. The church that few in number have grown to be one of the most influential in Nigeria with about 50,000 worshippers attending Sunday services weekly as her headquarters in Ikotun-Egbe, Lagos (Joshua, 2006) Following a well-attended praise and worship service, Joshua, founder and senior pastor of the church got a call of the Lord. June 5th, 2021 was the day Joshua kicked the dust of the sheepfold. Even

though there are revisions to the church's outer look, the vision is still unmoved. SCOAN is a place where millions of worshipers from all over the globe gather together to learn the message of God's saving power, healing and the victory over sin. The church members are generous in donating money and materials in order to support the church's social ministry to the poor long before they enter the Church and even outside of the church matter.

### 4. Doctrine of the Church

SCOAN Church resonates with a Christian faith based on the Biblical teachings maximizing on faith, healing and deliverance. 'Points of Belief' is the name of the church doctrines. Here is the statement of faith of the Synagogue Church of All Nations: Here is the statement of faith of the Synagogue Church of All Nations:

Through the Father and the Son the Spirit joined God in the creation of the world. The Father ministered the Spirit so that we might become sons/daughters of God like Jesus Christ. It is Jesus as Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit whom we know. He made a wonderful promise in John 14:16-17: "I will ask the Father, and the Father will give an Advocate to you, the one who will stay with you forever—the Spirit of Truth. The world cannot receive Him, because it does not see Him, neither does it know Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and He will be in you." The Holy Spirit is to be with us forever. He is certainly not a well-known figure for everyone but only for those who are ready for Him. The Spirit of God shows up how poor our sin actually is. He leads us to the right path to accept Christ as our Saviour. He does a one-eighty turn to our lives. They call it being saved or being born again.

Thus, Jesus Christ preferred soul-winning. That is what it was all for Him to come for, to live and to die and to rise again for. He is the Messianic figure whom the church expected to come and restore the communion between God and man. Concerning His ship of the flesh, Jesus Christ was David's son. On that point His divine nature is alleged by His rising from the dead on the third day and by His display of divinity while performing many great (and otherworldly) deeds. Now He sits at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2: Paul describes Jesus as "the Son of God, who was appointed by God to be the Savior of the world, according to the good news that we have received" (Romans 1:2-4). He in every respect was subject to these temptations, but in all respects without sin. Jesus Christ loves us, died for us, rules and reigns

in power for us and is also the one who keeps on praying for us.

The message of God was spoken by the people of God that was moved by the Holy Spirit like the channel through which this message was transmitted. Both Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible don't only mean events which happened long ago and ancient wisdoms. It is God's message of grace and truth to us today (2 Timothy 3:(16:21 Peter 2:1) the prophecy came by them from Divine dictation, as the very Scripture says.

If you follow sin, it leads to destruction and death; but, the Word of God leads one to life. Should Christ Jesus be our Lord and Savior, one day, we get a new body, a new soul and a new spirit. God's Spirit joins Himself to our spirit to declare that we are God's children (Romans 8:(16)

Salvation comes when one is set free from the sin and its results and gets it by believing in the cleansing power of the Blood of Christ. Every man should call upon our Lord Jesus Christ as his own personal Lord and Savior; otherwise, the death of Jesus will not accomplish anything for him.

God's word is a good thing to meditate on and God's spirit is a good power to revive my strength. We must have his spiritual word, as well as his spirit, which, mixed with repentance and faith, makes us be born again.

Divine healing is the divine power by which God restores or preserves the physical health of man. It is credited to us by grace through faith in what our Lord Jesus Christ has perfectly done. All the damage Jesus was subjected to before and during His crucifixion He carried for the sake of our healing – spiritual, emotional and physical. His pain healed us. The divine healing is one of the fruits that Jesus Christ died for us at Calvary at.

Water baptism and baptism in the Holy Spirit We also believe in speaking in tongues as the Spirit of God gives utterance (Acts 2:e). All who enter into the number of the body of Christ do so because they are baptized in the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12: God's love showcases His posture of 13; Romans 8:9). When you are baptized in the Holy Spirit, God's power will come upon you as it did on the first disciples on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:№1-4). The life-changing force of God comes upon you when you are filled with the Holy Spirit. He touches every part of your being. The Holy Spirit produces rivers of life, joy, love, peace and power to flow out of your spirit for the needs of others (John 7:

The Lord's Supper as was celebrated by Jesus Christ and His disciples in Matthew 26:26-28, "While they were eating, Jesus took the bread, blessed it and broke it, and handed it to His disciples, saying, "Take and eat for this is My body." Then, He took the cup, gave thanks and offered it."

## 5. Church Administration

The Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCOAN), an African Christian ministry based in Lagos, Nigeria, with large congregations across the globe, is led by the late reverend T.B. Joshua, a renowned televangelist and prophet. Concerning the church administration, SCOAN appointed Prophet T.B. Joshua until his passing on 5th June 2021. The senior pastor and founder of the church was him in that he had the central leadership role and participated in the decision-making process. One can easily notice that hierarchy is usually a feature of such churches since the senior pastor is the one who decides and is responsible for all the church administration.

