

# Commercialisation of Christianity in Nigeria: A Review

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doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/gjahss.2013/vol12n2114>

Published February 19, 2024

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**Citation:** Adabembe K.O. (2024) Commercialisation of Christianity in Nigeria: A Review, *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol.12, No.2, pp.1-14

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**ABSTRACT:** *This review investigates the commercialization of Christianity in Nigeria, delving into its historical roots and modern expressions. A booming economy that includes mega-churches, televangelism, religious tourism, and a robust market for faith-based goods and services has resulted from the nexus of faith and commerce. Factors responsible for the commercialization of Christianity and the impacts of commercialization on religious practices, and the larger socio-cultural fabric are critically evaluated in this study. The article examines how some charismatic leaders have shaped the religious-business environment and considers how this has an impact on the genuineness of Christian teachings in contemporary Nigeria. This review adds to the on-going conversation on how Nigerian religious practices are changing and highlights the intricate interactions that exist between faith and business within the framework of Christianity. This review recommends more investigation into viable ways to promote peaceful coexistence of religion and business in Nigeria's Christian community.*

**KEYWORDS:** Historical, Commercialization, Christianity, Religion, Review

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## INTRODUCTION

Religion and commerce are economically interrelated. On the one hand, church members engage in commerce that brings money to the church through offerings and tithes for growth and development. They established small, medium, or large enterprises that would provide funds for the family, which they generously gave to the church. There is a tie between religion and commercial expansion. (Papageogiou, 2012). On the contrary, church administrators often create educational institutions, hospitality homes, and other ventures that could generate money for the church's growth and development. As such, church members benefit from educational and hospitality services (Webster, 1964; Falola&Babalola, 1991). Worthy of note is that every religious institution has a goal for its establishment.

Apostle ChibuzorChinyere, the general overseer of Omega Power Ministry in Nigeria, has proven beyond reasonable doubt that tithe and offering are for humanitarian services; this he

has demonstrated on many occasions, in which he brought succour to the downtrodden, the oppressed, and the needy. For instance, the parents and siblings of Deborah Samuel Yakubu, a student who was accused of blasphemy and lynched in the College of Education in Sokoto State, were relocated from Sokoto State in the northern part of the country to Port Harcourt in the Eastern part of the country to River State, Nigeria. He granted the siblings of this Martyr scholarship abroad, got the father a salary job, and opened a small business for her mother. (Arowolo, 2022). Also, this prophet rescued two teenagers known as "Happi Boys" who were sacked from their work as security personnel for dancing on duty. Having seen the plight of these boys, the apostle gave them scholarships to study abroad. (Sodiq, Oyeleke, 2022). Similarly, among Muslims, "Islamiyyah schools are established primarily to preserve and spread Islam within Muslim communities," and these schools are primarily established on humanitarian grounds (Abdul-Raheem, 2020, p. 53).

Meanwhile, several historians traced the advent of Christianity in Nigeria to Benin City, Nigeria, as far back as August 1515, when the Oba of Benin invited the missionaries from Portugal; on their arrival, he was already in a war with Idah. The Oba requested the missionaries to join (Ryder, 1961). This is the first attempt to Christianize Nigeria, especially the people of Benin (now Edo State) and Warri (now Delta State), by the Portuguese missionaries was unsuccessful because their missions were characterised by much trading and less evangelism (Ogunrinde et al., 2013). Scholars have identified the slave trade as one of the effective forms of commerce introduced by the missionaries at the inception of Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa; Africans were sold into slavery across the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. (Ajayi, 1979; Mugambi, 2002; Adewale, 2013). For example, Russell (1946) and Mugambi (2002) emphasise that slavery was based on Aristotle's philosophy, which viewed enslaved people as an "animated instrument who was nothing in himself" (Muller, 1945). The slave trade was tagged "a living tool" (Ayandele, 1966).

