



Religious-Preneurship, Pentecostalism and Criminality in Nigeria: The Case of Bishop Feyi Daniels

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22859211>

Abstract

This study critically examines the rise of religious-preneurship within Nigeria's Pentecostal churches, often led by prophets and prophetesses, and its correlation with criminality. Pentecostalism, especially within New Generational Churches, is increasingly being exploited as a profit-driven enterprise, in which spiritual practices such as prophecy, tongues, and signs and wonders are used to manipulate followers. Historically, Pentecostalism emerged as a vibrant religious movement centred on divine empowerment, but in contemporary Nigeria it has evolved into a business model, with church leaders acting as "religious-preneurs" who profit from vulnerable congregants. Using qualitative methods, including a case study of Bishop Feyi Daniels (26th January, 2024) and interviews with two people, this research investigates the role of the prophetic ministry in facilitating criminal activities within these churches. Findings indicate that many church leaders exploit their positions for personal gain through financial and spiritual manipulation. The study concludes that while Pentecostalism offers spiritual empowerment, its commercialisation poses significant ethical concerns. Recommendations include greater regulation of religious organisations in Nigeria and the promotion of ethical leadership to curb criminality and exploitation within the church.

Keywords: New Generational Churches, Prophets and Prophetesses, Religious-preneurship, Pentecostalism, Criminality.

Introduction

Pentecostalism emerged as a vibrant movement centred on spiritual empowerment, but it has evolved into a business model for manipulating and exploiting members of the New Generational churches in Nigeria, all under the guise of spirituality and solutions to difficult life challenges. The history of Pentecostalism in Nigeria can be traced to the advent of the New Generational churches, especially the "Aladura" churches, which are known for emphasising faith, healing, and signs and wonders. Pentecostalism is a global phenomenon; therefore, it is important to trace its origins in the Bible. Gordon Melton argues that the practices and activities of the Pentecostal denomination can be traced to the Book of Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2–4). The Apostles and other believers received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, evidenced by speaking in tongues. Pentecostalism is a religious movement that gave rise to several Pentecostal churches in many parts of the world in the 20th century. Recalling the Holy Spirit's baptism of the disciples of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2–4), this experience appears to have been common in the Christian



movement during its first generations.¹ It is pertinent to note that the experience of the early church in the upper room cannot be separated from the global concept and practice of Pentecostalism. Pentecostalism favours personal experience of God and encounter with God above all else. Allan Anderson opines that the early Christian church was a community of the Holy Spirit, and the freedom of expression and spontaneity of its worship may not have been very different from that of many Pentecostal and charismatic churches today. Some characteristic features and ecstatic phenomena of Pentecostalism, such as prophecy, healing, and speaking in tongues, were common.² To capture the growing population of the Pentecostal movement, David Barrett notes that the sheer magnitude and diversity of the numbers beggar the imagination. There are 332 million affiliated Pentecostal/charismatic church members. Of these, 176 million are Pentecostals, 123 million are charismatic, and 28 million are third wavers.³ Creating a dichotomy between Pentecostals and Charismatics, David Barrett affirms that the 20th-century renewal in the Holy Spirit is a single cohesive movement into which a vast proliferation of individuals and communities has been drawn across a whole range of different circumstances over a period of 250 years. Whether termed Pentecostals, charismatics, or third-wavers, they share a single basic experience.⁴ In Nigeria, the origin of Pentecostalism cannot be fully comprehended without a thorough examination of the British missionaries and the advent of the Aladura churches. In alignment with this, Naomi Richman notes that Pentecostalism in Nigeria is widely recognised to have unfolded in three phases. The first phase, known as Aladura, or the African Initiated/Independent Church movement (1910–1930s), was led by Yoruba itinerant preachers like Joseph Ayo Babalola (also Moses Orimolade and Oshoffa of the Celestial Church of God).⁵