The church took a serious hit on leadership issues after a vacuum appeared in leadership through the absence of a leadership succession plan after the passing of the Prophet T.B. Joshua. During this period, on September 13, 2021, Punch newspaper wrote that the successor of Prophet Temitope Joshua, is his widow Mrs Evelyn Joshua.

As divulged in written and video post shared on the church's official Facebook page, Joy S. Siko Joshua was referred to as the commander with divine assignment to take the command of the Lagos-based church, according to the text posted on the church's official Facebook page. The sentence read, "We thank you all from our hearts for your prayers and love for the ministry since the dear father of ours, servant of the Most High God, Prophet T.B. Joshua passed away. We thank you for your faith too. It is time for God to see the day, to the glory of God, for us to soldier on with the divine assignment under the guidance of God and the human leadership of Mrs. Ev We strongly invite you all to the prayers sessions as we commend the praying space for her to get God's directions and wisdom. Soonest, Mrs. Evelyn Joshua will have a word with the overgrating audience which held together The SCOAN members and Emmanuel TV partners who do not seem to lose hope in the newest phase of the Great Commission.

Yet, on the day after the earlier statement was made on 12th July, some members of the church in Akure, Ondo State, who were under the aegis of SCOAN Global

Activists Movement (GCSM), revealed their concerns over the development of Late Prophet TB Joshua's wife to be the new leader of the Church. The organization claimed, in an official statement signed by Mr. Adedeji Opeyemi, its President and Secretary Mr. Brown Chimieze, that they asked all Christians and humans worldwide to help in saving the church from imminent collapse. They asked questions like how a congregation that never existed claimed that 2k people appointed her saying how the meeting was held in the first place. What was I going through when the people have voted Yes? Was it through election? Is this the year of "appointment" for 2000 members at church?"

### 6. Finance of the Church

SCOAN, which stands for Synagogue Church of All Nations is one the largest and richest churches in the world as far as reported assets are concerned according to Owolabi (2019). It has several branches in different parts of the world like in the United Kingdom, South Africa, Greece, and Ghana (Owolabi, 2019).

Nonetheless, the church has incurred the charges of embezzlement of money. It has been barely four months after the death of the founder of the church, late T.B Joshua, on which the EFCC reportedly invited 20 elders of the Synagogue Church of All Nations to question them of alleged financial fraud and diversion of funds left by Temitope Balogun Joshua (aka TB Joshua), the late founding leader of the SCOAN (Adejumo, 2

These allegations have led to inquiries as to how the church finances are managed. It is also worth pointing out that the church, as opposed to many other religious organizations, does not have to provide its financial details to be made public in general. The lack of transparency in this case may in some cases project the donor community to wonder about the use and management of funds within the organization.

### 7. Relevance of the Church

SCOAN, one of the world's prominent Christian ministries based in Lagos, Nigeria, is a synonym of the late T.B. Joshua. The relevance of SCOAN to society can be viewed from different perspectives: The relevance of SCOAN to society can be viewed from different perspectives:

1. **Spiritual Guidance:** Just like many other religious institutions, SCOAN offered spiritual counselling and guidance to those who came to church and those who were its members. For the individuals who are

Christians, the doctrine and the church's worship rituals may provide a sense of purpose, hope, and direction in life (Owolabi, 2019).

2. **Humanitarian Efforts:** Humanitarian works were part of what the church was involved in. She assisted the less privileged by providing them with food, clothes and financial support both in Nigeria and other parts of the world. The Church's charitable initiatives were geared toward touch the lives of the poor and positively impact the society (Owolabi, 2019).

3. **Healing and Miracles:** Miracles and healings made SCOAN the globally known brand. Through prayer, many other people were drawn to the church to seek divine intervention for their health problems and other challenges. These experiences were important in the life of those who had faith in them, whether it be through faith healing or other means (Wikipedia, n.d.).

4. **Tourism and Economic Impact:** The church, among other places, became an important attraction for local and international tourists, thus fueling tourism in Lagos, Nigeria. SCOAN may have led positively to the local economy by means of hotel bookings, restaurants hosting visitors, and the transportation sector for the visitors (Wikipedia, n.d.).

5. **Media and Global Reach:** SCOAN's activities which sought to cater the entire humanity were widely covered by both local and international media placing it on a global podium. This visibility enabled the church to spread out its messages and teachings to a wider mass of the population via the use of the internet (Wikipedia, n.d.).

### 8. Problems of the Church

In terms of a large religious organization, the Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCOAN) had to confront many challenges and problems throughout its existence. Some of the problems associated with SCOAN included: Some of the problems associated with SCOAN included:

1. **Controversies and Criticisms:** SCOAN has experienced a series of criticisms and controversies throughout the years. Some critics raised doubt about the questions whether these faith healings and miracles happened or not, saying that they were untrue about what they claimed to be. The miracles were alleged to have been staged and this influence of manipulation of testimonies was alleged.

2. **Lack of Financial Transparency:** Often cited as a large and typical example of a religious organization, SCOAN's financial transparency has been a subject of debate. Some doubters argued that the financial matters of the church were not transparent enough and how donations were actually used.

