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Effects of Materialism on Pentecostal Churches, with Specific Reference to Redeemed Christian Church of GOD and Living Faith Church (A.K.A Winners Chapel)Dr. Selome Kuponu*¹, & Joseph Moyinoluwa Talabi¹¹Department of Religions and Peace Studies, Lagos State University, Ojo Lagos, Nigeria**Article History**

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Abstract: The greatest enemy of the church, which incidentally, is also the greatest enemy of the society, is our mindless quest for material things. The inordinate primitive accumulation of wealth by the rulers against the ruled since amalgamation of Lagos Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria without the consent of the people of Nigeria, but for selfish material exigencies of the Britain is fraud and foundation of materialism laid by the British Imperialists. This has been sustained by the Post Independent rulers from independence to date for economic, financial, political and legal deprivations of the citizens, who have overtime been consistently kept in abject poverty, penury and degradation. These rulers reign as financial and material emperors accumulating about ninety percent of the commonwealth of the nation. The cancer of materialism has crept into the church and corroded the sacred values of the church on salvation, discipleship, modesty and evangelism, which has made the message of salvation and righteousness to be swapped for prosperity messages, brainwashed messages for exploitation of members, marketing of spirituality as a traded commodity, corporate merchandizing, monetization of faith and grace and ostentatious religiosity. The Paper discusses the nexus between Christianity and materialism, the Jesus teaching on materialism and Christian values; the effects of materialism on Redeemed Christian Church of God and Living Faith Church (aka Winners Chapel). The researchers deployed historical and phenomenological methodology for the study. The Paper recommends that the spiritual materialist should return to the path of sanctity of the scripture and Christian values and align the good sides of materialism to build micro and macro entrepreneurs, who will emerge as spiritual, financial and economic giants that will move the kingdom business to a higher level.

Keywords: Materialism, Pentecostal Churches, Redeemed Christian Church of God, Living Faith Church, Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION**What is materialism?**

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines "materialism" as the belief that money, possessions and physical comforts are more important than spiritual values (Hornsby, 2015). This position was corroborated by Williams Vine, Merrill Unger and Williams White in Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament when they define 'materialism' as the state of being self satisfied, proud, morally and spiritually compromised (or "lukewarm"), spiritually blind, dominated by their fleshly nature (or 'naked') (Vine *et al.*, 1996). This happened when the first man created- Adam and his wife Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden (Genesis Chapter 3).

In the secular usage of the concept of materialism, it is the excessive pursuit of material things at all cost, without regard to the sacred societal values. The dominant philosophy is to acquire money at all means, by trampling people down and if possible killing or eliminating whoever stands on their way. One is recognized as existing only to the extent of his or her material acquisition which becomes the sole

determinant of his or her social position and influence in the society. Since the real instrumental power of acquisition and wealth is money, it has been deified and excessively revered. Indeed, money as some people say has become the Nigerian Supreme Deity.

The impact of this mad rush for material possession has left the nation in total darkness in terms of development. The power supply is worse than epileptic, the roads are not motor able, her teeming graduates are not taken care of, hospitals are not well equipped; her economy has been crippled.

Historiography of Materialism in Nigeria

The inordinate primitive accumulation of wealth by the rulers against the ruled since amalgamation of Lagos Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria, between 1914 and September 30, 1960. Without the consent of the people of Nigeria, for selfish material exigencies of the Britain, through extractive political and economic institutions, is fraud and foundation of materialism laid by the British Imperialists (Uzochukwu, 2021). Extractive political institutions concentrate power in the hands of a narrow elite and place few constraints on the exercise of this

power. Economic institutions are then often structured by the elite to extract resources from the rest of this society. This impoverishes millions for the benefit of narrow elite. Extractive economic institutions thus naturally accompany extractive political institutions, as they must inherently depend on extractive political institutions. These extractive economic institutions enrich the same elites, and their economic wealth and power help consolidate their political dominance. On the other hand, inclusive economic institutions are forged on foundations laid by inclusive political institutions, which make power broadly distributed in society and constrain its arbitrary exercise. Such political institutions also make it harder for others to usurp power and undermine the foundations of inclusive institutions. Those controlling political power cannot easily use it to set up extractive economic institutions for their own benefit. Inclusive economic institutions, in turn, create a more equitable distribution of resources, facilitating the persistence of inclusive political institutions (Robinson & Acemoglu, 2012). Between 1960 and 1966, Nigeria practices true federalism. This system of inclusive political and economic institutions promotes fiscal federalism and resource control. This engenders impactful competition, creativities, innovation, accountability, wealth creation and prosperity among the federating states. As was practiced. Hence, the quest for materialism was at the lowest ebb, as there was more equitable distribution of resources among the citizens and the standard of living was very high and poverty level was very low. From 1966 to date, Nigeria practices unitary system of government, where extractive political and extractive economic institutions have been entrenched, during successive military and civilian regimes. This has resulted in economic, financial, political and legal deprivations of the citizens, who have overtime been consistently kept in abject poverty, penury and degradation. These rulers reign as financial and material emperors accumulating about ninety percent of the commonwealth of the nation. It is this abject poverty, hunger and hopelessness of majority of the citizens that have resulted in high quest for materialism (mad desperation to get money at all cost, throwing all societal and ethical values to the wind) for survival (Nigerian Pilot, 2017).

