

THE SUSTAINABILITY OF CHRISTIAN FAITH AND PRACTICE IN NIGERIA

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ARTICLE INFO

Article No.: 0532

Accepted Date: 11/08/2026

Published Date: 01/09/2026

Type: Research

ABSTRACT

The sustainability of Christian faith and practice in Nigeria is increasingly challenged by secularization, materialism, declining ethical commitment, generational disengagement, religious commercialization and the widening gap between Christian profession and practical conduct. Although, Christianity remains highly influential in Nigerian society, the persistence of these challenges raises question about the capacity of the faith to preserve its moral credibility, social relevance, and transformative witness. This study examines the sustainability of Christian faith and practice in Nigeria, particular attention to the challenges confronting its continuity and the prospects for renewal. The study examines the factors threatening sustainable Christian faith and practice, assess the relevance of Christian ethical values to contemporary Nigerian society, and identify practical strategies for strengthening Christian discipleship, social responsibility, and intergenerational transmission of faith. The study adopts the Black Social Gospel Theory, which emphasizes the inseparability of authentic Christian faith from human dignity, social justice, ethical responsibility, and transformative engagement with societal problems. The findings indicate that Christianity's sustainability depends not merely on numerical growth or institutional expansion but on the integrity of Christian character, effective discipleship, youth engagement, social responsibility, and credible responses to poverty, injustice, and social inequality. Recent Nigerian studies similarly identify community engagement, digital adaptation, ethical formation, and youth inclusion as important for maintaining Christian relevance. The study concludes that Christian faith in Nigeria can remain sustainable when belief is translated into responsible social action. It recommends strengthened discipleship, youth mentorship, ethical leadership, social interventions, digital engagement, and renewed prophetic advocacy for justice and human dignity.

Keywords: Faith Sustainability, Black Social Gospel. Ethical Transformation, Faith Renewal, Christian Practice.

Introduction

Christianity has become one of the most influential religious traditions in Nigeria, shaping the nation's moral values, educational development, political discourse, and social welfare systems since its introduction in the mid-nineteenth century through missionary activities (Sanneh, 2003). Over time, the faith has grown rapidly, making Nigeria one of the countries with the largest Christian populations in Africa, with vibrant expressions across Catholic, Protestant, and Pentecostal denominations (Kalu, 2008). The expansion of Christianity has also contributed significantly to the establishment of schools, hospitals, and humanitarian institutions, thereby reinforcing its relevance in national development (Paul Gifford, 2016; Meier zu Selhausen, 2019; Asadu, 2021). Despite this remarkable growth, contemporary Nigerian Christianity is increasingly confronted with complex challenges that raise concerns about its long-term sustainability and spiritual vitality. Scholars have noted a gradual shift in religious commitment, particularly among younger generations, who are increasingly influenced by secular values, globalization, and alternative worldviews (Pew Research Center, 2015).

This trend is further compounded by the rise of materialism, the prosperity gospel, and the commercialization of religion, which, according to some scholars, have contributed to the erosion of the ethical and spiritual depth of Christian practice in Nigeria (Ojo, 2006). In addition, issues such as denominational fragmentation, leadership crises, corruption within religious institutions, and declining trust in church authority have contributed to growing skepticism about organized Christianity (Kalu, 2008). The increasing disengagement of youth from active church participation also presents a significant concern, as this demographic represents the future of the Church. Many young people perceive Christianity as increasingly disconnected from their socio-economic realities, prompting some to seek meaning, identity, and belonging through secular ideologies or alternative spiritual movements (Pew Research Center, 2015). Furthermore, the Nigerian religious landscape is becoming increasingly pluralistic, with the rise of Islam, African traditional religions, and new religious movements contributing to a competitive spiritual environment (Ogunleye, 2021).

This pluralism, combined with globalization and digital media, has intensified Christians' exposure to diverse belief systems, thereby challenging traditional Christian authority and identity (Adogame, 2013). The problem, therefore, is that despite the numerical strength and institutional presence of Christianity in Nigeria, there are emerging indicators of spiritual decline, weakened discipleship, and reduced doctrinal commitment, particularly among younger believers. These developments raise critical questions about the future sustainability of Christian faith and practice in the country (Otonko, 2018). Against this backdrop, this study examines the emerging challenges confronting Christianity in Nigeria and explores the prospects for its renewal and sustainability. It is grounded in the understanding that while Christianity faces significant internal and external pressures, it also possesses transformative potential when authentically lived and contextually expressed. The Black Social Gospel perspective underscores the importance of demonstrating Christian faith through social responsibility, justice, and moral transformation (Dorrien, 2018). Ultimately, this study contributes to ongoing scholarly discourse on religion and society in Nigeria by highlighting both the threats to Christian continuity and the opportunities for revitalization through discipleship, ethical leadership, youth engagement, and contextualized Christian education (Casanova, 2012).

