

The Proliferation of Churches and Moral Decadence in Nigeria: The Socio-Economic and Religious Implications

Dare Ojo Omonijo¹, Mary Jude-Theresa, Nwodo², Onyekwere Oliver Chizaram Uche², Emmanuel Ntochukwu Ezechukwu³

¹Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, Nigeria

²Department of Religion and Human Relations, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria.

³Department of Psychology, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria

***Corresponding Author:**

Dare Ojo Omonijo

Email: oluwadare.omonijo@covenantuniversity.edu.ng

Abstract: This article examined the social problem of the proliferation of Churches and moral decadence in Nigeria with a focus on Pentecostal ministries, from the humanistic point of view. The study engaged majorly secondary data in an attempt to study this phenomenon. It presented both the positive and negative impacts of Pentecostalism in Nigeria. It also indicated several manifestations of moral decadence in spite of Church growth and its causal factors. The study equally looked at the socio-economic and religious implications of Church proliferation with moral decadence. The study ends with concluding remarks and also proffers the way forward.

Keywords: Proliferation, Churches, moral decadence.

INTRODUCTION

From the Bible (Prov. 14:28; Acts 4: 13) God is interested in Church growth and the piety of every member of the Church. Thus, Christians are supposed to showcase all the embodiment of godliness. The rise in the number of Churches in any society therefore, should correspond with developing interest in the fear of the Lord for a godly living in order to ensure societal development. Christians are supposed to live exemplary lives (Mat. 5:13; John 1:5) that should warrant a just society. That is why the above scriptures describe them as the light and the salt of the earth. From all indications, the reverse seems to be the case in Africa and this is increasingly becoming worrisome to scholars across the continent [1, 2].

In sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), Mfumbusa [3] contends that there has been a remarkable increase in the number of Churches and also a commensurate rise in corruption and other social vices. It is assumed that if Churches are increasing, its positive impact in the lives of the people should be greater than when there were few Churches. Mfumbusa [3] therefore wondered if the Church growth and rise in corruption are coterminous in these societies.

Scholars and other agencies [4-6] who studied this phenomenon seem to agree that, initially, when Christianity was first introduced in West African countries, it had the impact of leading people to

holiness than contemporarily when the reverse is the case.

In Nigeria, other writers such as [7-12] also all seem to agree that little improvement has been recorded in attitude, behaviour and comportment of Christians though the number of Churches has risen exorbitantly. Consequently, indecent activities of most Nigerians have caused the nation to be constantly ranked low in the corruption index [13-15].

So far, the Nigerian government is either not doing anything about this problem or that efforts put in place to curtail moral decadence are weak and have failed to yield the requisite results. The following reasons could account for the seemingly unwillingness and the inability of government to bring about solution to moral decadence which some authors have attributed to the underdevelopment of Nigeria [16-18].

- Most government officials attend pentecostal Churches where the emphasis against corruption is very poor.
- Most pentecostal Churches generate their income from donations, tithes and offering of top government functionaries [94].
- Nigerian top government officials seek divine protection, and other sundry solutions to their problems in pentecostal Churches

In spite of all the above cited literature, it must be admitted that enough scholarly attention has not been

devoted to the understanding of the causes of high moral depravity in the face of rising number of Churches. However, the study of Adesanya [19] which dealt with the same topic was restricted to the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG). More importantly, the study was severely limited because it focused mainly on environmental factors.

It is on the basis of the flaws in knowledge identified in Adesanya [19] that this study was conceived. The study intends to: (i) examine the origin of pentecostal Churches, (ii) investigate the impacts of Pentecostal ministries, (iii) look into the manifestations of moral decadence in pentecostal ministries, (iv) explore the causes of the rise in moral depravity in spite of the growth in the number of Pentecostal Churches, (v) find out factors responsible for this menace and (vi) x-rays the religious, economic and social implications of Church growth without piety.

The study proceeds in numerical order as indicated in the introductory section down to the concluding remarks.

The Concept of Pentecostalism

Gabriel [20] maintains that "Pentecostalism refers to certain elements of Christian life often associated with the experience of the power of the Holy Spirit which manifested strongly at the feast of Pentecost in the Bible and the consequent gifts of the Spirit by Christ" (p. 68). This author argues further that it means emphasis on the third person of the Trinity and his manifestations in the individual and corporate lives of Christians. In addition to the above perspective, Harvey, (1998) cited in Asamoah-Gyadu [21] defined pentecostalism as an aspect of Christianity which is hinged on personal salvation through Jesus by the help of the Holy Spirit.

Dwelling on the above, Pentecostalism has the following features: Holy Ghost baptism, Holy Spirit, Charisma etc. [20]. However, in the recent past, some writers equated Pentecostalism with extremism because of their uncompromising insistence in upholding to the letter the teachings of the Bible. This includes strong opposition against the consumption alcohol, smoking of cigarette and Indian hemp, fornication and adultery, indecent dressing, watching and listening to secular movies and music etc. While some orthodox Christian Churches may tolerate a measure of the above, they were strongly condemned by Pentecostal Churches. Hence, from their preaching and activities, the Pentecostal ministries were different from the orthodox and independent African Churches. In recent times, the reverse seems to be the case, as most of the behaviours strongly condemned in the past are now regarded as parts and parcel of Christianity. Certainly, it has made it very difficult to make a strong distinction between

Pentecostal ministries and orthodox Churches in contemporary Nigeria.

In spite of this, however, it is essential to note that Pentecostal Churches do not constitute a uniform body. There are Pentecostal ministries which could be described as hardliners and see the rapture, a time when Christ will come and take believers to heaven, as the ultimate. Such ministries are very few in Nigeria today, while many other Pentecostal ministries preach prosperity, deliverance, healing, breakthroughs etc.