Nexus between Christianity and Materialism

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines "Christianity" as the religion that is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ and the belief that he was the son of God (Hornsby, 2015). That is, it is a religion derived from Jesus Christ, based on the Bible, as the sacred scripture. In like manner, Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary defines a "Christian" as one who becomes an adherent of Christ, whose behavior, activity and speech were like Christ (Brand *et al.*, 2003). (Acts 11:26). In other words, Christians are reflection of the likeness, nature and teachings of Christ. That is, a Christian is a person who has accepted

God's gift of salvation and put his faith in Jesus Christ. This includes accepting Jesus' death on the cross as payment for our sins and His resurrection as proof of His power over death and living his life, as Jesus did. The gentile world, who knew Jesus Christ during His earthly ministries, in and around Galilee did see and recognize his disciples direct and comparable semblance between Him and his disciples, hence their usage of the term to refer to these disciples⁸. The primary goal of Christians should be centered on the glory, mission, purpose and assignment of Jesus on earth, which is **to teach, build and impact lives to the glory of God.** (Mark 16:15-16). In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, he said that, Christians, are the light of the world, the salt of the earth and the beacon of holiness, sanctification and righteousness. (Mathew 5: 13-16). Hence Christian leadership should influence people of a Christian institution (Church) to formulate and achieve biblically compatible goals that meet real need⁹. Thus, Anozie opines that, spiritual (church) leaders' responsibility is to **enable individuals and group understand both biblical and secular goals, through scriptural admonition, which empowers them to adopt such goals and accomplish them**¹⁰.

The purpose of the five-fold ministry that Jesus Christ handed over to the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors is to **equip the saints for the work of the ministry, so that, they should only come to the church to refuel and go out to reach out to the lost through evangelism and mission.**

Teachings of Jesus on Materialism

Jesus instructs his adherents (Christians) to seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all other things (materials) shall be added unto them (Mathew 6:33); they are not to store up treasures (materials like money, riches...) on earth, but in heaven, where moth and rust cannot destroy, as their heart will always be, where their treasure is (Mathew 6: 19-21); No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate one and love the other, .and (vice-versa). You cannot serve God and mammon (Mathew 6:24). Mammon (materialism) works through mammonial spirit or gods of mammon. (II King 5:20-27). Mammonial spirit refers to **the godless pursuit of accumulating wealth, money or property (materialism) (I Timothy 6:9-10)** . This manifested in the life of Gehazi, (a prophet in training), **who traded off his calling for material gift and was accursed for his raw quest for gratification and wealth** (II Kings 5: 20-27). Gehazi's spirit is rampant in the church, from the leadership to the followers. Abraham rejected the gift of Sodom (Genesis 14:21-28), but we embrace it today in the church and the gospel has been commercialized and perverted (Mathew 10:8). They claim to be following, representing and imitating Christ before the "gentiles" of the world, as the case was to the first recipients of the name. Too often, 'Christians' today fail to show the **beautiful character, purity and ethical teachings of Christ** to a

world desperately in need of the right model to emulate¹¹. The gospel of Christ has been swapped with false gospel (“rich theology”) and religious syncretism. The “rich theology, which preaches that “God wants you to be rich quickly” does not line up with the tenets of the Holy Scriptures and in fact is a gospel of Satan and message of hell fire.

Christ showed his anger in dealings with religious leaders, who were fleecing the people in the name of God. On two occasions, he casts out of the temple, two classes of people (church deviants and rogues), who were milking the people under the guise of spirituality. Those, that bought and sold animals and those that exchanged Greek and Roman coinage with their idols or images. All Christ’s teachings on money, finance and wealth are antithetical to materialism.

Nigerian Pentecostal Churches

The Christian Church grew out of apostolic traditions based on biblical orientation and has over the years sustained her doctrines, traditions and practices. However, at a stage, reasons were given by some members and leaders of prayer groups and charismatic members to secede and start different movements.

The mainline churches were said to be too cold spiritually, worldly, stereotyped, too liturgical and regimented. The Pentecostals wanted the type of Christianity that would lay emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts. They wanted to experience miracles, healing deliverance, signs, wonders and power encounter¹². It became obvious that they needed to start their own movements to properly express their Christian faith.

Elijah and some charismatic leaders of Israel manifested the move of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament. Equally in the New Testament, the move of the Spirit of God was manifested in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. This was extended to the apostolic era. Pentecostal phenomenon was obvious in the writings of the early Church Fathers¹³. The manifestation of the Holy Spirit was visible in the expansion of the Christian faith, in healing, prophecy, speaking in tongues and power for evangelism.