The Aladura movement, whose name derives from the Yoruba word for prayer, meaning ‘praying for people’, represented a decisive indigenization of Christianity in Nigeria. J.D.Y. Peel, in his landmark study of the Aladura, demonstrates that the movement arose as an African response to the perceived inadequacies of mission Christianity, emphasizing prayer, faith healing, and direct access to divine power as alternatives to Western-mediated religion.⁶ The Aladura movement emphasized prayer, healing, and deliverance from traditional ‘pagan’ religion. In this period, foreign Pentecostal denominations like the Classical Pentecostal church, Assemblies of God, and the Welsh Apostolic church also laid down roots in Nigeria. The second wave, known as the ‘Latter Rain’ revival, took place in the 1950s and was initiated by British and American evangelists like Sydney Granville Elton and Oral Roberts. This phase emphasized deliverance, healing and also apocalyptic eschatology. The third wave, known as the Neo-Pentecostal movement, emerged in the (1960s–80s) and was heavily influenced by ideas and trends introduced to Nigeria in American evangelical literatures.⁷ From the foregoing, it should be noted that the major emphases of the Pentecostal movement in Nigeria are prayer, faith healing, deliverance/exorcism and prosperity gospel. One of the factors that contributed to the rise of Pentecostalism in Nigeria is the failure of the British Missionaries to sufficiently cater for the spiritual needs of the African people, as many of them did not believe in the existence of demons, dark/voodoo powers, witches and wizards. These British Missionaries could not perfectly align their missionary activities with the socio-cultural milieu of the African people in this context. The Members of mainline churches’ expectations from the churches were not met. Mbefo opines that the missionaries of the older churches failed to address the type of questions the African situation raised for them: witchcraft, demon possession, haunting by the evil spirit, the cult of ancestors; the use of protective charms, talismans; sorcery, and the traditional dancing form of worship at the shrines. The tendency among the missionaries was to dismiss these questions due to ignorance arising from a pre-scientific



mentality.⁸ Without controversy, churches where the spiritual needs of the people are not prioritized are bound to fail in their evangelistic and missionary commitment. This explains the reason for the failure of the Orthodox churches established through the missionary activities of the British Missionary Societies. It is quite unfortunate that, this failure is still noticeable in many of our Orthodox churches in Nigeria today, where big cathedrals and massive church buildings are now visited on Sunday basis by a few congregants. From Idahosa to Adeboye, Kumuyi and Oyedepo, the Pentecostal movement continues to grow tremendously as new denominations are being created on daily basis.⁹ Without any iota of doubt, the poverty and suffering of the masses have contributed to the growth and expansion of Pentecostalism in Nigeria.

Having traced the history of Pentecostalism in Nigeria, it is pertinent to also examine other germane terms of this paper. What is Religious-preneurship? Who is a religious-preneur? Religious-preneurship as used in this paper does not mean Religious Entrepreneurship which is a combination of religion and entrepreneurial business ventures for social transformation often engaged in by some Pentecostal churches. Nigeria has many Pentecostal churches who are involved in business ventures for the transformation of the society. However, Religious-preneurship is different; it is an attempt by religious leaders, in this case, Pastors, to turn religion and their spiritual gifting into an avenue to manipulate their gullible church members for financial and monetary gain. While Religious Entrepreneurship centres on churches establishing businesses for the sole purpose of impacting the society positively, Religious-preneurship focuses on making profit and monetary gain from religion and exploiting gullible church members. It is particularly important to create this dichotomy between these two concepts, because there is a thin line between the two. While Religious Entrepreneurship aims to create business ventures to eradicate poverty, create employment opportunities, provide good health and medical facilities, make quality education available and accessible and thereby transform the society, Religious-preneurship is the opposite of all these, because it aims to make dishonest gain and profit by all means through the religious activities from ignorant religious worshippers. Religious Entrepreneurship has the good of the populace at heart, while Religious-preneurship is driven by the selfishness and greed of religious leaders, in this case, Pastors, Prophets and Apostles, etc. Who then are Religious-preneurs? Religious-preneurs are Christian religious leaders who have turned religion and its attendant miracles, signs and wonders into a business venture, in order to exploit their church members by their selfishness and greed. These are the people described by Paul, the Apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ, as those who see godliness as a means of financial gain (1 Timothy 6). The other germane word that must be defined is the prophetic ministry. Lydia, Kitause and Hosea are of the opinion that the church has a prophetic mission and role to play in the fight against socio-political oppression.¹⁰ Nmah notes that “a prophet” is called. In fact it is the experience of his call and mandate that are most characteristic of him. He is not a politician, a social thinker, a philosopher nor a poet even though his sayings are in poetical form.¹¹ The Prophetic ministry is a ministry that is based on foreknowledge and a foretelling of God’s counsel to the church, the body of Christ. A prophet is like a watchman saddled with the responsibility of revealing the obscured and predetermined counsels of God to the body of Christ. It is, however, important to note that the prophetic ministry has been corrupted through the deceptive and manipulative activities of many prophets. It is pertinent to note that, many Biblical scholars have done scholarly research works on the concept of Pentecostalism and religious-preneurship. For instance, Lydia, Kitause and Hosea have examined the prophetic mission of the church and the role of the church in the fight against socio-political and religious oppression in contemporary Nigeria.¹² Abioje also examines