Fortunately, the Act of Slavery was seen as obscene. By the year 1807, the Slave Trade Abolition Act was passed by Britain, while America and Denmark followed suit (Ogunrinde, 2013). The Slave Abolition Act was followed by another emancipation act that freed all enslaved people in Britain. (Hanciles, 2005). The Emancipation Act was promulgated to end the slave trade and set free all the slaves in the British colony (Hanciles, 2005). Consequently, some humanitarian interdenominational fellowship groups consisting of C.M.S., Methodists, and Presbyterians of Edinburgh felt the pains and sufferings of the enslaved people around the 16th century and the need to save the enslaved people and end the commerce of trading in human beings. Hence, they started the anti-slavery campaign. (Ajayi, 1965). Hence, the abolition of the slave trade ended an era of commerce and religion. Although the slave trade was abolished, another era subtly emerged, which brought religion and commerce to the path of commercialization. Boston, a leading voice in the campaign for the abolition of the slave trade, proposed the establishment of a Christian commercial centre where legitimate commerce would discourage the slave trade.

Thus, Boston proposed an agricultural society and model farm that would work against the slave trade in Africa (Ajayi, 1979). He advocated that the plough and spade, which literarily

means missionaries and school teachers, must join hands to grow agriculture in Nigeria. (Buston1840). Benin, Calabar, and Warri were noted for an economic boom as a result of the activities of European traders around 1841 (Dike, 1990). Interestingly, Calabar Chiefs only allowed missionary operations in their town for three things: the establishment of the sugar industry, the establishment of schools, and the development of agriculture. (Ajayi, 1979). In the same way, these European traders also influenced Lagos and Badagry, making these states famous and developing rapidly. (Ajayi, 1979). Furthermore, the missionaries in sub-Saharan Africa attracted people to their folds through Western wealth, which they created after the abolition of the slave trade. Thus, evangelism and economic enterprises in Nigeria were related early in Christian evangelisation. For instance, the white missionaries were interested in supplying raw materials to the growing industries in Britain. (Falola et al., 1991). For example, to make evangelism and commercial enterprises catch on, the white missionaries introduced the doctrine of the three Cs: Christianity, Commerce, and Civilization. They intended that "Bible and Plough" would regenerate Africans (Buston, 1967).

Consequently, Henry Venn, C.M.S. Honorary Secretary, invited the Manchester Chamber of Commerce to Abeokuta, Nigeria, for investment in cotton growing and processing. (Izuakor, 1987). Fortunately, early Christian converts accepted the responsibility of opening up Nigeria for economic opportunities with the outside world in agriculture. As a result, they were the first group of people to plant cash crops such as cocoa, coffee, and rubber (Webster, 1964). The African church members were the brains behind cocoa plantations in Agege, Lagos State, Nigeria (Falola et al.). Fortunately, studies have shown that religious beliefs and practices have contributed immensely to Nigeria's commercial activities and economic growth. (Falola et al., 1991). The majority of missionary organisations at this epoch were interested in commerce. Although, their involvement in commerce assisted them in their missionary activities, it equally assisted Africans by opening them up to the rest of the world for commerce and missionary activities. Falola and Babalola (1991) believed that "European Christian missionaries, as precursors of British colonial administration in Nigeria, contributed significantly to the evolution and development of a monetised economy in the country."

Fortunately, the orientation the missionaries gave during their missionary activities spurred the governments of many African countries to be interested in endorsing the teachings of these missionaries on agriculture in African continents. Therefore, they were actively involved in the breeding of new crops that were alien to Africans. These crops include citrus fruits, cotton, coffee, and cocoa. The first sets of converts in Nigeria were traders. (Falola and Babalola, 1991). Moreover, in Yoruba land, the cultivation of cash crops such as cocoa, cotton, and rubber, which the area was recognised for, was said to have been initiated and popularised by Christian converts from the area. (Ayandele 1966).