In Nigeria, we allude to the fact that Pentecostalism predated the widely publicized revival of 1930 by Apostle Joseph Ayodele Babalola of Christ Apostolic Church¹⁴. Garrick Sokari Braide (1882-1918) was the story of an unsung hero¹⁵. Olofinjana wrote that Braide is one of the pioneers of revival not just Nigeria, but in Africa. According to him:

Braide was born in Obonoma, a small Kalabari village in the Niger Delta. The village was noted as one of the leading places of traditional worship and pilgrimage in Nigeria. His parents were traditional worshippers and very poor; therefore Braide did not have the opportunity

of Western education. He later became a Christian and was baptized on January 23rd 1910 at St Andrews Anglican Church in Bakana. He was noted for his enthusiasm and religious devotion. He felt called by the Lord into ministry and was accepted as a lay preacher in the Anglican Church of the Niger Delta pastorate. Braide adopted a more practical approach and contextualized the Gospel among the Delta people. He taught the people to renounce their gods, destroy their fetishes and to simply believe in the Lord Jesus he organized a crusade against charms, idol worshipping and the use of fetish objects¹⁶.

It is widely believed that Braide’s methods of ministry redefined Christianity as a practical religion for the people of the Niger-Delta, and the result was a large number of conversions to the Anglican Church. He demonstrated the gift of healing through prayer; he was believed to be a gods. Through Braide’s ministry and miracles that attended it, many people no longer visit medicine men and witch doctors.

Pentecostalism began to grow across Nigeria like a wild fire. Many individuals came up with visions of divine call to preach the Gospel and deliver the people from oppressions. Different forms of Pentecostalism grew from this period till date. This ranges from Indigenous Pentecostal Churches include, but not limited to Christ Army by Brother Coker (1918)¹⁷, Cherubim and Seraphim Society (1925) by Prophet Orimolade Tunolase¹⁸, and Christ Apostolic Church (1941) by Prophet Ayo Babalola¹⁹. Classical Pentecostal Churches include but not limited to Assemblies of God (1939), Celestial Church of Christ (1947), by Pastor Samuel Bilewu Oshoffa, Redeemed Christian Church of God (1952), by Pa Josiah Akundayomi, Foursquare Gospel Church (1954), and of recent, the Neo Pentecostal Churches. These include Church of God Mission International (1972) by Archbishop Idahosa and now being led by his wife, Bishop Margaret Idahosa, Deeper Life Bible Church (1975, by Pastor Williams Kumuyi, Living Faith Outreach Worldwide (aka Winners Chapel) by Bishop David Oyedepo, New Testament Church by Pastor M.R. Popoola, Rhema Church by Pastor George Adegboye, Pastor Tunde. Bakare, Prophet T.B. Joshua of Synagogues, Pastor Chris Oyhakhrome of Christ Embassy and Pastor Daniel Olukoya of Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministry²⁰.

Nigerian Pentecostal Churches and Materialism

The church in the early years was known for its communal life, believers did things in common. They would sell their belongings and bring their proceeds to the service of the church. These were usually shared equally among the members of the church. As a result of their togetherness, oneness and the sense of belonging and the cohesive force binding

the members of the early church together, the proclamation of the gospel was followed by signs and wonders resulting in many conversions²¹(Acts 2:40-47) and the material goods acquired are to be deployed for the good of all.

As Jesus nurtured His disciples which made them to be known in Antioch (Acts 11:26), so also church leaders must disciple others to become like Jesus in faith, practice and life. To preach the gospel is to preach Christ with boldness, as the first Disciples of Christ did. The church is to preach the gospel that will open their eyes to repentance, believe the doctrine of Christ, to submit to His grace and government to come under an eternal engagement to abide by. The church leadership is not to merchandize the gospel, so as to amass wealth, nor is our anointing to oppress our audience; rather, we are called as candidates of the Kingdom of God and to make many same as we are.

POSITIVE EFFECTS OF MATERIALISM ON PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES

These include but not limited to the following:

- **Mission development and expansion:** Pentecostal Churches have made landmark breakthrough and expansion in the mission engagement. They had broken hitherto fallow grounds and have deepened the spread of the gospel to the grassroots.
- **Educational development:** Pentecostal Churches have been actively involved in establishing schools from the Nursery Schools to the Universities, where they have been able to raise the moral margins of the students. However, such schools' fees have been priced beyond the financial capacity of greater number of members.
- **Provision of humanitarian services:** Pentecostal churches have been offering scholarship and financial supports to the children of indigent members and providing food and material supplies to the needy among them.
- **Creation of jobs:** Through the establishment of schools, hospitals, petrol stations, event centers to mention but a few, several jobs are provided for hitherto unemployed people²².
- Organizing of Seminars and training on entrepreneurship to the members for vocational skills and capacity to raise entrepreneurs
- Complementing the efforts of the government in setting up of Micro-finance Banks, Savings and Loans Banks, establishing some industries or buying up shares of such companies thereby contributing to raising required fund for the industries²³.

NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF MATERIALISM ON PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES

Lack of love for Perishing Souls

Several Ministers in the Pentecostal Churches, through their dispositions have not shown any love and regard for perishing souls. They are just after people's purse and not their souls. Apostle Paul was after souls and the fulfilment of his calling. He was not after money and material acquisition. (Philippians 3:7-8). He was zealous about saving the souls of men from eternal damnation in the pit of hell. He saw material things a mere animal dung.