Since the emphasis of Pentecostal ministries in the past was on rapture, the strong opposition of members to social vices was understandable. It seems most difficult to explain why such social vices are now prevalent in many Pentecostal ministries where the emphasis on piety and self-denial were the ultimate in the recent past. Probably, Churches in the category of holiness are relatively few, comparable with others that lay much emphasis on prosperity, healing, breakthroughs etc. This study intends to examine factors responsible for this problem.

Pentecostal Churches: The Origin in Nigeria

One of the instruments which the Colonial masters used to dominate and win the mind of people in the colonies was Christian religion. At that period, Christianity preached messages of eternity via holiness and righteousness. Thus, deliverance and salvation of people from some obnoxious African customs, traditions and practices such as the killing of twin babies and persons of hunchbacks, human sacrifice, worshipping idols etc. were evident and they appealed to a broad segment of the African society during colonialism. These seem to have accounted for the dramatic rise of Churches in Nigeria, where many people had suffered greatly prior to the advent of Christianity.

After independence in 1960, the influence of Pentecostal Churches in the United States of America began to permeate Africa. By the year 2001 in Nigeria, there were 1018 of Pentecostal ministries [8]. Kalu [7] categorized them into nine groups based on their teachings and indications.

However, the line of demarcation between them is between fellowships and Churches on one hand and between holiness and prosperity groups on the other hand [13]. In other words, the focus of each ministry is different but no matter the focus, holiness should be the bed rock of each of them in such a way to endure greater impacts on national development. Although, this view seems to be contrary to the reality on development but some of the obvious positive impacts of these ministries are succinctly discussed below:

Impact of Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria

It is evident in the literature that Christianity has contributed significantly to the progress of many Nigerians since its introduction [22]. Prior to colonialism which brought about its introduction, many obnoxious cultural practices were evident in African societies. It was after its introduction in the wake of colonialism that Christian religion began to counter and render several obnoxious and some age-long practices, customs and traditions useless for the salvation and deliverance of many people Wikipedia [23]. Some dehumanizing widowhood practices, wife inheritance and human sacrifice were condemned for the first time. People began to frown at the practice of interring living people with dead monarchs as a sign of respect. But the work of Owofe and Aluko [24] and Gabriel [20] shows that the impact of Christianity expanded,

especially after 1960, and gave birth to and accelerated the growth of Pentecostalism.

Besides, at its early stage, Christianity was characterized by abject poverty, as many Christians were not aware of the reality of prosperity. It was the commencement of Pentecostal ministries that brought to the fore the reality of prosperity in the Church [25,26] and it seems to have terminated abject poverty in the lives of many Nigerians to some extent

Pentecostal Churches have also been positively impacted on Nigerians in the area of education. Many of Pentecostal Churches have established schools at all level thus, contributing to the fight against ignorance. For the avoidance of doubt, the list of tertiary institutions established by the Pentecostal Churches is stated below:

Table-1: Tertiary Institutions Established by the Pentecostal Churches

SN	Pentecostal Ministries	Universities
1	Four Square	McPherson
2	Assemblies of God	Evangel
3	Church of God mission	Ben Idahosa
4	Apostolic faith	Crawford
5	Christ Apostolic Church	Joseph Ayo Babalola
6	Mountain of Fire	Mountain Top
7	Deeper life Bible Church	Anchor
8	The Redeemed Christian Church of God	Redeemer University and Redeemer College of Technology
9	Living faith aka winners	Covenant and Landmark
10	The Christ Life Church	Precious Cornerstone University
11	The Apostolic Church	Samuel Adegboyega University
12	Others	Others

Source: Compiled by the researchers, (2016)

Moreover, some programmes of study created by some pentecostal universities that were not in existence in tertiary institutions in the country in the past, such as entrepreneurial studies have been successfully introduced into the nations teaching curriculum. Apart from this, one of the private faith-based universities in Nigeria is often rated as the best university in Nigeria by the Global Ranking Web of Universities [27].

Further to the above, these educational institutions provide employment opportunities for some persons. To some extent, this has reduced the rate of unemployment [28-31] responsible for the high level of abject poverty [32-35] and criminal activities such as smuggling, armed robbery, prostitution, stealing etc. among Nigerians

Apart from the above, missionaries from the west introduced formal education to Nigerians but it has not been established in the literature that any missionary in developed countries has ever established and run two universities or a university and a polytechnic like two

Nigerian preachers. The aim of building these institutions is to raise a new generation of leaders to bail Nigerians out of illiteracy, ignorance, subjective thinking and prejudice and to also restore the dignity of the entire back race.

Although some scholars have argued that education in the private sector is too expensive in Nigeria Encomium [36] and that it benefits only the children of the elite class, mostly those who siphoned the resources of the state. In other words, the dawn of faith-based educational institutions has not favoured indigent children. On the other way round, it is evident in the literature that most faith-based universities offer quality education with modern learning facilities and effective state-of-the-art facilities [37]. Also, cases of students victimization, high level of corruption, sexual harassment, cultism etc. in the faith-based universities are not common. This prompts many parents to patronize the institution. Moreover, these institutions are noted for a stable academic calendar, which has

greatly helped the present younger generation to build their careers early in life.

In addition to the above, the greatest strive to include a Nigerian university among the leading universities globally is currently being pursued by the management of a private faith-based ivory tower [38].

The management of the institution in question has strictly 'keyed into' the criterion being used by Times Higher Education to rank universities in the world (see fig.1 below) with the hope of ensuring that the university is listed among the topmost universities in the world very soon.