Scholars such as Omotayo and Zubaru, (2019) have affirmed that, in the Ondo district, which is the present-day Ondo State and Ekiti State, many people became Christians mainly for wealth and peace building, which was the primary concern of missionaries at this period. (Omotayo and Zubaru, 2019). It has also been argued that Christianity could not have flourished or gained ground in Yoruba land without imbuing it with commerce because it was

a source of pride for people at that time. They were happy to be called Christians because of the opportunities it brought in education, commerce, and agriculture. (Ayandele, 1966).

Although the influence of missionaries on the development and growth of Nigeria's economy cannot be overemphasised, this is evident in the examples given above. Apart from the efforts of the missionaries on civilization, commerce, agriculture, and the introduction of new crops, missionaries were equally instrumental to national rehabilitation by restoring peace to towns and villages that were formally enemies due to inter-tribal and intra-tribal war. (Omotayo and Zubar, 2019). Therefore, the British administrators and Christian missionaries fully participated in some of these wars in Nigeria. The participation of the missionaries in the wars in the southern part of Nigeria was necessitated to promote a peaceful environment for economic enterprises and not only for evangelism but for commerce and agriculture (Ayandele, 1966; Omotayo and Josiah, 2019). This marked the beginning of an economic boom in southern Nigeria; European traders had free movement due to the peaceful atmosphere. Therefore, both the missionaries and the people were able to participate in economic enterprises.

Fortunately, merchants from Lagos, Ondo, and Ekiti towns dealt in imported goods, which they took to the inland areas and also traded for palm produce in places like Ondo, Oke-Igbo, and Ekiti, as well as for the exchange of potash and leather goods in Ilorin. (Uriah in Omotayo and Josiah, 2019). Fortunately, the parties involved developed their domestic markets through the exchange of these commodities. Goods that could not be produced locally were enjoyed because of this interdependence on others. Christianity and commerce were also inseparable at this period in teaching and training Africans specific skills. Africans were exposed to crafts such as carpentry, masonry, leatherwork, and printing. Additionally, various mission agents offered industrial pieces of training. For instance, members of the Baptist mission in Lagos and Ogbomoso were trained in carpentry, brick-making, tailoring, and bookbinding. Equally, in present-day Kogi state, Catholic Church missionaries established Topo Industrial School to equip the students with carpentry, mason, printing, farming, and shoe-making skills. Also, some Ijaye War survivors were taught carpentry at Abeokuta in 1867. (Omotayo & Josiah, 2019).

However, Christianity and commerce are related (Papageogiou, 2012). The arrival of missionaries in the 19th century was to introduce genuine business that would eradicate the slave trade in Nigeria. The commerce to be introduced was expected to favour church members. Unlike the earlier Orthodox churches, when contemporary churches establish schools, it is strictly for commercial purposes. While fixing the price of such schools, the fees are always on the high side. However, the high school fees point to the fact that such schools were established for the affluent members of the church and society. This segregates the poor members of the church and society from benefiting from the advantages of church-established educational institutions. Thus, scholars also view religion (Nwosu, 1988) as the bedrock of economic progress because the role of religion as an employer of labour, particularly in Christianity and Islam, cannot be overemphasised. This article, therefore, aimed to review the commercialization of Christianity in Nigeria. The article is organised into three sections and

sub-sections comprising the introduction, an overview of the commercialization of religion, and impacts of commercialization on religious practices in Christianity.

### ***An Overview of the Commercialization of Religion***

This section presents a review of general issues of the commercialization of religion and discusses the relationship between religion and commerce in sub-Saharan Africa. This section concludes with an understanding of the relationship between commerce and religion.

According to Adabembe and Adedayo (2022), religion is about relationships, this relationship is often between man and deities. There is also relationship that involves the adherents in the course of religious practices. August Comte views on religion was that, religion is a delusion, a symbolic thinking or an understandable behavior. According to Comte, the foundation of religion was an expression of powerful emotions and an immature thought. It is the opium of the people. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opiate of the people (Adabembe and Adedayo, 2022).