Statement of the Problem

Christianity remains a major religious force in Nigeria, yet its numerical strength does not always correspond with sustained ethical commitment, authentic discipleship, and transformative social practice (Adogame, 2013; Ukah, 2016). The growing influence of secular

values, materialism, religious commercialization, denominational fragmentation, weak accountability, youth disengagement, and the gap between Christian profession and conduct increasingly challenge the credibility and sustainability of Christian practice (Kalu, 2008). The problem is therefore not simply whether Christianity will continue to exist in Nigeria, but whether it will retain spiritual integrity, moral relevance, and social responsibility necessary to influence individuals and society positively (Casanova, 2012). When Christian faith becomes detached from justice, compassion, and integrity, its transformative capacity is significantly weakened, thereby diminishing its moral credibility and social relevance (Dorrien, 2015). This situation underscores the urgent need to reconsider how the Christian faith can be sustained beyond institutional expansion and numerical growth. Consequently, this study investigates the factors threatening the sustainability of Christian faith and practice in Nigeria and examines how the Black Social Gospel Theory, with its emphasis on justice, human dignity, ethical responsibility, and social transformation, can provide a framework for strengthening authentic Christian witness and promoting meaningful faith renewal (Dorrien, 2023).

Objectives of the Study

1. Examine the major factor contributing to the emerging decline in Christian faith, commitment, and practice in Nigeria.
2. Assess the influence of secularization, materialism, religious pluralism, and changing socio-cultural values on Christian identity and practice.
3. Evaluate the role of churches and Christian leadership in addressing declining faith, particularly among youths and younger generation.
4. To investigate the challenges affecting effective discipleship, intergenerational transmission of Christian values, and sustained participation in church life.
5. To propose practical and sustainable strategies for renewing Christian faith in Nigeria, with particular emphasis on spiritual formation, ethical leadership, and contextual evangelism

Conceptual Clarification

Christianity in Nigeria

Christianity broadly refers to the religious faith centred on the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, expressed through belief in God, and the Scriptures, Christian worship, discipleship, fellowship, and service to humanity (Jekins, 2011). In Nigeria, Christianity has developed into a major religious and socio-cultural institution with diverse expressions, including Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, Methodism, Baptist traditions, African Initiated Churches, Pentecostalism, and Evangelical movements. Its development has been shaped by missionary enterprise, indigenous agency, church expansion, and contextual adaptation of Christian teachings (Sanneh, 2003; Kalu, 2008). The Nigerian Christian experience extends beyond worship and doctrinal confession to include contributions to education, healthcare, humanitarian activities, community development, and moral formation. Christian organizations established schools, hospitals, social welfare institutions, and other developmental initiatives that contributed to the transformation of Nigerian society (Paul Gifford, 2016). Therefore, Christianity in this study is understood not merely as a religious identity but as a faith tradition whose beliefs, institutions, practices, and social witness have implications for Nigerian society (Ukah, 2016; Adogame, 2016).

The Concept of Christian Decline and Threat

The expression Christian decline requires careful clarification because it does not necessarily mean a numerical reduction in the number of people who identify as Christians. Nigeria continues to have a substantial Christian population and a highly active Christian

institutional presence (Pew Research Centre, 2016). Consequently, the concept is employed in this study primarily to describe a possible weakening of Christian faith, commitment, discipleship, ethical practice, institutional credibility, and social influence, rather than an assumed demographic collapse. Christian decline may therefore manifest when professed Christian identity becomes increasingly disconnected from Christian values and conduct (Okpaleke, 2022).

It can be reflected in weakened commitment to Christian teachings, declining participation in meaningful discipleship, moral inconsistency, reduced trust in church leadership, youth disengagement, and diminished Christian influence on social ethics (Okpaleke, 2022). The distinction between numerical expansion and spiritual depth is particularly important in understanding contemporary African Christianity, which has experienced substantial institutional and Pentecostal growth while simultaneously confronting questions concerning the quality and social consequences of Christian practice (Kalu, 2008). Thus, this study uses Christian decline as an analytical concept referring to the potential erosion of the spiritual vitality, moral credibility, practical discipleship, and transformative social influence of Christianity in Nigeria.