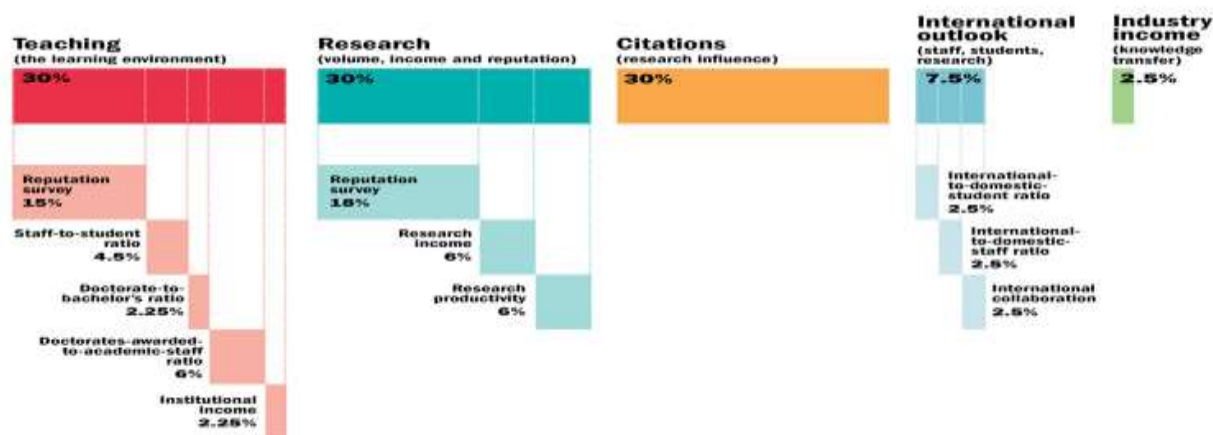


Fig-1: The Criterion for Ranking Universities Globally
Source: Culled from Times Higher Education [95]

The awareness of the above criteria and the importance they portend to academic advancement in higher education system began to permeate the Nigerian higher educational systems through this faith-based institution. The institution was the first university in Nigeria to start using publications indexed in Scopus and Thomson Reuters Web of Science and citations of scholars calculated through Google Scholars Citation Index for academic promotion [39]. Hence, in the last two years, the institution was ranked the best university in West Africa by the Webometrics ranking of universities across the globe [40].

Similarly, the awareness of what actually constitutes plagiarism in academia in Nigeria could be traced to the faith-based universities. In these institutions academics, staff and students have adequate access to plagiarism software such as turnitin, which they use to check the similarity index of their papers before sending them out for peer review process. Although, the management of many public universities is aware of this development Universities News [41] but it seems just a few of them make the software available for the faculty, staff and students of their institutions. Consequently, most students, faculty and staff in these educational institutions lack adequate knowledge of plagiarism.

In term of spirituality, the presence of many pentecostal ministries in cities, towns and villages in Nigeria seems to have drastically reduced idol worshipping that characterized African religion in the past to the barest minimum. Further to that, activities of

evil forces such as witches, familiar spirits, demons, occult powers, mummy water spirits etc. seem to have been greatly reduced through the spiritual activities of brethren in towns, villages and cities in Nigeria.

In another development, past studies show that many personalities have achieved great feats in many areas of human endeavours in developed nations [42]. In short, many great inventions in the past and in recent times are traceable to them. Nevertheless, they are yet to break the record of a Nigerian preacher who built the largest Church auditorium (50, 000 seat capacity) in the world [43,44].

Internationally, in less than one century, Nigerian Pentecostal Churches have spread to different parts of the world, flourishing in countries whose missionaries came to introduce Christianity in Nigeria in the wake of colonialism. Therefore, it is a surprise to observe the rate at which Christianity is spreading in Nigeria and other African countries goes hand-in-hand with the shriveling of Churches in Western Europe and North America that introduced the same to Africa. Really, "It is not insignificant that Africa, a continent despised, deprived, trampled upon, marginalized, and shamed in many ways, has emerged as the beacon of Christian mission and evangelization in the global spread of the faith" [45].

In the light of the above, it is expected that Nigerians with moral decency and integrity would have increased drastically but the reverse is the case. This

could be regarded as paradox with casual factors, which the present study intends to address.

Manifestations of Moral Decadence in Pentecostal Churches

The alarming rate of moral decadence in Nigeria could be regarded as the cumulative effects of the failure of many social institutions in Nigeria. These institutions include the family, school, Churches etc in contemporary Nigeria.

In the family, parents “with sound moral and ethical sanctity” Anofienem [46] are no longer available like in the traditional society. Hence, “morally decadent children with little or no regard to societal norms and values” (P. 1 of the above) are increasing as the day go by. When these children move from homes to educational institutions, they become worse due to the current state of education Auwal [47] in the country.

In Churches, where moral values are expected to be inculcated, many strange practices and teachings are subjects of orchestrated arguments Naija Church News [48] among scholars. Eyoboka, [49] in particular argues that most Pentecostal Churches have not come out to strongly condemn immorality. Instead they provide comfort zones for moral decadence in all ramifications [49]. This scholar believes that the Church has greatly contributed to the high rate of indecent dressing in Nigeria by allowing their members, mostly ladies to dress half naked. In fact it seems that indecent dressing is regarded as the normal way of worshipping God in such ministries.

Furthermore, some scholars such as [50,51] have demonstrated that some unbiblical practices have been associated with some Pentecostal ministries. These include fornication, adultery, divorce Farias [52] and remarriage. In early Christianity, fornication, adultery, divorce and remarriage were strictly prohibited in the Church. Christians in large number were getting married as virgins. The relationship was not only defined as for better and for worse, it lasted till death separated one of the two parties from the union. In recent times, the reverse is the case in many Pentecostal Churches. The problem is not because such sins are no longer condemned Uwaegbute [53] the issue is that it seems they have been accepted as parts of Christian life because many Christian adulterers and divorcees are now been ordained as deacons, deaconess, pastors etc.