the Christian Prophets and other Prophets in Nigeria,¹³ while Nmah also critically analyses the Sola Scriptura and its impact on Christian Prophetic Making in Nigeria.¹⁴ In like manner, Okobia also critically evaluates the ambivalence of Prophetic ministry in Pentecostal churches in Nigeria.¹⁵ Ughaerumba also examines Pastorpreneurship in Southern Nigeria using Weber's Protestant Ethics.¹⁶ In the same vein, Okanlawon examines Churchpreneurship in the Nigerian socio-economic space.¹⁷ It is, however, the aim of this study to partake in filling an observed critical gap, because no study has combined the three critical concepts of "Religious-preneurship, Pentecostalism and Criminality" with a focus on the most recent deceptive and manipulative prophetic ministry of Bishop Feyi Daniels of the Ireign Christian Ministry, Lagos, Nigeria. Hence, this study is particularly significant because it combines three critical concepts and focuses on a most recent prophetic incident in the south western part of Nigeria. The study aims to unravel how Pentecostalism has degenerated into religious business ventures and an avenue for criminality by critically evaluating the prophetic ministry of Bishop Feyi Daniels who had recently been sentenced to life imprisonment because of his numerous ministerial atrocities. It also aims to answer the question of how and in what ways has the commodification of the prophetic ministry contributed to criminal behaviour in the recent case of Bishop Feyi Daniels. The scope of the study is limited to the prophetic ministry of Bishop Feyi Daniels, because it deals with a recent case of well-pronounced prophetic ministry and its abuse. The study adopts qualitative analysis that allows for using Bishop Feyi Daniels' prophetic ministry as a case study and the interview of two persons, as a research methodology. The paper explores the criminality of Pentecostalism which has degenerated into profit-making religiosity, highlighting the most recent prophetic ministry trend, in order to sensitize the gullible populace to be discerning in their relationship with contemporary Nigerian prophets.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology, which is most appropriate for examining complex socio-religious phenomena such as religious-preneurship, Pentecostal criminality, and prophetic manipulation. Qualitative research enables a nuanced, contextual, and interpretive exploration of the human experiences, behaviors, and institutional dynamics that underpin the subject matter under investigation. The choice of qualitative methodology is further justified by the nature of the data collected, which includes oral interviews, observational accounts, and documentary sources.

Specifically, the study employs a case study design, centered on the prophetic ministry of Bishop Feyi Daniels of Ireign Global Church, Lagos, Nigeria. The case study approach is particularly suitable for this research because it allows for an in-depth, multi-faceted investigation of a bounded contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. As a paradigmatic case, the Bishop Feyi Daniels case offers exceptional analytical value, given its documented trajectory from prophetic ministry through criminal conduct to judicial conviction in January 2024. This renders it a heuristic illustration of the broader dynamics of religious-preneurship and Pentecostal criminality in Nigeria.

Data collection was conducted through two primary channels. First, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with two individuals possessing direct or proximate knowledge of the ministry and activities of Bishop Feyi Daniels: (i) Josiah Adelaja, a former spiritual son of the prophet, and (ii) Folake Ajenifuja, a commentator offering a broader perspective on the prophetic



ministry in Nigeria. These interviews were conducted in 2025 and generated primary data on the lived experiences of those affected by the religious-preneurship under study. Second, documentary sources were consulted, including media reports, court records, denominational disclaimers, and existing scholarly literature on Pentecostalism, prophetic ministry, and religious entrepreneurship in Nigeria and Africa.

Data analysis was conducted through thematic analysis, wherein recurring patterns, themes, and categories were identified across the interview transcripts and documentary sources. The themes were interpreted in relation to the theoretical frameworks adopted for this study. All ethical considerations were observed; fictitious names were used for the interviewees based on their recommendation to be anonymous, and the research was conducted with sensitivity to the vulnerability of persons affected by prophetic manipulation and Pentecostal criminality.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on three complementary theoretical frameworks: the Weberian Theory of Religion and Economic Rationality, the Rational Choice Theory of Religion, and the Social Exchange Theory. Together, these frameworks provide robust analytical lenses through which the phenomena of religious-preneurship, Pentecostal commercialization, and criminality can be examined.

The first framework is drawn from Max Weber's seminal work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Weber argued that certain religious orientations, particularly those rooted in ascetic Protestantism, generate an ethos conducive to systematic economic accumulation. For Weber, religion and economic behavior are not separate domains but are deeply intertwined: the inner-worldly asceticism of Calvinist and Puritan traditions produced a disciplined, rational approach to work and wealth that inadvertently fostered the spirit of modern capitalism. Applied to the Nigerian Pentecostal context, Weber's framework illuminates how the theological emphasis on prosperity, divine favor, and material blessing within New Generational Churches functions as a religious legitimization of wealth acquisition. More critically, it explains how religious leaders commodify their spiritual authority, turning the pastorate into a profit-generating enterprise. The phenomenon of religious-preneurship can thus be understood as a distorted application of a Weberian religious-economic logic: whereas Weber's ascetic Protestant pursued wealth as a sign of divine election through disciplined labour, the Nigerian religious-preneur pursues wealth as an end in itself, through the exploitation of congregants' faith. Ughaerumba's analysis of Pastorpreneurship in Southern Nigeria explicitly references Weber's Protestant Ethic as a lens for understanding this dynamic, thereby emphasizing the relevance of the Weberian framework to the Nigerian religious context.