An emerging threat refers to as a developing condition or combination of factors that has the potential to weaken the continued vitality, relevance, or sustainability of Christianity (Ehuani, 2024; Onyeije, 2025; Tijani et al, 2026). The use of the word “emerging” is significant because the study does not assume that Christianity has already declined in Nigeria. Rather, it identifies contemporary developments that could contribute to decline if they are inadequately addressed (Okpaleke, 2022; Ezigbo, 2015). Such developments include secularization, materialism, consumerism, religious commercialization, denominational rivalry, leadership crises, inadequate discipleship, youth disengagement, globalization, and the influence of competing worldviews. The rapid growth of Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity demonstrates the dynamism of Nigerian Christianity, but the commercialization of religious practices and the prominence of prosperity-oriented teachings have also generated debates about Christian spirituality, ethics, and social responsibility (Ojo, 2006; Kalu, 2008). The emerging threat, therefore, concerns the possibility that Christianity could retain numerical visibility while experiencing a gradual weakening of its spiritual depth, ethical witness, institutional credibility, and capacity to address contemporary social realities (Gifford, 2015; Ojo, 2020; Okpaleke, 2022).

Challenges Confronting Christianity in Nigeria

Challenges refer to the internal and external conditions that may hinder the effective transmission, practice, and sustainability of Christian faith. Internal challenges arise from within Christian institutions and communities, while external challenges emerge from wider social, economic, cultural, political, and technological environments (Okpaleke, 2022). Internal challenges may include poor leadership accountability, inadequate discipleship, doctrinal controversies, denominational fragmentation, commercialization of religion, moral failures, and the perceived inconsistency between Christian preaching and the conduct of some religious leaders (Peel, 2016). External challenges include poverty, unemployment, insecurity, corruption, globalization, secular cultural influences, religious pluralism, changing family structures, and the rapid transformation of communication through digital technology.

These challenges become particularly important when Christianity fails to provide credible responses to the realities confronting its adherents. Sanneh (2003) emphasizes the capacity of Christianity to become culturally rooted and locally meaningful, while (Kalu (2008) demonstrates the dynamism through which African Christianity continually responds to changing contexts. The challenge for Nigerian Christianity is therefore to preserve the centrality of

Christian faith while remaining relevant to the changing needs and aspirations of contemporary society.

Christian Faith and Practice

Christian faith refers to the believer's trusting relationship with God and commitment to the person, teachings, and redemptive work of Jesus Christ. It encompasses intellectual conviction, spiritual devotion, personal commitment, and faithful obedience, expressed through the ordering of individual and communal life according to Christian principles (McGrath, 2017; Wright, 2016). Christian faith is therefore more than intellectual acceptance of doctrines; it encompasses a lived relationship with God expressed through worship, obedience, love, service, and moral conduct (Pontifical Biblical Commission, 2008; Wright, 2010; Stott, 1996). Within this study, Christian faith is understood as the spiritual foundation upon which Christian identity and practice are established. A sustainable Christian faith should produce disciples who demonstrate commitment to biblical teachings and embody values such as love, justice, compassion, honesty, humility, forgiveness, and service. The Black Social Gospel tradition understands Christianity as a socially engaged faith whose authenticity is demonstrated through personal spirituality but also suffering, and the pursuit of social transformation (Dorrien, 2015, 2023).

Christian practice refers to the concrete expression of Christian faith in individual and communal life. It includes worship, prayer, Bible study, evangelism, fellowship, discipleship, sacrificial service, moral conduct, care for vulnerable persons, and participation in activities that promote justice and human well-being (Pohl, 2012; Bass, 2010). Christian practice is important to this study because the sustainability of Christianity cannot be measured solely by church membership or attendance. The practical consequences of Christian belief are equally significant, where Christian profession is not accompanied by ethical conduct and social responsibility, there may be a gap between religious identity and lived faith (Nanthmbwe & Magezi, 2024). The Black Social Gospel perspective challenges Christians to demonstrate their faith through practical responses to poverty, injustice, exploitation, and other forms of social suffering (Dorrien, 2018).