Watering down the gospel

Some of the Pentecostal preachers have integrated human and vain philosophy into the word of God and have deviated from preaching the revealed will of God and mammon spirit has taken over their pulpits. They preach and teach ephemeral things and instead of wholesome truth of the bible.

Commercializing the Ministry

Several Pentecostal Ministries charge for ministrations and use gimmicks to get as much money as possible from the congregants in every meeting. What matters to them is "**pay your tithe**"; "**sow your seed faith**"; "**give your offering**"; "**pay all your vows**"; "**seed of faith**"; "**covenant seed**"; "**altar seed**"; "**outreach offering**"; "**food sacrifice**"; "**maintenance offering**"; and "**kingdom promoters**", to mention but a few. In most cases, seven and eight different collection are made on a Sunday morning service. Several of Pentecostal preachers are not concerned with the source of fund. **Sow seed and the Lord will bless you** is how they rob church members today. They teach faith and prayer without salvation and sanctity. Anointing services without redemption and cleansing from sin. Midnight warfare with hatred and un forgiveness in the heart. Choir practices with lip shine on the lips. Revivals without holiness.

Fabricating spiritual gifts to impress the congregants (Leviticus 10:1-2)

Several Pentecostal Preachers do entertain their congregants with motivational talks, conjuring up false prophecy, interpreting the word of God out of context, and bribing people to give false testimonies on blessings.

Brainwashed messages through fables and favor

Most often, several Pentecostal Preachers spend hours telling stories about how God favored one person or another. After telling such stories, they call on people to sow tangible seeds so that God will also favor them. Fables are stories and not gospel and do not save souls from eternal damnation in the pit of hell. Testimonies and stories are meant to support the gospel of Jesus Christ, just the same way, ingredients support the blending together of the food. But, if we concentrate on consuming only fables, definitely, the

congregants will suffer from spiritual malnutrition and kwashiorkor. What penetrates a hardened heart is the heat from the hot iron of the word of God. *“The word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”*.(Hebrew 4:12). This is what the word of God can do. Fables cannot afford to pierce and divide the souls and the spirit and the joint and marrows; It is only the word of God that can accomplish these.

Churning out avalanche of prophecies and promises at every prayer meeting

It has become a tradition for several Pentecostal ministries to churn out prophecies and promises a every prayer meeting. They speak of good things and good times in order to gladden the heart of members. Prophecies like: **“You will be the head and not the tail;”**; **“You will be above and not below;”**; **“You will live and not die;”**; **“You will excel among your equals;”**; and so on. All these are given superficially, without giving the scriptural foundations for such prophecies to come to pass. Prophecies and promises are not to be compared with the word of God. Prophecies and promises make people to be comfortable, while true preaching of the word make members uncomfortable. **“But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men”**.(I Corinthians 14:3). Preaching the revealed will of God should be eternal to any true man of God. While sin itself is not good news, God’s dealing with it, is the gospel indeed and not stories and fables, nor prophecies and promises.

Poor Spiritual Empowerment

The word of God gives life to our Spirit man. This is the reason why the Bible has declared in Psalms 119:130 saying, **“the entrance of your word gives light”**. The word of God quickens our spirit man. When the spirit man is quickened by the word of ‘God, which is our spiritual good, the mind will be able to receive divine inspiration and revelation from the Lord. **“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit and they are life, but there are some of you who do not believe.”** John 6:63-65. It is unfortunate in several Pentecostal churches, that the primacy of teaching of the word has not been emphasized. The teaching and exposition of the word of God has been pushed to the basement, while primordial issues are given more prominence. Psalm 119:130 says, **the entrance of thy word gives light**”. However, they are not savvy on the word of God, since they are not taught; hence they live in darkness. No wonder, majority of their members are “religious people” and not “Christians”. Since they live in ignorance of the word of God, they live in error and confusion. They live in gross darkness and ignorance. For this reason, they see life as a mystery even when

life is not a mystery; but life becomes a mystery to those whose minds whose minds are closed²⁴.

Corporate Merchandizing

Majority of the Pentecostal Churches use aggressive advertising, publicity and market promotions to win public patronage. The billboard and media advertorials are innovatively crafted in market sensitive slogans and catch words, such as grab your miracle now!; harvest of success!; Miracle extravaganza! And so on. There is also a window display of spiritual products: healings, miracles, breakthroughs, deliverance, to mention but a few

Monetization of Spiritual products

In several Pentecostal Churches, sacramental, spiritual goods like Holy Communion, spiritual goods and CDs are no longer necessarily produced to “edify” and “uplift” the souls of the congregants,; rather, they are designed expressly for material profiteering. Worse still, prayers, healing, miracles and anointing are dispensed apparently according to the principle of “earn to pay”. In the same vein, members may have to pay a “consultancy fee” in order to enable him/her see “the man of God” for consultation. Not only that, there is wide sale of pilgrimage items like water from River Jordan, sand from around the burial site of Jesus Christ, and mustard seeds are sold to people looking for miracles rather than salvation²⁵.