The second framework, the Rational Choice Theory of Religion, as developed by Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, and later elaborated by Laurence Iannaccone, posits that religious behavior, like economic behavior, is governed by rational actors who seek to maximize benefits and minimize costs within a religious marketplace. Applied to this study, the theory illuminates the economic rationality that underlies both the conduct of religious-preneurs who turn spiritual gifts into profit-making ventures, and the behaviour of congregants who invest in prophetic services in exchange for anticipated spiritual or material rewards such as healing, protection, and financial breakthroughs. Religious-preneurs in this framework are entrepreneurs who exploit the asymmetric information between themselves and their congregants, positioning themselves as



exclusive brokers of divine favor in a competitive spiritual marketplace. Bishop Feyi Daniels' ministry exemplifies this dynamic: his prophetic performances, arranged prophecies, and miracle claims served to attract and retain a clientele willing to pay for access to perceived divine power.

The third framework, the Social Exchange Theory, developed by George Homans and Peter Blau and widely applied in sociology of religion, argues that social relationships are sustained by reciprocal exchanges in which actors give and receive valued resources. In religious contexts, social exchange operates through the exchange of spiritual capital (prophecies, blessings, and divine interventions) for material resources (monetary offerings, tithes, and gifts). This framework helps explain how false prophets maintain authority over their followers: by creating cycles of spiritual debt and gratitude, they engender dependency, submission, and susceptibility to manipulation. The theory also explains the psychological trauma suffered by those who leave such relationships, as documented in the testimony of Josiah Adelaja, whose departure from the ministry of Bishop Feyi Daniels resulted in severe psychological dislocation and attempted suicide, illustrating the profound social and emotional costs of disrupted exchange relationships.

Together, these three frameworks situate the phenomenon of religious-preneurship not as an aberration of religion but as a structurally intelligible product of the intersection between Weberian religious-economic rationality, competitive religious markets, economic precarity, and unregulated religious authority in Nigeria. They also underscore the urgent need for regulatory mechanisms that can disrupt exploitative exchange dynamics in the Pentecostal religious marketplace.

Review of Related Literature

Earlier in the study, it has been established that “religious entrepreneurship” should not be confused with “religious-preneurship”; while the first deals with the attempt of the church to engage in business activities that will bring maximum profits in order to further enhance the church in its mission to reach the unreached and help the poor in the society, the other is an attempt by religious leaders to manipulate and extort money from the poor with an empty promise of security, protection, deliverance and prosperity. Scholars have written copiously on certain aspects of the prophetic ministry, Pentecostalism and religious-preneurship. A prophet is a man or woman ordained by God to be a voice of warning, correction and instruction for the body of Christ; he is a seer and a mouthpiece for the God of the universe to receive, decode, encode and deliver divine messages to people with precision and accuracy. A prophet has foresight and can foresee an event long before they happen; therefore, he is saddled with the responsibility of forewarning the body of Christ about future events. Like the Old Testament's watchman, he sees things ahead of time and instructs the body of Christ and by extension, all men, and gives direction on how to prepare for the future events. Reflecting on the lives of the Nigerian prophets, Abioje opines that the prevalent image of Christian prophet in Africa and many parts of the world nowadays is that of a miracle worker and fortune/future teller. In some instances, immorality, such as sexual promiscuity, and crimes, such as ritual murder and fraud are alleged, rightly or wrongly, against one prophet or another.¹⁸

Commenting on the life of a prophet, Nmah affirms that:

The life of a prophet is characterized by a personal communion with God in prayer, devotion, meditation and moral submission to the divine will. What distinguishes a



prophet from all other religious men and women is that he never keeps his religious experiences to himself. He feels compelled to announce it to others.¹⁹

In the excerpt above, Nmah describes the life and devotion of a prophet; he is given to rigorous training in prayer, meditation and submission to the will of God. It is important also to know that unlike other ministerial offices, he always desires to share his spiritual experiences to the comfort, exhortation and the edification of the body of Christ. Nmah further describes a prophet as one who is called. In fact, it is the experience of his call and mandate that are most characteristic of him. He is not a politician, a social thinker, a philosopher nor a poet even though his sayings are in poetical form. The prophet entirely belongs to his God. He is the one who speaks for another. His office presupposes people's ignorance and blindness with respect to God's will and purpose, which the prophet as spokesman of the Almighty seeks to dispel.²⁰ Reflecting on the concept of prophecy, Nmah opines that Prophecy has often been associated with the foretelling or prediction of what is to come. It is something that is declared by a prophet, especially a divinely inspired prediction, instruction, or exhortation, a divinely inspired utterance or revelation.²¹ Therefore, it is safe to say that a Prophet is a custodian of divinely inspired utterances, revelation and messages. Looking critically at the advent of false Prophets and false prophecy in Nigeria, Okobia observes that:

Unfortunately, the rise of false prophets in Nigeria is a source of concern to rational minds. Some years ago, church titles like prophet, pastor, evangelist, apostle, bishop and reverend were reserved for real servants of God who fear the Lord and shun evil. Unlike now, where some people who are not saved, have no fear of God and no integrity, open up churches and prayer houses, calling themselves prophets and twisting scriptures with the mind to extort money from their members and clients.²²

It is also important to note that, these modern men of God or "gods of men" are extortionists who will stop at nothing to manipulate people to give their hard-earned money. Okobia also captures the victims of the pseudo-prophets and prophetic ministry as he observes that those who fall prey to the manipulation of these false prophets are the desperate miracle seekers who are either looking for the fruit of the womb or financial breakthroughs and who are prepared to pay the required price to get what they want. The false prophets often ask them to sow seeds with huge amounts of money as pre-requisites for divine intervention.²³ The common victims of prophetic manipulation in Nigeria and Africa by extension are the desperate seekers of visions and miracles who can do anything to get their problems solved.

Many of the new generational prophets cannot measure up to the standard of the prophets of old in word, character and integrity. Commenting on Pentecostalism and Pastorpreneurship, Ughaerumba posits that some people find in Pentecostalism in Southern Nigeria one of the crucial survival and lucrative options through which they seek to navigate out of the prevailing socio-economic crises in the country, particularly, the rising menace of unemployment and poverty. This option is found in Pastorpreneurship. Pastorpreneurship is the business of using the word of God or God's name to make money and earn a living. Seen as a survival and business investment option, some people in Southern Nigeria have enterprisingly commercialized religion in diverse ways.²⁴ It is pertinent to note that Pentecostalism has become a means of survival and an escape route out of poverty and suffering in the light of the prevalent economic crises. Ughaerumba notes further that Pastorpreneurship involves the invention of strategies and means of extorting money and other



material goods from unsuspecting admirers and adherents.²⁵ It is important to note that, these means include tithing, first-fruit, offering, thanksgiving. Reflecting on the factors that keep producing many Pastorpreneurs in Nigeria, Ayantayo opines that carrying the bible is one of the quickest and easiest means of making money, earning a living, getting access to power as well as becoming influential in Nigeria and this consequently, seduced countless number of Nigerians into the business of Pastorpreneurship.²⁶ Believing that the freedom of religion and lack of regulation on the practice of religion have led to the rise of many religious-preneurs, using pregnant and catchy words, Obiora notes that self-appointed super priests, hanky-panky pastors, arch-deacons, spurious prophets, obnoxious and nefarious prophetesses, self-styled senior apostles, rag-tag supreme evangelists, unschooled rabbis, mercenary and sham preachers, self-proclaimed messiahs, self-declared archbishops, self-ordained patriarchs, self-consecrated men of God, overnight venerable and Levites, bob-tail saviors and redeemers, quack messiahs, unqualified and untutored Rev. Drs., social drop-outs, social misfits, societal leftovers, quid-pro-quo spiritual healers, veritable devil's advocates and Kangaroo Christs arise, invoking and claiming to be mandated and sent.²⁷ Obiora's submission shows that, many of these Charlatans masquerading as Prophets are into the ministry without the call of God. Practitioners of religious-preneurship are versed in manipulating people in order to get money from them. In alignment with this, Ayantayo affirms that to make people persuade them to part with their money and resources, they introduce series of pranks which are manifested in manipulation and playing upon the intelligence or ignorance of their audience.²⁸

Defining the nexus between religious-preneurs and Evangeconomics, Ughaerumba opines that these (religious-preneurs) practice evangeconomics, which is the act of turning evangelism into business. Evangeconomics consists of inventing/creating, increasing and turning religious programmes or activities into opportunities/avenues of making money and maximizing profit. To achieve this end, the pastorpreneurs saturate the Nigerian social space with multiplicity of religious programmes such as crusades, market outreaches, revivals, Sundays and week days services, prayer ministries and prayer camping, among others.²⁹ Against the backdrop of Ughaerumba's submission, Pentecostalism has given a platform for religious-preneurship such that religious leaders use multiplicity and diversity of programmes to keep their ungodly business of extorting the saints going. Allan Anderson opines that all over the world untold thousands of revivalists without western connections were responsible for the spread of the Pentecostal gospel.³⁰ He also observes that historians have pointed out the connections to Azusa Street through those missionaries who directly or indirectly went from there to different continents. But without minimizing the importance of Azusa Street, we must also give due recognition to places in the world where Pentecostal revivals broke out independently of this event and in some cases even predated it.³¹ David Martin asserts that Pentecostalism looks back to the outpouring of the Spirit "on all flesh" dramatized in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. In the later liturgy of mainstream Christianity, and still today, Pentecost is celebrated as the third most important feast in the calendar and regarded as the manifestation of the Holy Spirit that gave birth to the Church.³² Paul Gifford notes that the paradigm shift that exists in Ghana's Christianity is evident in that everyone is aware of charismatic prayer centres, their all-night services, their crusades, conventions and Bible Schools, new buildings, their bumper stickers and banners, and particularly the posters that everywhere advertise an enormous range of forthcoming activities.³³ Emphasizing that Pentecostalism breeds fear and horror, Afe Adogame shows a picture of 300 long buses