Kwon [54] and Raymond [5] even went to the extent of pointing out that some Pentecostal Churches embrace deception, stealing, embezzlement, lies in an unusual manner. Actually, Raymond [55] could be criticized on the grounds that such things are not totally absent in the orthodox Churches but their occurrences in Pentecostal Churches that claim to be different from the orthodox Churches could be regarded as an

aberration and unfortunate. The manifestation of social ills in contemporary Pentecostal ministries does not only make it difficult to find trustworthy Christians [56, 57], it also indicates that they are no longer better than orthodox Churches.

Apart from the above, selfishness now supersedes the love for others [58]. In most institutions, non-Christians are more useful in assisting the needy than many Christians. The business activities of founders of many Pentecostal ministries are not different from that of bourgeois, as many workers in institutions established by them cannot adequately take care of themselves and their families due to poor remunerations and conditions of service, poor motivation at work and in personal development. Such institutions are only interested in the input of workers and spitefully ignore what the institution needs to do to advance workers course. More often than not, potential materials are being destroyed instead of being trained, assisted to grow and blossom. Therefore, the wealth of some of the Pentecostal ministries could be said to be largely rooted in capitalism.

Not surprisingly, several cases of fraud and corruption are now synonymous with many Pentecostals ministries [59-61]. It is on these notes Anipupo [62] traces the origin and escalation of corruption in the society to the Church. According to him, the value system of a given culture influences people's faith and religion. Thus, people have imbibed the wrong and corrupt messages that most Pentecostal pastors preach and they are largely associated with the escalation of corruption in the society [62].

Lastly, cases of disorderliness and rowdiness in several Pentecostal Churches are evident. The scriptural injunction that things be done decently and orderly (1 Corinthians 14:40) is seems to be irrelevant to many Christians in contemporary Nigeria. This usually manifest in the course of observing the sacred meal (Holy Communion) in a rowdy manner. Impatience, riot, abuse, cursing, fighting, eagerness, witch-hunting, wickedness, hatred are now trademarks of Christianity.

Factors Responsible for the Escalation of Moral Decadence in spite of the proliferation of Churches

Increase in the number of Churches and corresponding rise in moral decay is a very curious paradox in Nigeria. Ordinarily, it would have been expected that a rise in the number of Churches would also facilitate a commensurate rise in holy living and life that is wholly dedicated to God but the reverse is the case. This could probably be attributed to the following factors:

Previous studies have associated economic issues with high level of crime Maddah [63] in the

society. One of such issues is unemployment Kilishi, et al. [64] and it correlates moral decadence in modern society. In 2014, the rate of unemployment among the Nigerian youths was between 37.7 and 22.4 percentages for people in the age bracket of 15 to 24 and 25 to 44 respectively [64]. As the saying goes 'an idle hand is a devil workshop' several authors have linked the high level of unemployment in the countries with evil of all sorts-Fornication, mostly among young girls who lack: (i) paternal support, (ii) maternal support, (iii) employment opportunities etc. Preaching may not produce any meaningful effect in the lives of such persons; it has to be complemented with other means of survival. Where such is lacking, blind obedience to Christian faith may likely be very remote among brethren. Besides, several studies have associated the high level of local and international prostitutions to unemployment [65]. Certainly, "no woman has ever "chosen" to be a prostitute where she has had valid alternatives to prostitution" [64]. This problem may then be associated with fornication, abortion, divorce, lies, dupping, stealing etc in many Churches. Among the unemployed brothers, social ill such as stealing smuggling, armed robbery are evident in the literature [66].

In contemporary Nigeria, moral integrity seems to have been replaced with laxity. Thus, scriptural doctrine or teaching seems to have been slaughtered in place of freedom. The moral cyphers in the recent past have been replaced with conditional principles and it makes many Christians to be at peace with a one-sided message that tits to prosperity. Messages of many Pentecostal Churches in contemporary Nigeria hinge on prosperity, healing and deliverance etc. Although, prosperity is necessary to live a successful life, but when it is been preached to the detriment of holiness, it becomes an issue of concern. If much emphasis is placed on prosperity, deliverance, signs and wonders, most Christians could simply forget about holiness and its importance in Christianity. This could be used to explain why some brethren do everything possible to get money. However, the poor emphasis on holiness could be regarded as one of the strategies of today Pentecostal Churches to command large crowds. Any attempt to enforce holiness could prompt members to relocate to other Churches that provide comfort zone for unrighteous living (living the way they like).

Moreover, preponderance of pastors who are not trained nor see pastoral work as a calling is increasing at an alarming dimension. The high level of unemployment in Nigeria seems to have forced many people to priesthood. Such pastors are in ministries because they were once jobless and needed any lucrative profession to earn a living. Since it has been realized that priesthood attracts money, they do everything possible to get power in order to perform

signs and wonders. A pastor, who sees vision and predicts future events always enjoy the patronage of many Nigerians. More often than not, activities of such pastors are enmeshed in immorality and fake doctrines [67]. For instance, Kilishi *et al.*, [64] revealed a pastor who claims to be obeying prophetic/spiritual injunction to do the will of God, which is to impregnate any one chosen and revealed by the Holy Spirit, irrespective of whether the woman is married or not. When the woman delivers the baby, the child remains in the ministry with the mother for life. Activities of these pastors undermined the word of God, and members of such Churches are not expected to behave differently.

The failure of many pastors to punish or correct erring members for wrongdoing could be a contribution factor. Most Pentecostal Churches today believe so much in attendance and it seems to be preventing their pastors from rebuking immorality. It is a common phenomenon that Churches that enforce discipline in all ramifications are no longer in the good book of Nigerians. They prefer Churches that provide 'comfort zone' for immorality. Probably, this could be used to explain why the spiritual heads of many Pentecostal ministries use to condone moral decadence of the elite class. It is a duty of every man of God to reprove and to correct erring members as evident in (1 King 21: 20; 1 King 21:21). If corrupt elites were not being treated like the way King Saul treated Agag in (1 Samuel 15: 8-9) probably, moral decadence in high and low places might not be on the increase in Nigeria.