Prospects for Sustaining Christianity

Prospects refer to the possibilities, opportunities, and positive conditions that can strengthen the future vitality and relevance of Christianity in Nigeria (Abu, 2025). Despite the challenges confronting the Church, Christianity possesses considerable resources for renewal. These include the continuing commitment of Christian communities, the expansion of Christian educational institutions, evangelistic movements, youth ministries, humanitarian programmes, theological education, digital evangelism, and the capacity of churches to respond to changing social circumstances (CBCN, 2025). Sustainability in this context means the ability of Christianity to preserve its essential theological identity while effectively responding to contemporary social and cultural realities. Such sustainability requires more than numerical church growth. It involves developing spiritually mature believers, strengthening Christian families, promoting credible leadership, engaging young people, improving discipleship, encouraging social responsibility, and ensuring that Christian teachings are meaningfully communicated within contemporary Nigerian society (Umeanwe, 2025; Church of Nigeria, Anglican Communion, 2025).

Christian Faith and Practice as a Basis for Sustainability

The relationship between Christian faith and Christian practice is central to the sustainability of Christianity (Ilesanmi, Imuwahen & Akanbi, 2024). Faith provides the theological foundation, while practice demonstrates the authenticity and relevance of that faith.

Where Christian belief produces compassionate, ethical, socially responsible, and spiritually mature individuals, Christianity is more likely to retain credibility and transformative influence (Ilesanmi, et al, 2024). The sustainability of Christianity in Nigeria therefore requires an integration of belief and behaviour, spirituality and social responsibility, evangelism and discipleship, and institutional growth and ethical transformation. This approach is consistent with the Black Social Gospel emphasis that Christianity should address both individual spiritual needs and broader social conditions (Dorrien, 2015).

Theoretical Framework: Black Social Gospel Theory

This study is anchored in the Black Social Gospel Theory, which provides a useful framework for examining the sustainability of Christian faith and practice in Nigeria. The theory is particularly relevant because it understands Christianity not merely as a system of beliefs or a religious institution but as a faith that must be expressed through ethical conduct, social justice, human dignity, compassion, and transformative engagement with society. Gary Dorrien's scholarship identifies the Black Social Gospel as a tradition of Christian Social thought and activism that connected religious faith with struggles against injustice and social inequality (Dorrien, 2015). The Black Social Gospel tradition, although developed principally within the African-American Christian experience, provides a useful framework for examining the relationship between Christian faith and social realities in Nigeria. The tradition emerged from attempts by Black Christian thinkers to relate Christian theology to racial injustice, poverty, oppression, human dignity, and social transformation. Its central insight is that Christianity should not be restricted to private spirituality but should demonstrate its relevance through engagement with concrete social problems. Dorrien, (2015) further demonstrates that the Black Social Gospel tradition continued to develop around questions of justice, social responsibility, human dignity, and the transformative implications of Christian faith.

The application of this framework to Nigeria does not suggest that the Nigerian experience is historically identical to the African-American experience from which the Black Social Gospel emerged. Rather, the study contextually appropriates its transferable theological principle: that authenticate Christian faith should have implications for the social, ethical, and material conditions of human life. In this study, the framework therefore adapted to examine whether the continuing numerical and institutional presence of Christianity in Nigeria is accompanied by corresponding spiritual vitality, ethical conduct, social responsibility, and transformative influence. Within the Nigerian context, the theory provides a basis for understanding Christian decline as potentially qualitative rather than numerical. Christianity may retain a substantial numerical presence, while experiencing weakening commitment to Christian teachings, inadequate discipleship, moral inconsistency, leadership challenges, declining public credibility, and reduced capacity to influence social ethics. Such developments are significant because the Black Social Gospel tradition evaluates Christian vitality partly in terms of the capacity of faith to respond meaningfully to human suffering and justice. (Dorrien, 2015)

Relevance of the Black Gospel Theory to the Sustainability of Christian Faith and Practice in Nigeria

The Black Social Gospel Theory provides a particularly useful lens for this study because the sustainability of Christianity in Nigeria should not be assessed solely by church population, number of denominations, frequency of worship, or institutional expansion. Numerical strength becomes less meaningful if Christian profession is disconnected from ethical conduct and social responsibility. Applied to Nigeria, the theory suggests that the sustainability of Christian faith depends partly on the extent to which Christians and Churches demonstrate the practical implications of their faith through justice, integrity, compassion, service to the poor,

defense of human dignity, responsible leadership, youth engagement and constructive responses to social problems. This makes the theory relevant to challenges such as poverty, corruption, inequality, insecurity, unemployment, social exclusion, and declining public trust in religious institutions.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design using the documentary research method to examine the sustainability of Christian faith and practice in Nigeria, particularly in relation to the challenges associated with Christian decline. A qualitative design is appropriate because the study seeks to understand and critically examine the complex religious, social, cultural, and institutional factors that influence the continuity and sustainability of Christianity in Nigeria. Rather than relying on numerical measurements, the study interprets existing scholarly arguments, theological perspectives, historical developments, and documented evidence relating to Christian faith and practice (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Recent scholarship on African Christianity also demonstrates the importance of examining Christianity through its changing social, cultural, demographic, and institutional contexts (Adogame, 2022; Asonzeh, 2021).