### ***Religious Passion and Economic Motivation***

This segment of the work gives a scholarly view of religious passion and economic motivation. Scholars have questioned whether religion and economy are parallel and should be distinct. Abioje (2011) argued that religion and economy are two sides of a coin, which means they are closely related, although they seem different. This scholar's argument is somewhat valid because the commercialization of religion, especially the three religions in practice in Nigeria, can be said to be as old as these religions.

Religion is as old as human life, and there are three main religions in Nigeria: African Traditional Religion (A.T.R.), also known as an indigenous religion; Islam; and Christianity. A.T.R. is the oldest religion in sub-Saharan Africa. Nearly all three significant religions are involved in one commercial activity or the other in their interactions with people. In A.T.R., there are healers, diviners, priests, and priestesses whose concerns are solving human problems in health, future teller, and agriculture by proffering solutions to them. They are intermediaries between the deities and people (Falola et al.). These consultations are primarily in cash and sometimes in kind, depending on the status of the person involved. For example, an Ifa oracle cannot be consulted empty-handed. Diviners have asked people to bring money, yams, palm oil, goats, sheep, cocks, hens, bush meats, clothes, gold, and silver before consultation and appeasement could be done. (Jongbo, 2022) It is often said that these things are collected from people for personal gratification and use by diviners. (Taiwo, 2022)

African traditional religion is primarily concerned with beliefs in witchcraft, sorcery, and magic. Rituals were performed to appease the witches, wizards, and spirits for good health and a bountiful agricultural harvest, as it was believed that these spirits were the owners of the land and could make or mar an agricultural harvest. Moreover, ancestral worship was an integral aspect of A.T.R., more so that ancestors were believed to be active members of the family who

must be appeased and honoured through rituals and sacrifices, and these were performed through an intermediary known as diviners, priests, or priestesses.

Similarly, in Islam, some Imams and Alfas claim to be professionals in offering solutions to human problems by consulting God on their behalf. These consultations are done promptly; some Islamic clerics claim to be professionals in foretelling and healing and often charge people for these services (Belo, 2022). Muslims are allowed to participate in economic activities with strict rules and regulations guiding how they should be done. Examples are cooperative societies and loan interest (Ajani & Adebayo, 2018). There are equally available credits for Islam adherents in order for them to establish and expand their businesses. (Mazrui, 1967). Many factors have been cited to be responsible for the growth and development of Islam on the shores of Africa; among these factors is the economic factor; the advent of Islam in West Africa is linked to trade and commerce with North African people (Spencer, 1970; Jimoh, 2017).

However, the arrival of Christianity threatened the very existence and foundation of A.T.R. on foretelling and healing because Christianity came with civilization and the introduction of hospitals, which solved some of the fundamental health issues for which people relied on orthodox medicine. Christianity brought relief to people over how some dubious diviners had cheated them. People were made to know that intermediaries between God and man are not needed. This can be seen in some of the early songs among the Christians of the Yoruba ethnic group in Nigeria.

Ori mi pemedeyunleonifa  
Aduramigba,  
medeyunle  
Orimi sun han  
mederohunko  
Adura mi gba o eee

This song is interpreted to mean that,

My head is correct;  
I will no longer go to Ifa diviners.  
My prayers have been answered  
I'm not going to the diviners.  
My head has brought goodness to me  
I'm no longer buying the goat for Satan.  
My prayers have been answered.

In contemporary society, some diviners request foreign currencies from people before consulting gods or proffering solutions to their problems. Max Weber's postulation in his thesis "Protestant Ethics and the Rise of Capitalism" has been the bedrock for scholarly deliberations on religion and economy (Weber, 1930). Weber focused his arguments on particular sets of

protestant Christians who practiced asceticism, an act of living a self-denying, simple life without physical comforts, pleasures, and luxuries, primarily for religious reasons. (Weber,1930). He posits that the principles of these groups of Christians aided and assisted the rise of capitalism. (Weber, 1930). However, Karl Marx, a foremost sociologist, was against Weber's ideology on religion and economy. He argued that religion is a means of exploitation, enslavement, oppression, and alienation in a capitalist society. He affirms that religion flourishes in any society that exploits and alienates its members. (Marx and Engels, 1957) "The belief of Christianity to him is snitching and deceitful, and the proletariat is revolutionary" (McLelland, 1987).