conveying people to Redemption Camp, which is one of the deliverance centres for seekers of miracles.³⁴

A Brief History of Bishop Feyi Daniels

Bishop Feyi Daniels (born May 6, 1980) is a renowned Nigerian prophet, educator, author, and the founder of Ireign Global Church, a Christian ministry with a global presence. He is renowned for his prophetic insights, teaching excellence, and dedication to dominion. As the principal of Kings Academy, a prophetic school focusing on missions and ministry, and the chancellor of Evolve Business School, an institute specializing in business and leadership training, Feyi Daniels has made significant contributions to both spiritual and professional realms. Born on May 6, 1980, in Gbolade Adebajo, Opebi, Nigeria, Feyi Daniels, with the full name Daniels Oluwafeyiropo, was raised in a devout Christian family. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Daniels, played a crucial role in nurturing his spiritual growth, instilling in him a deep love for God and His teachings from an early age. Bishop Daniels holds Nigerian nationality and identifies with the Yoruba ethnic group. Bishop Feyi Daniels has faced significant controversies, particularly related to allegations concerning his sexual conduct and integrity. In June 2020, Bishop Feyi Daniels faced serious allegations of sexual assault involving two female church members at Ikota Villa Estate, Lekki, Lagos. Despite pleading not guilty and being granted bail, the court ultimately sentenced him to life imprisonment after several hearings in 2024.³⁵

Religious-Preneurship, Pentecostalism and Criminality in Nigeria: A Case Study of Bishop Feyi Daniels' Prophetic Ministry

Reuben Abati captures the style, composure and character of the Nigerian modern-day Prophets in a humorous but truthful manner, when he observes that:

The new generation Pastor (and prophet) is a spellbinder; he dresses well, he rides very flashy cars, he even carries a gun; just in case; he is a part-time businessman. He does not need to have attended any Bible college, as long as he can quote passages from the Bible and report to a bewildered congregation what his Daddy told him in the night, he would get a captive audience.³⁶

Abati's submission above perfectly describes the manners of life of many Pentecostal ministers in Nigerian Churches, especially those who are in the prophetic ministry. Looking critically at the above excerpt, it is obvious that it has a prophetic connotation. It is important to note that the "Daddy" inferred in the excerpt refers to God and it signifies the fact that a minister hears from God and therefore, brings his congregation words and instructions from God. It should be noted that among the five-fold ministry, only the prophets pride in the fact of consistently hearing from God because they are regarded as the sights and ears of the church. In alignment with Abati's submission, the modern-day Prophet is a spellbinder, who uses very flashy cars, has body guards/bouncers and this manner of life is completely alien to the life lived by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Another critical area that cannot be ignored in Abati's submission is his reference to Bible College. Without any iota of doubt, many people parading themselves as prophets in Nigerian New Generational Churches today are inept in the teaching and preaching of the word of God faithfully. This is because majority of these prophets have never been to any theological/seminary college. There are some among these prophets who are stark illiterates and who believe that no formal training is required to do the work of ministry. This explains the reason



for the many erroneous teachings and damnable heresies that are being propagated on pulpits in our New Generational Churches. With the advent of social media, it is not strange to wake up to dubious, corrupt, insincere and private interpretations of the scriptures on digital spaces. Unfortunately, many church members know next to nothing when it comes to the Bible that they carry every Sunday. No wonder, many of these New Generational Prophets have done despicable things to gullible congregants all in the name of religion. It is a common thing on social media to see some of these false prophets affirming that the God that the Christian serves, is the God of the other religions of the world.