Documentary research is particularly suitable because the study does not seek to generate primary empirical data through questionnaires, interviews, or observations. Instead, it critically examines existing scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, theological publications, church documents, institutional reports, demographic studies, and credible international publications to identify the factors affecting Christian commitment and practice.

Bowen (2009) argues that documentary analysis provides a systematic procedure for reviewing and interpreting documents as evidence in qualitative research. In the Nigerian context, documentary evidence is especially useful for examining the historical development, institutional transformation, changing patterns of religious participation, and contemporary challenges confronting Christianity. The study also incorporates selected relevant African scholarship to situate Nigerian Christianity within the wider African religious landscape. African Christianity continues to demonstrate considerable vitality, but its sustainability is influenced by changing patterns of religious identity.

Literature Review

Recent scholarship suggests that the major challenge facing Christianity in Nigeria is not necessarily the disappearance of Christian institutions or religious activities, but the quality, credibility, and transformative capacity of Christian faith. Umeanwe (2025) observes that the proliferation of Christian denominations has contributed to the expansion and contextual adaptability of Christianity in Nigeria. However, he cautions that denominational competition can produce rivalry, sensationalism, and an emphasis on membership growth at the expense of genuine discipleship and spiritual maturity. Thus, while numerical expansion may indicate vitality, it does not automatically demonstrate sustainable Christian growth. This concern is reinforced by Ilesanmi, Imuwahen, and Akanbi (2024), who identify a significant disconnection between Christian religiosity and moral praxis in contemporary Nigerian churches. They argue that visible religious activities such as worship attendance, fasting, pilgrimage, and media ministry have not always translated into moral and spiritual formation. Their position is important to the present study because it suggests that Christian decline should also be understood in terms of diminished ethical credibility and the failure to translate faith into responsible conduct. Consequently, faith renewal must reconnect Christian belief with practical Christian living.

The literature further indicates that church growth should be evaluated beyond numerical indicators. Davis and Howell (2024) challenge conventional measures of church

success based principally on attendance and giving. They propose a more substantive understanding of growth centered on believers' conformity to Christ's example of servanthood and their participation in Christian community. Their argument complements Umeanwe's (2025) concern about numerical proliferation without corresponding spiritual maturity. Together, these scholars suggest that sustainable Christianity requires discipleship, character formation, communal responsibility, and Christ-centered service rather than numerical expansion alone. Another important dimension is the Church's social relevance. Ng'etich (2024) maintains that Christianity and other religious institutions in Africa have historically contributed to education, healthcare, charity, social stability, and community development. He therefore views religion as possessing considerable potential for positive social transformation, particularly in contexts of poverty and instability. Similarly, Adigun and Afolaranmi (2024) argue that the Nigerian Church has contributed to community development through education, healthcare, empowerment, outreach, and other forms of social responsibility, although they contend that greater engagement with structural social problems is still required.

Mashau (2024), however, introduces a critical missiological perspective by linking declining church vitality in some African contexts to missionless, inward-looking ecclesial practices, including Sunday-centered Christianity and inadequate societal engagement. He argues for a reorientation of mission that restores the Church's social and missional agency. This perspective is particularly relevant to Nigeria, where Christianity possesses extensive institutional and demographic presence but faces questions concerning its capacity to influence ethical, social, and public life. The literature also points to discipleship and youth engagement as important components of renewal. Mepaiyeda (2024) argues that the passivity of lay members in some Nigerian mainline churches has weakened the realization of effective discipleship and mission. His emphasis on shared responsibility challenges a clergy-centered model of Christianity and supports greater participation of ordinary believers in mission.

Findings

1. Christian decline is not necessarily synonymous with numerical decline.

The literature indicates that Christianity in Nigeria continues to demonstrate considerable numerical and institutional presence. However, numerical expansion does not automatically translate into spiritual vitality, moral credibility, or transformative influence (Umeanwe, 2025; Davis & Howell, 2024).