In the past, ancestors of Africans used to punish members of the society for wrongdoing and also reward them for their good deeds Nigeria News [68] which must have contributed significantly to moral decency among Africans prior colonialism. In recent times, anybody who is trying to instill discipline is stigmatized wicked while other evil practices have been accepted as the normal way of life and it is on this note that restitution seems not to be reckoned with in the present day Christianity.

Restitution is a way of correcting ones bad behaviours, which includes returning back what was stolen or repairing what one damaged in the past [68-70]. This is a sign of a changed person and a crucial step for every believer. It is a picture of a clear conscience and good testimony as illustrated in (Luke 19:8). In most Pentecostal Churches, restitution is no longer relevant, as it does not appear in their teaching outlines. No wonder, many Christians today do not know the standard of God and that is why those who are still addicted to the dictate of the Bible are called old schools while those who are trying to replace the standard with the modern way of life are called modern Christians.

Apart from the points raised above, human beings are very difficult to correct and to control. More often than not people always think they are right until it is done on them. Hence, it takes prayers and the intervention of the Holy Spirit to change persons from evil ways of life to good. Through prayers, the Holy Spirit convicts sinners and delivers them completely. Conviction goes with people realizing their evil ways and it leads them to confess their sins and also ask for forgiveness, which guarantee salvation their gradual establishment in faith. Having been established in Christ Jesus, the lust of the flesh is suppressed to the barest minimum and positive change will begin to manifest in their lives. This process is not evident in the present time like the early years of Christian experience. People claim they have surrendered their lives to Jesus without any change of lifestyle. Therefore, it is one thing to preach the correct message; it is another thing for people to follow the preaching and retain the teaching for good conducts or interaction among mankind. This could be used to exonerate most pastors from the blame of moral decadence prevailing in many pentecostal Churches across Nigeria.

Besides, in Christianity, everyone will stand before God for judgment. Although, pastors could be role models, but the standard of God is evident and it has no respect for excuses. If pastors are no longer preaching on holiness, brethren are expected to use the Bible as their standard so as to ensure a godly living as much as possible. But the reverse is the case because the standard of God is not convenient for mankind and anything that is not convenient for humanity is not embraced and followed to letters by them. Hence, living a descent life could be practically impossible for persons who are not addicted to the Holy Spirit. This makes people to be attending Church programmes, listening to massages, etc. and still be living in moral decadence which is evident in all denominations.

Lastly, proliferation of moral decadence in Pentecostal Churches today goes to confirm the prediction of Paul the apostle (2 Timothy 2: 7), which says in the last days (present time), sins shall abound and the love of many people for God will be on the negative side.

In spite of the above, some people are still worshipping God in truth and in spirit. Although such persons could be few in number, it confirms scripture which says narrow is the way that leads to eternity and very few people are found there.

However, this paper does not rule out the possibility of Nigerians witnessing immense Church growth in the midst of more moral decadence, even with the evidence of more complex signs and wonders till rapture. God gives people signs and wonders not because they are good, but because God is good [71].

This could be attributed to the fact that the issue of religion is beyond human understanding.

Proliferation of Pentecostal Churches Without moral Decency: Implications

Implications of the proliferation of Churches without moral decency could be discussed in the following ways:

Religious Implication

The Bible says if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. This is an indication that holiness as a life style determines answers to prayers. Therefore, proliferation of Churches without holiness could hinder answers to prayers. If prayers are not answered it may be very difficult to access deliverance, breakthroughs etc. In that scenario, it is possible for the wickedness of the wicked, suffering, abject poverty and other forms of suffering to continue among the people.

Apart from the above, the Bible says without holiness no one can see the Lord. The negative effect of the escalation of pentecostal Churches without moral decency could prevent many Christians from entering the kingdom of God, which is an indication of eternal destruction.

Economic Implication

The proliferation of Churches and moral decadence could also have economic effects. Although, Church growth has been identified as correlate of national development in western societies Blum and Dudley [72] cited in Gehman [73], but it has been argued otherwise in Nigeria. Mfumbusa [3] in particular wondered if Church growth and the rise in corruption are coterminous. The more Churches are spreading the higher Nigeria is being rated as one of the most corrupt nations [13].

This has a negative impact on the economic development of the country in the sense that business transaction that contributes significantly to economic development depends on trust and moral integrity [74]. Where trust and integrity is lacking, the rate of investment could be very low. The high rate of criminal activities has become of a strong disincentive to business investment Eelke [75] as it could prevent foreign investors from investing in Nigeria and it has a great setback on industrialization and employment.

This corroborates Weber [76] who believes that corruption impedes national development. In a situation where there are 40 criminals for every 100 Nigerians UN (1994) cited by Ighomereho and Akpor-Robaro [77], it could be very difficult to experience national development. Development is never achieved in a chaotic environment, which characterizes the Nigerian state Ejiofor [78]. It is peace and tranquility that ensure investment that leads to national

development.

Sociological Implication

Religion is a social phenomenon that ought to affect people's life positively [79]. In the light of the recent development in contemporary Nigeria, however, it has also affected many people negatively. Apart from the problems emanating from bizarre religious rivalry / conflict [8-82], the proliferation of Churches without moral decency seems to have contributed to the escalation of diverse social ills in the country. These include:

- (i) Family problems relating to fornication, abortion, adultery, divorce [83, 84], separation, 'baby mama' Aluko [85], teenage mothers, prostitution etc.
- (ii) Organizational issues bordering on sexual harassment, enslavement of workers, denial of entitlements, corruption of different kinds, injustice, child abuse Parkinson [86] etc.
- (iii) Leadership scrimmage or tussle [87,88], kidnapping Uzochukwu [89], assassination Adegoke [90] greed, fighting, witch hunting Eket [91] hatred, discrimination etc.
- (iv) The societal perception of good as evil and evil as good, visa-vis.