As earlier affirmed, religious-preneurship is the process of turning religion and religious activities into business ventures with the aim of turning godliness into a means of making profit. It has a nexus with Pentecostalism because, it involves the commercialization and the marketing of the gifts of the Holy Spirit like the gifts of prophecy, interpretation of tongues, discernment, visions and revelations, healing and miracles, etc. More often than not, the practitioners of religious-preneurship are Pentecostal preachers, prophets, pastors, teachers and evangelists who always lay emphasis on prosperity gospel in order to extort and manipulate people into giving what they have and beyond what they have. Many of these preachers are not called of God, but they are called by their desire for wealth, fame and influence. They are not servants of God, but servants of their own belly. As a result of this, they can do and undo to manipulate and extort people of their hard-earned money. Not only do these Pentecostal preachers engage in religious-preneurship, but they also involve in criminal activities to keep their religious-preneurship going. Many of them are very dubious and they see nothing wrong in defrauding others to get what they want. There have been instances, where a Prophet would take the possession of a landed property from women through prophetic manipulation. These Prophets know that women are highly emotional beings and they, therefore, take advantage of their emotions. It is an established fact that, there is a nexus between religious-preneurship, Pentecostalism and Criminality, because many Pentecostal ministers of the gospel are full-time practitioners of religious-preneurship and more often than not, they practice it in criminality. It is safe to say, therefore, that religious-preneurship could not be practiced within criminality because religion is never designed to be commercialized. This critical relationship between Pentecostalism, religious-preneurship and criminality can better be evaluated through the prophetic ministry.

It should be noted that, more than any other gifts of the spirit, the gift of prophecy (visions and revelations) has given more ground to religious-preneurship and Pentecostal criminality in Nigeria and Africa by extension. This is perhaps better portrayed through the prophetic ministry of Bishop Feyi Daniels who shook the South Western Part of Nigeria between (2017–2024) with diverse prophecies, religious-preneurship, Pentecostal criminality and controversies. Until his sentence to life imprisonment in January 2024, Bishop Feyi Daniels manipulated and extorted money from people (young and old, male and female, educated and illiterate and the rich and the poor). He took advantage of his gullible congregants and followers, as he doctored miracles, arranged prophecies and shared bogus and too-good-to-be-true prophecies. Like every other false prophet from the scripture days, he presented himself as almost “a god” to his followers; he was the infallible seer who sees both Heaven and Earth, the teaching prophet and his magical mantra “the move of God”. He shared with his followers how he translocated and how he could hear people’s thoughts. He defrauded many people, raped young ladies who he called daughters in the faith. An interview with a former spiritual son of the prophet, Josiah Adelaja, sheds more light on the ministry of Bishop



Feyi Daniels and on how Pentecostalism has become an avenue for religious-preneurship and criminality in Nigeria and by extension, Africa, thus:

At that same Ibadan meeting, he made me a son alongside many others. But in 2018, many of the sons left him but they didn't tell me what happened. Later, he made me start a ministry work for him. I started suspecting foul play in 2019 when he was arrested. While we went to visit him in the cell, the police men mocked us that we were following a criminal. He later manipulated me with a prophecy in 2020. He also lied about Prophet Babajide. He also engaged in arranged prophecies.³⁷

In the excerpt above, Adelaja reveals the dark side of Bishop Feyi Daniels' prophetic ministry. He also reveals that the prophet was arrested in the year 2019 for a series of crime ranging from rape of two young ladies, sexual molestation and harassment of his female assistant Pastors and spiritual daughters and manipulation, extortion and financial defraud. He also famously affiliated himself with the highly revered C.A.C (Christ Apostolic Church) second General Evangelist, Prophet David Olulana Babajide, claiming to be a spiritual son to the C.A.C patriarch of faith. At the wake of his rape controversies and dark ministerial practices in 2019, the Christ Apostolic Church's Babajide's School of Prophets and Evangelists wrote a disclaimer about his ministry, affirming that he does not have any physical and spiritual affiliation with the Prophet D.O. Babajide. This is also a testament to the prophet's deceptive and manipulative nature. As affirmed by the interviewee above, it should be noted that he also practices arranged prophecies, getting people's private details through their social media handles and he then uses it to prophecy about them whenever he sees such people in his meeting all because of monetary profit. In many parts of Africa, Prophets have informants on their prayer mountains, who hear people most pressing prayer points and reports those prayer points to the prophets who then use them to prophecy to the people whenever they converge for a general programme on such prayer mountains. Many prophets have become pathetic liars because of their desire to make money by all means, thus turning Pentecostalism into criminality because of great greed which turns them into religious-preneurs instead of servants-leaders of the church. In a general interview conducted on the overview of Prophetic ministry in Nigeria and by extension, Africa, Folake Ajenifuja notes the differences between the earliest prophets in Nigeria and the modern-day prophets and opines that the prophets of old are called of God and they submitted themselves to the leading of the Lord. They don't do what the Lord didn't want them to do, but less than average are called among the modern-day prophets, they called themselves because of their desires for fame, flashy cars and what they are going to eat and wear. Many youths go into ministry because there is no job. Prophets of old know whom they believe and are obedient to Him. They also rely solely on God.³⁸ She also makes shocking revelation about what money has done to the prophetic ministry and Pentecostal movement in Nigeria, thus:

Money has influenced the prophetic ministry negatively in Nigeria. Young people go into ministry primarily because of money and lack of job opportunities today. It should be noted that many prophets are called into the ministry because of the economic woes of our country, not because they have the love of the saints at heart. Many genuine called prophets who began very well have compromised their faith and calling because of money. Indeed, the love of money is the root of all evils (1 Timothy 6:10).³⁹



Commenting on some attributes of false prophets, Ajenifuja observes that false prophets are all around us. They do things forcefully; they don't want God to lead them. They do things their own way and they are always greedy. They have eyes full of adultery and they cannot cease from sinning (2 Peter 2:14). They are a well without water; they cannot even quench the thirst of others. They are pretenders. They have sugar-coated mouth, men of corrupt mind and destitute of the truth (1 Tim 6:5), supposing that gain is godliness.⁴⁰ It should be noted that, in a bid to maintain their relevance while making money in a dubious manner, many modern-day prophets engage in the practice of occultism. In alignment with this, Ajenifuja opines that some Prophets would even say that God instructed them to insert something into ladies' private parts for their problem to be solved. But many of these prophets are occultists; it's not ordinary that someone would ask a young lady to go naked while a man was there and she would obey.⁴¹ This is particularly true when it comes to the prophetic ministry of Bishop Feyi Daniels who would rape young ladies in the guise of finding spiritual solution to their lives' predicaments. Adelaja agrees with this, when he affirms that:

He seizes every opportunity to get whatever he wants. I don't know if he is an occultic person, but if you say manipulation, I will say yes. Like he could say a lady has a problem and that she needed a higher power to sleep with her to get rid of the problem. If there is an occultic part of him, I might not be aware, but it is possible. There has always been money issue. He has always had this tendency for doing wild and crazy things. He manipulated people to sleep and rape them. He asked ladies to go naked to prove their loyalty to him as their spiritual father.⁴²

It is an established fact that, Bishop Feyi Daniels would manipulate young ladies and rape them forcefully and sometimes clean up the blood of those who are doing menstruation and that of the virgins. This has an occultic connotation. Sometimes, he would ask his spiritual daughters to go naked before him in order to prove their loyalty to him. This goes beyond ignorance on the part of the spiritual daughters; it is a demonstration of occultism and hypnotization. Feyi Daniels, through his prophetic atrocities, his Pentecostalism of criminality and religious-preneurship, defrauded many people, threatened to assassinate some sons who know his deepest secrets and subjected many young men and women into social stigma and psychological trauma. In alignment with this, Adelaja narrates his experience after leaving Bishop Feyi Daniels' ministry thus:

Up till now, I don't have spiritual father. I only have mentors. Feyi Daniels was the first person I submitted to. For 3 months after leaving his ministry, I could not pray. I got scared of Pastors laying hands on me. I attempted suicide, but God did not allow me to die. I don't have a spiritual father up till now. He spoilt my image when I left him. He does that to everyone who left him. Feyi Daniel was never a leader, he was a predator. Later, I started going back to church and God healed me psychologically by the written and spoken word.⁴³

The above excerpt is a documentation of the psychological trauma that trails the practice of Pentecostalism of criminality cum religious-preneurship through the instrumentality of the prophetic ministry. Many have become atheist because of the activities of "Pente-criminals" in the Nigerian Churches, worse still, there are others who have simply stopped coming to the church and have renounced the faith of our Lord Jesus and there are some who attempted suicide out of



depression and we have others who have had to live with the social stigma of being raped, battered and dehumanized right in the church.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that God still has genuine Prophets and ministers in the Nigerian new generational churches, Pentecostalism in Nigeria and Africa at large has become a medium of manipulating, milking and extorting the body of Christ. Like Balaam in the Old Testament book of the Bible, some Nigerian prophets out of “doctrinal insanity” (2 Peter 2:15–16, Numbers 22:21–30) have lowered the standard of the prophetic ministry and has made it into an instrument to exercise their greed and excessive desires for wealth, thereby stopping at nothing in their covetous pursuit of wealth, fame and influence by all means. As a result of this, many Nigerian Prophets have become beasts created by greed, randy ministers fashioned into sexual predators by their sexual escapades and ritualistic tendencies and wolves consistently preying on the sheep. This paper has critically examined the interplay between religious-preneurship, Pentecostalism and criminality in Nigeria. Findings include the facts that congregants in Nigerian churches are victims of the Pentecostalism of criminality and religious-preneurship because of their shallow knowledge of the Bible and the lack of discipleship training that can facilitate their spiritual growth and that new generation religious leaders have turned Pentecostal gifts into business models for extorting and manipulating the gullible congregants in the church. Recommendations include the facts that there must be a swift regulation of religious organizations in the Nigerian society and there must be an interdenominational platform for the theological training of prophets and other ministers of the new generational churches.

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