The argument of these scholars can be said to be corrected to some extent, for the fact that early church leaders did not oppose slave trading raises a pertinent question: Why were the early missionaries interested in slave trading rather than the religion they came to propagate on the shores of Africa? In other words, Christianity is expected to be a religion full of sympathy, humanity, and kindness, not wickedness, which slavery entails. Similarly, why were the people who introduced the religion so cruel and hard-hearted to the extent of mixing religion with unwholesome human trading? The answer to this is not far-fetched in Nigeria's three religions in practice because, apart from slave trading, that was popular in the earliest days of Christianity on the shores of Africa.

Scholars have argued that some of the Christians who participated in the ancient crusade looted the properties of their fellow Christians, all in an attempt to accumulate wealth. For example, the white missionaries were only interested in human and material resources to build their growing economy, hence the Christianization of sub-Saharan Africa (Abas, 2003). This is not limited to Christianity, and scholarly evidence abounds that the Arab mujahedeen are involved in the holy war purposely to conquer the inhabitants of fertile land for agriculture and animal rearing to boost their economy (Schreck, 1995; Abioje, 2011).

Similarly, in recent years, there has been an upsurge in the number of pastors caught in unwholesome acts or in one crime or another. For example, Uzodinma (2016) reports about a church in Enugu State where three dead bodies were found buried in the church auditorium foundation. Another pastor was imprisoned by the High Court of Justice, Ado-Ekiti, for killing for ritual purposes in Rotimi (2021). Equally, Matthew (2021) reports the murder of a young girl by the pastor in Delta State. Hence, it is presumed that these self-acclaimed pastors were involved in these killings for church growth and money-making. As the events unfold, Jemiriye (1998) argues that church leaders have deviated from the foundations of religious practices and the church only to focus on economic gains. It was established that Christian religious organisations established educational institutions for economic gains, sometimes to the detriment of the adherents.

***Pentecostalism was a catalyst for the commercialization of Christianity in Nigeria.***

It is imperative to give a conceptual meaning to Pentecostalism, and it is a derivation from the word Pentecost, which is an Anglicised description of the New Testament Greek word "Pentecoste," which denotes the fiftieth day and relates to the Hebrew feast of Weeks, popularly

referred to as the Shabuoth in the Old Testament (Otonko, 2005). Pentecostalism concerns a group of protestant Christians who believe in an individual relationship with Jesus Christ. These groups of Christians believe in Jesus as a healer, redeemer, and Saviour, and that all these can be achieved if only a person has repented of his or her sins and becomes born again (Ogunlusi, 2019). Pentecostalism, therefore, can be understood, according to Valls (2010), as a feast of Passover and the pouring of the gifts of the Spirit, which is fundamental to the Christian life. Meanwhile, Ogunlusi (2019) argued that they are called Pentecostalism because the evidence of the Holy Spirit filling the disciples on the day of Pentecost was manifested in healing, miracles, and the discernment of spirits, prophecy, wisdom, and understanding that followed.

Nigerian Pentecostalism came into being as a result of many factors. Firstly, Nigerian Christians, under the leadership of Western missionary churches, believed they had not gained independence. The activities of white missionaries who were church leaders brought back the memory of colonisation. Western churches, founded in Nigeria and managed by white missionaries, failed to nurture Christian principles, tenets, and ideologies that were devoid of racially emancipating practices (Adedibu, 2018). These acts of the missionaries caused the native Christians to revolt against them, thereby challenging the white missionaries' unscriptural attitude; this began the indigenous sovereignty following world wars (Kalu, 2007). This brought about the introduction of African Indigenous Churches (A.I.C.) into the terrain of Christianity in Africa, and Nigeria was not an exception. Africans needed to worship God in their own ways through languages, liturgies, drums, and songs. Moreover, it is of note that deliverance, glossolalia, or speaking in tongues, prophetic utterances, and baptism of the Holy Spirit are familiar to Africa. All these were present in African Traditional Religion (A.T.R.). Africans aim to worship God in the African way, and Pentecostalism thus offers them this opportunity. Fortunately, devoutness to Pentecostalism provides the drive for sustainability and growth in the unfriendly settings where they served God under Western churches.