When Christians behaviours fall short of morality and expectation, as often manifested in business transaction, marriage etc. people's hearts are wounded. Such people usually say 'if a Christian sister or brother could do this to me, then it does not worth being a Christian'. In order words, the attitudes of such brethren have prevented other persons from obtaining salvation.

When the above social problems are unusually high in a given society, irrespective of the number of Churches, it is an indication that many people in that society lack the fear of the Lord, which should have prompted them to embrace moral integrity.

Solutions to the Proliferation of Churches Without Moral integrity.

In order to moral integrity Pentecostal Churches should strike a balance between the message of prosperity and holiness. The message people hear more often than not can determine a change of attitude in their lives. For instance, Our Daily Bread [92] revealed how a message on the eight commandment, which says "Thou shall not steal" (Ex. 20:15) was preached by the evangelist J. John in 2001 and its dramatic results in the lives of brethren. According to this piece, people's hearts were changed and large

amount of stolen property were returned. These include hotel towel, hospital crutches, library books, cash etc. If such messages are preached regularly, it may likely prevent the escalation of moral decadence.

In the same manner, pastors should stop shielding corrupt persons, mostly government functionaries in their ministries. They should realize that they are watchmen over their congregations and it is necessary to lead their sheep aright. This may prompt members to be living a godly life. It is the duty of any man of God to tell his congregation the naked truth like the scenario between Elijah and Ahab in (1 king 21: 20-24). That encounter made King Ahab to be sober and it prompted God to amend His pronouncements on him (1 King 21: 27-29). If possible the spiritual heads of Pentecostal ministries can hold a meeting with government functionaries and politicians in Nigeria and ask them to pray that if I steal government money or deal dubiously with people, God should strike me death. Also, such a prayer could be prayed among the congregation. Probably, people will be afraid to steal and that could bring about sanity in high and in low places.

Further to the above, The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and especially the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) should certify pastors before they can practice. This is the wake of the reality that so many pastors are not called by God and are not fit to go by the name. If those who are called directly by God are left in the profession, the ethic of priesthood could be preserved to some extent. Thus, moral decadence among pastors could be reduced to the barest minimum.

Moreover, Christians of all folds, Pentecostal or orthodox should sanction erring members in love. The idea of condoning indiscipline in the favour of attendance should be discouraged. When a pastor a brother is noticing ungodly behaviours from any member, he should take the right step by calling him to order. Such persons could be advised, counseled and constantly prayed for. Also it could be a good idea to rally round any one in challenge. A Christian who is passing through hard times could be assisted by sharing the word of God with him or her in line with (Mark 10: 46-52). When Bartimaeus, who sat by the roadside asking for alms heard that Jesus was passing, he cried out: "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me". While the people shouted him down to keep quite Jesus stood still, and gave him attention that led to the end of his predicament. Also, while people condemned Zacchaeus as a sinner, Jesus identified himself with him (Luke 19:5-6) and that led to his salvation. Also, any one in need should be assisted materially timely in line with 2 King 4:1-4). It is also very essential to be fair to everyone in all transactions as much as possible. The

'double standard' of many men of God should be strictly looked into for amelioration

Lastly, there should be a renewed emphasis on restitution in Pentecostal ministries in line with Luke 19:8 "And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold". If Christians are fully aware of the importance of restitution, it can cause them to avoid stealing. It can also ensure that they restore stolen property to their owners and tender apology to them.

The above will not be achieved at once, but a starting point should be the awareness of Pentecostal Churches to recognize the need for them.

Suggestion for Further Studies

Empirical studies on this subject are needed in order to accurately discover the position of Church growth and the escalation of moral decadence in Nigeria.

Concluding Remarks and Suggestions

In conclusion, it is generally assume that the proliferation of Churches, mostly Pentecostal ministries, ought to have produced attitudinal change in the life of many Christians. Also, based on the observed escalation of Churches in Nigeria, it is expected that attitudinal change of Christians would have been able to influence ungodly people who perpetrate evil to Christian faith and equally result in the socio-economic and political development of Nigeria but the reverse is the case.

The situation of Christian religion in contemporary Nigeria therefore goes to show that attendance in church does not ensure moral integrity. People can be going to Churches and still find it difficult to embrace holiness as a life style. This point to the fact that not every godly environment in contemporary Nigeria reflects the nature of God. Thus, being rated as the 9th most religious nation in the world Temitope [93] may not have a meaningful impact in moral integrity of many Nigerian Christians until positive changes in their behaviours or attitudes begin to manifest.

Therefore, the leadership of Pentecostal Churches should not use signs and wonders occurring in their ministries to justify their right track with God. This is because the way of God cannot be explained by man. He gives rains, light, bread and butter to everybody irrespective of religious background till the 'day of judgment'. Thus, signs and wonders may continue in the midst of the present moral decadence till rapture comes. Probably, God might be considering the faithful ones in the faith or extending His mercy, which endures forever to Nigerians).