Descent into worldly pattern

Several Pentecostal churches have lost the spiritual vitamins and have eroded completely the Christ values. There is no true revival in the churches again; it has been producing micro-wave Christians; uncooked, half-baked and immature believers; the altar is polluted, lifeless and full of church politics and acrimonies and the spiritual life is no longer aglow(Leviticus 6L12-13), because they have lost the Holy Ghost fire.

Leadership tenure and succession programs

The orthodox and mainline churches, as well as the Pentecostal Churches are all registered by the government in Nigeria, through the enabling Act- Part C of Companies and Allied Matters Acts 1990. *Section 590(2) states that, upon being registered by the Commission, the trustee or trustees shall become a corporate body and shall be run in accordance with the extant provisions in this act*²⁶. Every Church has her constitution, which stipulates the retirement age for the Church leaders and the mode of succession. This retirement age and succession plan is well articulated by the mainline churches; which ranges between tenure of five years in Foursquare Gospel Church, to 70 years retirement age in Anglican Church and 75 years retirement age in Christ Apostolic Church to mention but a few. However, there are double standards in several Pentecostal churches. Where the retirement age has been fixed at 70 years for other ministers, the

retirement age for the General Overseer was left open and not specific and leaving such to the voice of God.

As a registered trustee and body corporate guided by the laws of the land, the Central Bank of Nigeria and Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria started the Corporate Governance Code in every sector of Nigeria. It started with banks, non-banks institutions and recently that of Non- Governmental Organizations, and Churches and Mosques. The Corporate Governance Code of Conduct was released as stated in Sections 7 and 8 of the Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria in its “Not for Profit Code 2015, which puts the tenure of leadership of NGO’s, Churches and Mosques at twenty years and with the ouster clause that, they are not permitted to hand over to their families. Rather than complying with this law and corporate governance code, several leaders of Pentecostal Churches, went to court to challenge the law and have even pressurized the government to suspend the Code of Conduct, tagging it to be an attack and an attempt to muzzle the Church. But, ministers in other leadership position(s) have been taking their exit at 70 years or the specific retirement age. **This could not be seen as “fair” and “just” in the house of God, which should be the epitome of equality, justice and fairness.** Why did such Churches register with the government of the land, if they will not be ready to be legally compliant with the extant provisions of the Act and directives of other regulators, which have been consummated successfully with other five sectors of the country? Why will the leaders in the Pentecostal churches want to perpetuate themselves till eternity in office? Why are they political, when it comes to implementing succession programmes that could save them from turning to religious emperors and dictators in the religious organizations they lead? Are these activities scriptural? Are they protecting the cause of God or themselves? Are they irreplaceable and indispensable? Why is their grave yard quietness and silence by members of these churches (many who are sound intellectuals), against these obvious infractions of their leaders? Could we construe the acts of the congregants of these churches as a conspiracy game against the state? Have the congregants of these churches been hypnotized, hoodwinked and brainwashed never to interrogate the activities of their leaders when there are apparent deviations from the norms of the state? These are unanswered questions in the land. As we speak, Bishop (Mrs.) Idahosa succeeded her late husband, Archbishop Benson Idahosa in Church of God Mission and is this the trend of primordial succession plans, to expect from other Pentecostal ‘churches, which the Financial Reporting Council tend to protect the congregations from ? Will the suspension of this Code of governance be till eternity because of the hot pressures mounted on the government by these Pentecostal leaders? Time will tell!.

Living extravagant life with high taste by the leaders, with poor members trailing in abject poverty

The rich leaders often wallow in unfounded opulence while the poor faithful are encouraged to put up conspicuous life style, prosperity mentality and outward manifestation of “divine grace”. This is to affirm their total well-being, even when there is no material evidence to that effect. The propagation of ‘false consciousness and fake living’ in this fashion has interplayed to make the members worldly minded, property and things driven, to meet up with the superficial standard expected of them by their leaders. No source of wealth is ever questioned by the “Gods” of these prosperity preachers. The more they give, the poorer they become and the richer the church. Yet poverty ravages the members, in spite of their endless giving; while the leaders continue to defend their affluence on the grounds that “my God is not a poor God”.

Poor Advocates and Vanguarders for Good Governance, Social Equality and Material well-being of the Citizens

Pentecostal Churches in other parts of the world have been vanguards and advocates of transparency, accountability, equality and good governance, who devoted their time and energy to the development of their countries and to fighting the cause of the poor. But, some of the Nigerian Pentecostal Clergymen would rather wine and dine with those in power, even in the presence of abiding poverty and hunger in the land. Corrupt politicians are taking higher positions in the church and are even treated as “Very Important Personalities” seated in the front rows and sometimes given the privilege to read lessons and use the pulpit as the platform for campaigns. They often request for the endorsement of the leaders of the Pentecostal Churches, knowing that they have great influence on their members. Ayo Oritsejiafor, (as a case study of a foremost Pentecostal church leader) was involved allegedly in a money laundering during President Good luck Jonathan regime in South Africa. It flew \$9.3million cash in to South Africa where the money has been seized by the home country, although, he has explained that, he leased the aircraft to another company and that the money was meant for the purchase of arms to fight terror and that cash payments are sometimes effected in such details. But, Nigerians want to know, how this has helped evangelism? How has this translated to material well-being of his congregants and how has this advanced the cause of Christianity and citizenry in Nigeria²⁷.