Meanwhile, Adedibu (2018) affirmed that "the health and wealth theologies of Nigerian Pentecostal churches seem to be tailored to meet the social and existential realities of their adherents, leading to recruitment and sustenance of their membership." Since the African Indigenous Church aimed to make people serve God in African ways, given some religious considerations of African Traditional Religion, God was closer to the people. African Independent Christians were happy that they had been able to resuscitate the spiritual customs passed down by their ancestors to them before the arrival of white missionaries' People were made to understand by the African Indigenous Church leaders that many of the ways Africans worshipped their God before the arrival of the missionaries were far better than the ways the missionaries taught them. They believed that God was present in Africa before the arrival of the Europeans. All these resulted in a systematically Africanized version of Christianity (Kalu, 1998). "This constituted the first wave of Nigerian Pentecostalism associated with intentionality to dissociate from the aprons of Western missionaries and their idiosyncrasies" (Adedibu, 2018).

Thus, the emergence of Aladura churches, often referred to as African-initiated churches (A.I.C.s), Aladura (praying people) (Turner, 1967). Aladura Church is a prophetic healing church that emanates from Nigeria. The church is famous for prayers, foretelling, and healing miracles related to the African way of worshipping God. Meanwhile, Nigeria experienced another epoch of Pentecostalism with the introduction of foreign Pentecostalism to Nigeria from Europe and America in around 1967 and 1970, with the introduction of tracts that were mostly used for evangelism during this period. These foreign Pentecostal churches' activities impact the indigenous Pentecostal groups in Nigeria (Adedibu, 2018). The year 1960 marked the beginning of Nigerianizing Pentecostalism as major foreign Pentecostal churches handed over the leadership of such churches to Nigerians. Examples abound in this category, and we have Scripture Union, popularly known as SU, a campus associate of a British-based evangelical Bible reading group, the Evangelical Church of West Africa (E.C.W.A.), and the Church of Christ in Nigeria (C.O.C.I.N.) in Central and Northern Nigeria (Adedibu, 2018).

Moreover, the upsurge of conversion to this novel religion known as Pentecostalism in all the nooks and crannies of Nigeria in the past decades was the beginning of many changes in Christianity as a whole in Nigeria, and this is evident in the aspects of liturgy, doctrine, membership, and organisation. (Jegede,2009) For instance, the introduction of prosperity preaching and the belief that the wealth of members is a confirmation of acceptable service to God and his blessings upon them were made famous by the churches tagged as Neo-Pentecostal churches. Ayantayo affirmed that prosperity teaching and how imperative it is for Christians to be prosperous while on earth are integral parts of Pentecostalism. The list of these churches is endless in Nigeria. Churches such as the Church of God Mission International were established by the late Benson Idahosa, popularly known as the father of Pentecostalism in Nigeria, in Benin City. Winners Chapel, founded by David Oyedepo; Redeemed Christian Church of God, which was established by Josiah Akindayomi and made famous by Pastor Enoch AdejareAdeboye, popularly known as Daddy G.O.; Mountain of Fire and Miracles Church, established in 1989 by Rev. Dr.Olukoya; Christ Embassy, founded by Pastor Chris Oyakhilome in 1991; Fountain of Life Church, founded by Pastor TaiwoOdukoya in 1992; House on the Rock, established by Rev. Wale Adefarasin in 1994; Daystar Christian Centre, founded by Pastor Sam Adeyemi in 1995; and hosts of others too numerous to list that have their branches in all the nooks and crannies of Nigeria and overseas. It has been observed through participant observation that ostentatious lifestyles, the quest for leadership positions, and reckless spending of funds contributed by both the rich and the poor members of these churches by some founders and leaders of these churches have led to schism and proliferation of churches, leading to the bastardization of Christianity in Nigeria.