REFERENCES

1. Gbote, E. Z. M and Kgatla, S. T. (2014). 'Prosperity gospel: A missiological assessment', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 70(1)
2. Ogiugo, K. E. (2015). *Gang Rape: Cultists Assault DELSU Undergraduate. Leadership*.
3. Mfumbusa, B. (2010). *The Church is Growing. Corruption is Growing*.
4. Adams, A. (2015). *Anne Adams: The Rise of Prostitution in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria*.
5. Nigerianeye, (2013). *Price of Adultery: Lagos Housewife Dies During Sex With Lover in Hotel*.
6. United Nations Office on Drug and Crime, (2015). *Human trafficking and smuggling of migrants* (Nigeria).
7. Kalu, O. U. (ed.), (1978). *Christianity in West Africa: The Nigerian Story*. Ibadan: Daystar Press
8. Obiora, F. K (Dec. 2001a). *The Divine Deceit Business in Religion* in Newswatch Magazine. Dec. Issue.
9. Ekenna, G. (2001). *Has the Church in Nigeria Become a Lucrative Business Venture* in Newswatch Magazine, Dec. Issue.
10. Alghalus, O. (2001). *Proliferation of Churches in Nigeria* in Newswatch Magazine, Dec Issue.
11. Achunike, H.C. (2004). *The Influence of Pentecostalism on Catholic Priests and Seminarians in Nigeria*, Onitsha: Africana First Publishers Ltd.
12. Diara, B. C. D and Onah, N. G. (2014). *The Phenomenal Growth of Pentecostalism in the Contemporary Nigerian Society: A Challenge to Mainline Churches*. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(6): 395-402
13. Ejike, E. (2014). *Nigeria Ranks 136th Most Corrupt Country in Latest Global Corruption Index. Leadership*.
14. Ifoh, P. (2014). *The Essence of Thugs on The Streets of Lagos? TNV. The Nigerian Voice*.
15. Mohammed, S. (2015). *Internet fraudster bags two years jail term*. Newswatch Times.
16. Dike, V. E. (2008). *Corruption in Nigeria: A New Paradigm for Effective Control*. Africa economic Analysis.
17. Phillip, D. D and Akangbe, O. M. (2013). *Corruption as a Bane for Under-Development in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges*. *International Affairs and Global Strategy*, 15: 76-84
18. Olatunji, H and Muhammed, U. B. Y. (2013). *Corruption: A Clog in the Wheel of Industrialization in Nigeria and the Role of Education*. *International Journal of Modern Social Sciences*, 2(1): 1-9

19. Adesanya, I. O. (2011). Environmental Effects of Church Proliferation: Redeemed Christian Church of God as a Case Study. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(15): 177-182
20. Gabriel, N. (2015). Influences of Pentecostalism on the Mainline Churches in Nigeria. *Archives of 'Business' Research*, 3(3): 67-76
21. Asamoah-Gyadu, K. (2006). *African Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity: An Overview*. Lausanne World Pulse Archives
22. Obiora, F. K. (2001b). *The Divine Deceit Business in Religion* in Newswatch Magazine. Dec. Issue.
23. Wikipedia, (2016a). *Mary Slessor*.
24. Owuoye, S. A and Aluko, O. P. (2014). The Deeper Life Campus Fellowship/Church And The Culture of Pictures as Representation of Ideas and Aesthetics in an Environment of Moral and Socio-Political Lethargy. *European Scientific Journal*, 10(32): 251-265
25. Folarin, G. O. (2013). *The Prosperity Gospel in Nigeria: A Re-Examination of the Concept, its Impact and Evaluation*. Cyber Journal for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research.
26. Ezeh, P. (2014). Nigeria: the rise and (what?) of Prosperity Preachers. *New Africans*.
27. Ranksng, (2013). *Top Ten Private Universities in Nigeria*.
28. Trading Economics, (2016). *Nigeria Unemployment Rate*.
29. Onyemenam, C. T. (2013). *Unemployment Problem in Nigeria-Factors that Affect it*.
30. The Economic Times, (2007). *Unemployability and not unemployment, bigger crisis: Report*.
31. Ogidi, G. (2013). *Tackling Youth Unemployment in Nigeria: The Way Forward*. Modern Ghana.
32. Nwagwu, E. J. (2014). Unemployment and Poverty in Nigeria: A Link to National Insecurity. *Global Journal of Politics and Law Research*, (2)1:19-35
33. Onodugo, I. C. (2015). Graduate Unemployment And Economic Growth: Nigerian Experience Under Democratic Government. *International Journal of Engineering Research and General Science*, 3(1): 1389-1393
34. Treatment Solutions (2009). *Connections between Poverty, Substance Abuse, and Child Abuse*.
35. Umaru, A., Donga, M., Gambo, E. J and Yakubu, K. M. (2013). Relationship Between Crime Level, Unemployment, Poverty, Corruption And Inflation In Nigeria (An Empirical Ananlysis). *Global Advanced Research Journal of Management and Business Studies*, 2(8): 411-422
36. Encomium, (2013). *Most Expensive Private Universities in Nigeria Unveiled*.
37. Nigerianinfopedia (2016). *Best Private University in Nigeria*.
38. University News Flash, (2016). *Covenant University will become African Best University in 7 years time*. Available on <http://nigerianuniversitiescholarships.com/covenant-university-will-become-african-best-university-in-7-years-see-7-backup-facts-share>.
39. Covenant University, (2016). *Appointment and Promotion Criteria Rewarding Academic Performance, 2015-2017*.
40. Flatimes, (2016). *2016 Webometrics Ranking of Universities: UNN Tops in Nigeria*.
41. Universities News, (2013). *Nigeria: 123 Varsities Launch Anti-Plagiarism Software*. University News.
42. Gao, G. (2015). *How Americans Stand Out from the rest of the World*. Pew Research Centre.
43. Guinness Book of Record, (2011). *World's Largest Church & Church Building*.
44. John-Bunya, K (2016). *The Spiritual Foundation of the 100, 000 Seat Faith Theatre was Declared Established at the Close of Shiloh 2015*.
45. Asamoah-Gyadu, K. (2008). *African-led Christianity in Europe: Migration and DiasporaEvangelism*. Lausanne World Pulse Archives.
46. Anofienem, C. (2007). *Nigeria: Blame Parents for Youths' Moral Decadence*. This day.
47. Auwal, A. M. (2015). *Curbing students' immorality*. The Nation.
48. Naija Church News, (2016). *How most Nigerian churches became unhealthy-Akin-John*.
49. Eyoboka, S. (2004). *Nigeria: Moral Decadence: Count us out, says Church leaders*. Vanguard.
50. Dominica News Online, (2013). *A Warning to Pastors: Don't Baptize Fornicators*.
51. Leclair, J. (2013). *Why Megachurch Pastors Keep Falling into Sexual Immorality*. Charisma Magazine.
52. Farias, B. M. (2014). *Spiritual Adultery and Fornication in 21st Century Church*. CharismaNews. Available on <http://www.charismanews.com/opinion/the-flaming-herald/45358-spiritual-adultery-and-fornication-in-the-21st-century-church>. Retrieved on March 19, 2016
53. Uwaegbute, K.I. (2013). *The dikaiosune of Matthew 5:20 and its implication to Christian Morality in Nigeria*. A Seminar paper presented to the department of Religion and Cultural Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