EFFECTS OF MATERIALISM ON REDEEMED CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF GOD

Background

The Redeemed Christian Church of God was founded by Pa Akundayomi in 1952; who had a Cherubim and Seraphim background. It started as a housefellowship called the Glory of God Fellowship at 9, Willoughby Street, Ebute-Meta, Lagos. It is claimed that God made a covenant with Pa Akundayomi that, He the Lord would meet all the needs of the church in awesome way, if only members would serve **Him faithfully and be obedient to His word**. It is upon this covenant, that the Redeemed Christian Church of God was born. The church continued to meet at 9, Willoughby Street, Ebute-Meta, Lagos, until they relocated to 1-5 Redemption Way (formerly 1A Cemetery Street) Ebute-Meta.

Dr. Enoch Adejare Adeboye, who was then, a young lecturer of Mathematics at the University of Lagos joined the church in 1973. Pa Akundayomi claimed that God had spoken to him that his successor would be a young educated man; and he recognized him in the Spirit, as the one that, the Lord had spoken about in the past. Hence, Dr. Adeboye was ordained a Pastor of the church in 1975. Pa Akundayomi was 71 years old when he died. Amidst controversy, Pastor Adeboye's appointment was formalized by the reading of Pa Akundayomi's sealed pronouncement after his burial in 1981. Since then, an open explosion began with the number of parishes growing in leaps and bounds locally and internationally.

The Core Values of The Church Include, But Not Limited To:

- You must be born again and tested before you can be appointed as a worker.
- Face polish, lipstick, hair attachment, ear rings are forbidden to members.
- All members including the affluent ones are treated equally.
- Gifts, whose sources cannot be verified as credible and godly are rejected.
- Politicians are treated as ordinary members of the church and are not given undue prominence.
- Fasting and prayers are held as sacred, as every worker must fast for a minimum of two days a week and must attend vigils two days per week.
- There is great modesty on the part of the adherents in acquisition of land, automobiles and other assets. They are more concerned to spend their resources on evangelism and kingdom projects. The members are critical of sudden material acquisition.

Emergence of Model Parishes

The injection of 'Model Parishes' to the subsisting 'classical parishes' by the General Overseer, Pastor Enoch Adeboye on 1st October 1988, was designed to attract elites, professionals and youth in to the church. To accommodate them **the strict doctrines of the church were flexibly implemented, 'to catch them as they are, and be disciple after admission into the church'**.

It is claimed that, the mild implementation of the doctrines and originating core values, with massive evangelism and revival led to the sporadic increase in membership, both locally and internationally.

Effects of Materialism on Redeemed Christian Church of God (A dilution of Classical and Model Parishes)

- The qualification of regeneration and experience of a new birth, as a condition precedent to being appointed as a worker in classical parishes. This has been relaxed in model parishes. You now see people with wet lips, face polish, hair attachment and trousers constituting a great number of workers.
- The quality of message has been coated with prosperity message. Sitting under the ministrations of the General Overseer- Pastor Enoch Adeboye, for more than twenty consecutive meetings, seventy percent of the message at the monthly Holy Ghost meeting and the Holy Ghost congress is loaded with prophecies and promises that tend to make people comfortable, while maximum of thirty percent is dedicated to the revealed will of God, salvation and eternity; which is the reverse of the culture of the church at the outset.
- The church has been upstanding on the teaching of the word of God, through the '*digging deep*' programmes and school of discipleship and the campuses of Bible Colleges spread across the country and abroad. However, the impact of these changes could not be seen and measured in the lives of some of the congregants, as some of them will sleep off during sermons, while they display their talents on dancing during praises, worship and special rendition of the choir. Several of them still wear their trousers, paint lips and polish face, which is at variance with the vision of the founding fathers of the church.
- The church uses aggressive billboards and market advertorials, both at the zonal, provisional, regional and national level to win public patronage. While the informational content of these advertorials could be appreciated as an invitation to the unchurched to come to Christ, the huge cost of this adverts could be deplored to other specific areas of

soul winning, evangelism and humanitarians service that could have made more impacts.