### **Factors responsible for the commercialization of Christianity**

1. *Pentecostalism as an Enabler of Commercialization*: Iluno Nelson views Nigeria as Africa's main centre of Pentecostal force because Pentecostal waves in the country have gone worldwide. (Iluno, 2019. P. 234). Pentecostalism in Nigeria has been the bedrock for the promotion of wealth, faith, and health as the central theme. Thus, all these are evident in prosperity preachers, who emphasise that God desires believers to prosper materially, physically, and spiritually. These prosperity theologians teach that getting

rich is the will of God for all his children, and it is evidence or a physical manifestation of God's divine blessing on those who have faith in God (Lovemore, 2016). This teaching has assisted Nigerian Pentecostalism to grow in nip and bond. It was reported in the World Christian Database that African Pentecostalism presently represents 12% of the population of Africans (Ojo&Bankiole, 2019).

Therefore, Nigeria has been tagged as the home base of Pentecostalism in Africa because it has the highest number of Pentecostal churches and members. (Murphy,2006). Pentecostal churches in Nigeria have been argued to be changing not only the approach in which a person can reform their self-understanding but also the economic and social practices of cooperative organisations and groups of people in Nigeria (Ogunlusi, 2019). Unfortunately, growth and development always have positive and negative sides. This is also not unconnected to Pentecostal churches in Nigeria. These groups of Christians are presently creating some unpleasant perceptions about the movement and Christianity. Scholars have argued that churches are business ventures in our contemporary Nigeria because they have deviated from the ultimate goal of Christianity which is edifying God and producing new believers, but manipulates its members to obtain funds for luxurious lifestyles, (Adesanya & Adabembe, 2018).

2. Unemployment: In Nigeria, unemployment is a major factor in the commercialization of Christianity. The Yoruba-speaking community residing in the South West frequently reiterates the saying "adura ta juohunkohun," highlighting the fact that prayer is the most valuable commodity. Due to this trend, many people including university graduates and those who never attended school not even a theological colleges now see Christianity as a feasible source of income and have turned it into a successful business. As a result, churches sell apparel, accessories, music, holy water, anointing oil, and other religious items with a religious theme. Pastors have even been known to pressure people into buying multiple items; one such example is a woman who was asked to buy fourteen anointing oils after the pastor learned that her husband was a lawyer.
3. Technology and Media: The advent and extensive utilisation of mass media, including radio, television, and the internet, have produced venues for the sharing of religious content. However, when religious messages are packaged and promoted to a wider audience, this accessibility also opens the door for commercialization. Unfortunately, the use of social media to promote churches and miracles has resulted in the distorting of certain Christian principles, which has contributed to the commercialization of Christianity in modern Nigerian churches.
4. Prophecies and Miracles: It has been alleged that certain charismatic pastors are putting together miracles and prophecies for sale, with followers having to pay a fee to access them. In a further step, some even bribe people to attend and offer fictitious testimony while claiming to have received miracles during crusades. All these and many more are to attract people to their churches for economic gain.
5. Prosperity preachers: According to this theological doctrine, there is a direct link between faith, a positive confession, and material prosperity. This belief is often referred to as the health and riches gospel. Preachers that demonstrate their wealth through bogus cars, mansions, luxury and as well as private jets are known as prosperity preachers, and their lifestyles have contributed to the attractiveness of the gospel.