3. **Legal Issues:** The church found itself in the middle of legal battles even being a plaintiff in some other occasions. Among these concerns were cases of code violations, land issues and grievances with authorities.

4. **Leadership Transition:** When Prophet T.B. Joshua, the founder and leader of the church, died in June 2021, doubts arose concerning the structural transition of the church and its future orientation.

5. **Impact of COVID-19:** SCOAN, just like the other religious bodies of worship, had to deal with the martial and challenges that COVID-19 pandemic created, some of which included the banning of large gatherings and the limits of traveling.

## 9. Solutions

At certain stage the religious organizations are faced with a challenge. This paper suggests some general approaches that religious organizations, including the Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCOAN), can consider to address challenges. This paper suggests some general approaches that religious organizations, including the Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCOAN), can consider to address challenges:

1. **Transparency and Accountability:** In view of the need to increase financial transparency, religious bodies can set up financial practices that are transparent. This could consist of done releases of financial states and how offerings and donations are being expended for the distraction of gospel, respectively charitable activities.

2. **Ethical Conduct and Integrity:** Integrity and adherence to the highest moral values is an indispensable feature of any religious institution. Addressing the controversies or the criticisms by carrying out internal reviews and suctioning to the high ethical standards can restore the trust to the community.

3. **Regulation Compliance:** The implementation of all provisions of all applicable legislation may have a long-term beneficial impact in terms of the avoidance of legal issues and disputes. Regular reviewing of organizational practices and updating them occasionally in accordance with the laws is essential.

4. **Leadership Succession Planning:** Succession should be well planned and clear when a well-known leader passes, if it is to facilitate a smooth transition. It guarantees a leadership stability and continuity in the company.

5. **Focus on Core Mission:** Religious groups should center their efforts in -following their mission and values, making sure that their actions comply with the teachings they have.

6. **Open Dialogue and Communication:** Holding public debate with the people who support and those

who oppose can create way for the resolution of concerns and misconceptions. Communication is one of the ways in which we can create a climate of transparency and awareness.

7. **Adaptation to Changing Circumstances:** Aligning to the dynamic areas of the environment, especially that of Covid-19 pandemic, can be a key to continuation of the religious organizations operation in a way that meets the demand for well-being of their members and the visitors.

8. **Empowerment and Social Impact:** The effect of the community empowerment and social impact of charity initiatives may go beyond the church's activities which can be demonstrated as a commitment to the society.

## 10. Conclusion

Finally, this research has proved that T.B. Joshua's Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCOAN) is one of fastest-growing indigenous churches in Nigeria. The Church being the branches from the city of Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria has Ghana, the United Kingdom, South Africa, and Greece as its headquarter and the number of its followers is growing large. The church has had a positive impact on the society through its charitable projects and being the instrumental force in promoting tourism and local economy in the state of Lagos, Nigeria. In contrast, the church has faced some substantial challenges. The absence of a well-defined leadership succession plan before the death of the founder resulted in a leadership crisis, accusations of financial misuse and later demise of the organization. The church has a hand in conflict and lawsuits. It faces challenges like land issues, building code violations, and disagreements with authorities. The pandemic of the COVID-19 has had an effect on SCOAN as well, just like other religious institutions. The church has had to adapt to the challenges that came alongside the pandemic, like the limitations in number of members attending a service and restrictions with traveling. Believing that its goals are achievable in any circumstances, the church has been seeking to accomplish its mission and serve this community. Resilience is emphasized here as an indication of the value of flexibility and good leadership in dealing with the complex problem of the running of a large church in this current world.

## 11. Recommendations

Upon examining the Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCOAN) and its current situation, the following recommendations are suggested: Upon examining the Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCOAN) and its

current situation, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. **Leadership Crisis:** The indigenous church founders ought to draw from the lessons SCOAN succession crisis and identify legitimate successors when they are around.

2. **Transparency and Accountability:** In order to resolve the issues of financial openness that have come up, the leadership of SCOAN as well as other religious bodies can actively adopt transparent financial procedures. This might be made up of constant public disclosures of the financial statements and the descriptions of the donations and offerings' uses for the spreading of Gospel and charitable activities.

3. **Regulation Compliance:** Abiding by all legislation and regulations in place can help to avoid legal cases and conflicts. Keep track of and update organizational procedures to comply with legal requirements all the time.

4. **Humanitarian Efforts:** The church is extremely commendable for its many humanitarian activities, which include food, clothes, and money given especially to the poor both in Nigeria and outside Nigeria. These community projects have the ultimate goal of improving the lives of the disadvantaged and society as a whole, and more things of such nature should be kept up. They are also instrumental in evangelistic campaign with a view to recruit more people into the church and sustain the present members.

5. **Adaptation to Changing Circumstances:** Adjusting to new realities can enable Pentecostal churches such as SCOAN and other religious organizations to be ready for future incidences that may affect their church activities without sacrificing the health and well-being of their members and visitors.

Applying these recommendations will augment the Synagogue Church of All Nations and other similar organizations that will lead to growth in their spiritual influence. It is assumed that the remarks are fully tips and they will be implemented for the church to continue growing even after the departure of its founder.

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