- The church has made great exploits in mission development. It has over two thousand parishes in Nigeria, with other branches in continent of Africa, England, Scotland, France, Germany, Canada, Australia and New Zealand to mention but a few. This has been made possible with the grace the church witnessed in the robust financial windows, she has been blessed with.
- The church has been actively involved in establishing schools from the Nursery Schools to the Universities, where they have been able to raise the moral margins of the students. Although, there are wide criticisms that, the schools fees have been priced beyond the financial capacity of greater number of members, it needs to be appreciated, that schools businesses are commercial ventures, that have minimum standard of infrastructure and human capital that must be maintained before they are given accreditation by their regulators; hence they cannot be run as charitable organizations.
- The church has been investing heavily on building of expansive auditorium(s): The church built 1km by 1km auditorium, which has the capacity to sit 1million people in the Year 2000. Yet she has gone ahead to invest \$60 million dollars (about N7.7 billion) on 3km by 3km auditorium, which was opened at Shimawa on 2nd September 2016 at the September edition of the Holy Ghost congress²⁸. This generated serious outrage among members and Nigerians have called this 'humongous investment' a waste and a confirmation that the church is gradually veering off from the teachings of Christ. When you look at several headquarters of zonal headquarters and provincial headquarters and regional headquarters, they are architectural wonders. Warehouses and factories have all been bought over by several arms of the church. The mandate of Christ is not for us to confine ourselves to only these buildings at all times. His mandate is for us to go out and reach out to the lost; and any time we come back to our churches, it is for spiritual refueling. The opportunity benefits of \$60 million dollars to members are immense in terms of provision of employment, personal empowerment of the poor to mention but a few, has been traded off for these monumental structures. These are manifestation of materialism.
- Empire building of the church: As at July 22, 2014, the church was estimated to worth over N550billion, under the leadership of the General Overseer. The Redeemed Camp ,

which is having 40,000 hectares of land worth N200billion; the 1km by 1km one million seater auditorium was put at N3.5billion, A private Jet (Gulfstream V) N8billion, A Garden City – N1billion; Redeemers University N5billion ; Ultra modern buildings in 196 countries – N100billion and offering and tithes from over 10 million members – N232billion²⁹. While this could be seen as a sign of giant stride in physical and financial development, could this be reconciled with the spiritual development of her members and how equitable is the redistribution of resources for the welfare of indigent members among them?

- To some extent, the church has made giant strides in being a vanguard for good governance, social equality and material well being of the citizens. In the ongoing political structure of the country, the church has one of his senior Pastors – Professor Yemi Oshibajo, as the Vice President of the country. But, what has that translated into, in terms of good governance and financial and economic well being of the citizenry? Why is the leadership not talking? Before the controversial landslide election victory of Obasanjo' in 2003, it was reported that the General Overseer of the Church, Pastor Adeboye likened Obasanjo to the Prophet Elisha, whom God had "specially ordained". It was also reported that, the General Overseer, Pastor Adeboye openly endorsed Olusegun Osoba as the only one fit for the government house when Osoba was seeking for the second term which he eventually lost. These are examples of the Pastor Adeboye's forays into the murky waters of politics³¹.
- On leadership and succession programme, given the precedent set by Pa Akindayomi, the founder and the first General Overseer of the church, that, the tenure of the General Overseer is for a life time, as his successor was not revealed until he passes into glory, one might agree, that, the tenure of Pastor Adeboye is for a life time. It needs to be added, that, the church has been registered under enabling Act, Part C of Companies and Allied Matters Act³², on Not for Profit organization and Non-governmental organizations, as they are expected to be compliant with the extant provisions of the act and other regulators. It is also on record in the church that, except the office of the General Overseer, all other ministers retire at the age of 70 years. The Corporate Governance Code has been seamlessly implemented for banks, and non banks. Extending such to the "Not for Profit Organisation", which covers churches and mosques. Section 7 and 8 of this Code states that, **the tenure of leadership of NGOs has**

been restricted to twenty years and they are not allowed to handover to their families.

This, the government claimed to bring fairness and justice in the governance system in NGOs. Immediately this law, was communicated to all, reports say that the General Overseer of the church, at its Annual Ministers Thanksgiving on Saturday, 7th January 2017, announced his retirement as the General Overseer of the church, in Nigeria, while the church will now be led by Pastor Joseph Obateru, who was the former Special Assistant to the General Overseer on Finance; in line with this directive; while he will remain the General Overseer of the church worldwide. It was claimed that, when the illegality of this new structure dawned on Pa Adeboye, he made another announcement that he will retain his title as the General Overseer, while Pastor Obayemi is National Overseer. The Codes had been contested at the Federal High Court and the court decided against the church. With the loss at the Federal High Court, the Federal Government went ahead to suspend the Code indefinitely. The following teasers become relevant:

Has the Federal Government suspended the Code for implementation on the church because of Pastor Adeboye, since one of his pastors is the Vice President? Where the pronouncement of the Federal Government runs in conflict with the judgment of a competent court of jurisdiction, is the Federal Government suspension of the Code valid in law and not ultra vires, to suspend the code, without contesting the judgment in the court? Why should Pastor Adeboye, reverse himself on the announcement of a successor, under twenty four hours? Is it because of love of the position, money or not wanting to set a poor precedent? Where Pastor Adeboye's action conflicts with the judgment of the Court where they have lost out, his continuing retention of the title of the General Overseer, not an absurdity and a contempt of the court? If the General Overseer is reported to be above 79 years, older than the first General Overseer and above 70 years, when other ministers are retiring, and having spent over 40 years in office wouldn't it be a mark of high integrity and honor for him to relinquish his position and retire in bliss and mentor his successor, who he has announced? Did Pastor Adeboye just play the Redeemed Christian Church of God members the way Yahya Jammeh played Gambians?³⁰. If the Bible tells both the congregants and their leaders to subject themselves to constituted authority in the land, it beholds the General Overseer, a respected preacher and epitome of excellence follow the court order and Financial Reporting Council

Code on 'Not for Profit Organisation' and do the needful, except there is a contamination of materialism.