Another thing that has helped facilitate the commercialization of Christianity is the mega churches and televangelism that these preachers are well-known for. Thus, rather than being a calling from God, others who were not called to the ministry have perceived Christianity as a career and a quick way to make money due to some preachers' lifestyles, which have contributed to the commercialization and distortion of Christian principles and values. Sadly, some preachers emphasize prosperity as a sign of God's favour rather than soul-winning, this teaching has caused religious principles to be distorted for commercial benefit.

A few additional elements have also influenced the commercialization of Christianity in Nigeria in addition to the one previously discussed, are:

- building churches indiscriminately
- Pentecostal churches are becoming more and more fragmented.
- pastors being promoted as half-baked
- rivalry among church leaders and members
- Castigating and scheming for members from other churches, thereby causing problems within the Christian community.

### ***Commercialization's effects on Christianity***

1. Consumerism and materialism: In Nigeria, the commercialization of Christianity has resulted in the commodification of religious practices, turning spiritual encounters into exchanges for tangible goods. This change has fostered a consumerist mindset where people choose to seek out quick satisfaction over in-depth, profound spiritual investigation. Actually, in religious organisations, materialism has caused splits and expansion. Some religious leaders' ostentatious lifestyles have contributed to consumerism in religious cycles, whereby their sole motivation for being in the religious business is to amass wealth, satisfy their own materialistic desires, and project an elevated social status rather than meeting the actual spiritual needs or wants of their followers.

Materialism in Christianity has turned some houses of worship into lion dens; there are numerous examples of religious leaders ritually killing individuals to draw followers to their houses of worship. However, commercialization has also been a way for religious institutions to get funding so they can continue to serve their communities. If used wisely, it has served as a source of funding for humanitarian endeavours, community outreach, and the upkeep of places of worship. There are several examples of religious leaders in Nigeria who engage in humanitarian endeavours. The general overseer of Omega Power Ministry, Apostle Chibuzor Chinyere, is a prime example.

2. Distortion of religious values: The fundamental religious principles of compassion, justice, peace, solidarity, stewardship, and balance have been warped by the commercialization of religion, converting revered customs into things that can be sold. This perversion of Christian principles may cause people to prioritise financial gain over their sincere spiritual growth. For example, the free education that foreign missionaries brought to Nigeria has become so commercialised that even members cannot afford to put their children in the schools established by their churches due to

exorbitant school fees. Another issue is that some religious leaders in today's Christendom routinely kill people for ritualistic purposes. Uzodinma (2016), for instance, writes about a church in Enugu State where three dead bodies were discovered buried in the foundation of the auditorium.

The High Court of Justice Ado-Ekiti imprisoned another preacher for the killing for religious purposes (Rotimi 2021). Matthew (2021) also reports that a clergyman in Delta State killed a little girl. Meanwhile, religion is meant to be society's moral bulwark (Adabembe, 2022). Furthermore, as a result of the commercialization of religion, sacred things have become trivialised and reduced to mass-market entertainment. This has lessened the profundity and significance of religious encounters in Christianity.

3. **Exploitation:** There are worries that the exploitation of religious feelings may result from commercialization. It has been discovered through participant observation that religious leaders take advantage of their followers for monetary benefit. They accomplish this in a variety of ways, including ordering followers to remove all money from their pockets during religious services, which has left some of them stranded, gathering an excessive amount of offerings during services, and many more.
4. **Conflict of Interest:** Religious institutions now face conflicts of interest as a result of commercialization. Religious leaders who put financial gain ahead of spiritual instruction may be compromising the integrity of religious teachings in their pursuit of profit.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study offers an in-depth examination of the commercialization of Christianity in Nigeria, tracing its roots and examining its modern expressions. The study evaluates the factors promoting the commercialization of Christianity, highlighting its multifaceted impacts on religious practices. The sincerity and legitimacy of Christian teachings in modern Nigeria are being called into serious doubt by the actions of some charismatic leaders in the religious-business sphere. The review concludes by advocating for further research to explore viable strategies to forestall the present trend and ways of promoting healthy business within the Christian community in Nigeria.

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