54. Kwon, L. (2007). *Megachurch Co-Pastors Announce Divorce*. CP Church and Ministry.
55. Raymond, I. (2016). *Thought on the Abuse and Corruption in Nigerian Churches, and Why Religion cannot Reform the World*. Sahara Reporters.
56. Hetrick, L. (2012). *Why I Left Pentecostalism*. Average Us.
57. Grandy, J. L. (2012). *False Prophets, Foreign Charlatans and Global Deception*. Charisma Magazine.
58. Global News, (2016). *Nigerian Fake Pastors who love Money More than God*.
59. Bello, E. (2016). Nigeria: Corruption and the Church. This day.
60. Street Journal, (2014). *Corruption Endemic in Nigeria: Ushers steal from offerings in Church*.
61. Information Nigeria, (2014). *Assemblies of God's Church Suspend General Superintendent over Alleged Fraud*.
62. Anipupo, O. (2015). Nigeria: Pastor Blames Churches for Corruption in Nigeria. Daily Independence.
63. Maddah, M. (2013). An Empirical Analysis of the Relationship between Unemployment and Theft Crimes. *International Journal of Economics and Financial Issues*, 3(1): 50-53
64. Kilishi, A. A., Mobolaji, H. I., Usman, A., Yakubu, A. T and Yaru, M. A, (2014). The Effect of Unemployment on Crime in Nigeria: A Panel Data Analysis. *British Journal of Economics, Management & Trade* 4(6): 880-895
65. Alobo, E. E and Ndifor, R (2014). Addressing Prostitution Concerns in Nigeria: Issue, Problems and Prospects. *European Scientific Journal*, 10(14): 36-47
66. Abanyam, N. L., Bauchi, D and Tormusa, D. O, (2013). The Effects of Armed Robbery in Nigeria. *OSR Journal of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 11(3): 57-59
67. Nigeria News, (2014a). *Enugu Pastor: God told me to impregnate my church members*.
68. Nigeria News, (2014b). *Deeper Life Bible Church Pastor Ifeanyichukwu Eric Abakporo Gets Six Years In Jail For Fraud*.
69. The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Sunday School, (2011). *Restitution*, (One-Two).
70. Nigeria News, (2014c). *Aba Pastors Face Charges For Stealing And Selling Stolen Vehicles*.
71. Tozer, A. W. (2016). A man of God.
72. Blum U, Dudley L. Religion and economic growth: was Weber right?. *Journal of Evolutionary Economics*. 2001 Feb 1;11(2):207-30.
73. Gehman, R. J. (1989), *African traditional religion in biblical perspective*, Kijabe Printing Press, Kijabe
74. 123HelpMe.com, (2016). "Rapid Economic Growth In East Asian Countries.
75. Eelke de Jong, (2008). *Religious Values and Economic Growth: A review and assessment of recent studies*. Nijmegen Center for Economics (NiCE). Institute for Management Research Radboud University Nijmegen/ Netherland
76. Weber, M. (1930). *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London, England: Allen and Unwin.
77. Ighomereho, A. O. S and Akpor-Robaro, M. M. (2013). Security Challenges in Nigeria and the Implications for Business Activities and Sustainable Development. *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*, 4(2): 79- 99
78. Ejiofor, P. O. N. (1987). *Management in Nigeria: Theories and Issues*. Onisha: Africana Fep. Publishers
79. Global Peace Index (GPI, 2012). *Global Peace Ranking*, Institute for Economics and Peace,
80. Sampson, I. T. (2012). Religious violence in Nigeria: Causal diagnoses and strategic recommendations to the state and religious communities. African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Dispute.
81. Campbell, J and Harwood, A. (2013). Why a Terrifying Religious Conflict Is Raging in Nigeria. The Atlantic.
82. Paden, J. (2015). Religion and Conflict in Nigeria. United States Institute of Peace: Special Report.
83. Stanton, G. T. (2011). Divorce Rate in the Church – As High as the World? Focus on The Family.
84. Wikipedia, (2016b). Marx's Theory of Alienation.
85. Aluko, M. (2016). Lecture note on Social Thought. Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile ife.
86. Parkinson, P. (2013). Child sexual abuse and the churches: A story of moral failure? Religion and Ethics.
87. Dairo, F. O. (2014). Church Leadership in Nigeria in the Light of Leadership Qualifications in Timothy 3:1-7. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(6): 84-88
88. Wonsub, E. (2011). Religion and Economic Development - A study on Religious variables influencing GDP growth over countries. Retrieved on April 17, 2016

89. Uzochukwu, M. (2016). Kidnapping: Overview, Causes, Effects, and Solutions. Owlcation.
90. Adegoke, B. (2010). The Act of Political Assassination in Nigeria, Munich, GRIN Verlag.
91. Eket, E. (2007). Children are targets of Nigerian witch hunt. The Observer.
92. Our Daily Bread, (2008). Annual Gift Edition. Michigan: Grand Rapids.
93. Temitope, (2015). Nigeria Ranks 9th In List Of Most Religious Countries In The World. Nigerian Monitor.
94. Faleye, O. A. (2013). Religious Corruption: A Dilemma of the Nigerian State. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 15(1): 170-185
95. Times Higher Education, (2016). World University Rankings 2016-2017 methodology.