EFFECTS OF MATERIALISM ON LIVING FAITH CHURCH INTERNATIONAL (AKA WINNERS CHAPEL)

Background

Living Faith Church International began with his 18 hours vision on 2nd May 1981, where Bishop Oyedepo claimed to have received a mandate from God to liberate the world from all forms of satanic oppression through the preaching of the faith. Living Faith Church was initially known by the name Liberation Faith Hour Ministries. A couple of years later, on the 17th September 1983, Oyedepo and his wife were both commissioned and ordained as Pastors of the new church, by Pastor Enoch Adeboye. Five years after his ordination, Pastor Oyedepo was ordained as a Bishop, The Church has its headquarters at Cannanland, Ota, where 50,000 capacity auditorium is sitting on 530 acres of land. The church has apostolic doctrines as sanctity of the word of God as contained in the Bible, the Godhead, man, his fall and redemption, signs and wonders, divine healing, resurrection of the just and the return of the Lord, baptism by immersion, rapture to mention but a few. The church is situated in over 65 countries. It is presided over by Bishop Oyedepo, with Bishop David Abioye as the Vice-President of the church. The church has eight bishops who head the eight dioceses within Nigeria.

Effects of materialism include but not limited to :

- The experience of regeneration and a new birth, and upholding the sanctity of the word of God cannot be felt in the lives of members. As the church has been conceived as a liberal church where some members are conceived to be morally loose and full of indecent dressing now see people with wet lips, face polish, hair attachment and trousers constituting a great number of workers.
- The greater part of the message has been on Divine Healing, Signs and Wonders. The message is always loaded with prophecies and promises that tend to make people comfortable, while less than twenty five percent is dedicated to the revealed will of God, salvation and eternity; which the founder professed to be his divine mandate to banish poverty.
- While the church imparts the word of God to members, through her leadership courses for training of prospective ministers like Basic

Certificate Course (BSC), Leadership Certificate Course (LCC); and Leadership Diploma Course (LDC), the impact of these teachings could not be seen and measured in the lives of some of the congregants, as some of them will sleep off during sermons, while they display their talents on dancing during praises, worship and special rendition of the choir. Several of them still wear their trousers, paint lips and polish face which is at variance with the moral and ethical standards of the church.

- The church uses aggressive billboards and market advertorials, both at the zonal, provisional, regional and national level to win public patronage. While the informational content of these advertorials could be appreciated as an invitation to the unchurched to come to Christ, the huge cost of this adverts could be deplored to other specific areas of soul winning, evangelism and humanitarians service that could have made more impacts.
- The church has made great exploits in mission development. It has several parishes in Nigeria, and in about sixty-five countries. This has been made possible with the grace the church witnessed in the robust financial windows, she has been blessed with.
- The church has been actively involved in establishing schools from the Nursery Schools to the Universities, where they have been able to raise the moral margins of the students. The church has three universities located in Lagos, Omu-Aran and South Africa. Although, there are wide criticisms that, the schools fees have been priced beyond the financial capacity of greater number of members, it needs to be appreciated, that schools' businesses are commercial ventures, that have minimum standard of infrastructure and human capital that must be maintained before they are given accreditation by their regulators; hence they cannot be run as charitable organizations.
- The church has been investing heavily on building of expansive auditorium(s): The church built fifty thousand capacity auditorium, which was commissioned on 8th September 1999.
- Empire building and materialistic tendency of the leadership: The materialistic tendencies of the General Overseer has diffused into the lives of members who want to live the grandiose heavenly life on earth before the call up of the saints. It is claimed that Bishop Oyedepo owns private jets – Gulf Stream G550, Gulfstream 450, Gulfstream V and Lear Jet with combined value of USD 98.3 Million (N15.9 billion). While this could be professed as manifestation of supernatural blessings from God, how could this be reconciled with the

spiritual development of her members and how equitable is the redistribution of resources for the welfare of indigent members among them?

- On leadership and succession programme: What is the tenure of leadership of Bishop David Oyedepo? Being the founder, is the tenure a life time? What time is the succession program going to manifest, notwithstanding that Bishop David Abiona is the Vice – President of the church? As the church has been registered under enabling At, Part C, of Companies and Allied Matters Act³² on Not for Profit Organization and Non-Governmental Organizations, will the presiding Bishop be willing to follow Section 7 and 8 of this Code states that, puts the maximum tenure of any leader of any NGOs (including churches, mosques and others) at twenty years and retire as the General Overseer of the church, and inaugurate his Vice President, Bishop David Abiona as the new General Overseer, in consonance with extant and judgment against the church and by extension of all the NGOs, that are doubting the efficacy of this Corporate Governance Code, having being the Presiding Bishop for over 33 years? Time will tell!

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