2. There is a significant gap between Christian profession and Christian practice.

A major concern is the disconnection between religious commitment and ethical conduct. Where Christian beliefs are not reflected in honesty, compassion, integrity, and responsible social behaviour, the credibility of Christianity is weakened (Ilesanmi, Imuwahen, & Akanbi, 2024).

3. Weak discipleship constitutes a major threat to sustainable Christian growth.

The literature suggests that church expansion without systematic discipleship can produce nominal Christians whose commitment may remain largely institutional or ceremonial. Sustainable Christianity therefore requires intentional spiritual formation and mature Christian participation (Umeanwe, 2025; Mepaiyeda, 2024).

4. Denominational proliferation has produced both opportunities and challenges.

The expansion of Christian denominations has increased evangelistic opportunities and provided diverse forms of Christian expression. However, excessive competition, fragmentation, and an overemphasis on numerical success can undermine unity and authentic spiritual formation (Umeanwe, 2025).

5. The credibility of Christian leadership is crucial to faith renewal.

Leadership failures, including perceived ethical inconsistencies and inadequate accountability, can damage public confidence in Christian institutions. Conversely, servant leadership, integrity, transparency, and responsible stewardship can strengthen the Church's witness and contribute to renewal (Dorrien, 2015; Umeanwe, 2025).

6. Youth engagement is essential for the continuity of Christianity.

The future vitality of Christianity depends significantly on its ability to involve and disciple younger generations. Limited youth participation, inadequate leadership opportunities, and failure to address contemporary youth realities can weaken intergenerational transmission of Christian faith (Mepaiyeda, 2024; Church of Nigeria [Anglican Communion], 2025).

7. Christian families remain important agents of faith transmission.

The literature indicates that the family remains a critical context for Christian formation and intergenerational transmission. Consequently, weakening family structures and inadequate Christian parenting can affect the sustainability of Christian beliefs and practices (Church of Nigeria [Anglican Communion], 2025).

8. Social responsibility significantly affects the relevance of Christianity.

Christianity retains considerable potential to contribute to education, healthcare, poverty alleviation, community development, and social welfare. Greater engagement with socioeconomic problems can strengthen the Church's public relevance and demonstrate the practical implications of Christian faith (Ng'etich, 2024; Adigun & Afolaranmi, 2024).

9. Faith renewal requires the integration of spirituality and social transformation.

The findings indicate that renewal cannot be restricted to prayer, worship, evangelism, or increased church attendance. It should also involve ethical transformation, justice, compassion, service, and responsible engagement with society. This corresponds closely with the Black Social Gospel's insistence that authentic Christian faith should have social and transformative consequences (Dorrien, 2015, 2023).

10. Christianity possesses substantial resources for renewal despite existing threats.

The study finds that the challenges facing Christianity should not be interpreted as evidence of inevitable collapse. Nigeria's Christian communities possess theological traditions, Scripture, churches, educational institutions, social ministries, human resources, and missionary structures that can be mobilised for renewal. What is required is their intentional reorientation toward spiritual maturity, ethical credibility, discipleship, social responsibility, and transformative Christian witness (Dorrien, 2023; Ng'etich, 2024).

Conclusion

The study concludes that the sustainability of Christian faith and practice in Nigeria cannot be measured primarily by church membership, denominational expansion, or public religious visibility. Rather, it depends on the extent to which Christian belief produces spiritual maturity, moral integrity, responsible leadership, faith discipleship, and constructive engagement with society. Although, Christianity remains a major religious force in Nigeria, numerical growth does not necessarily result in ethical transformation or credible Christian witness. The persistent disconnect between professed Christian beliefs and everyday conduct therefore presents a significant threat to the Church's enduring influence and public trustworthiness. The theoretical framework of the Black Gospel Theory provides an important lens for interpreting this challenge. Its central emphasis on the inseparability of faith, justice, ethical responsibility, and social transformation suggests that Christianity cannot remain sustainable when it is detached from the realities of poverty, corruption, inequality, violence, family instability, and social exclusion. As Dorrien (2015, 2023) argues, Christian faith must be expressed not only through worship and doctrinal confession but also through active concern for human dignity and the transformation of

unjust social conditions. Applied to Nigeria, this framework calls the Church to move beyond an exclusive with numerical growth and to recover a holistic vision of Christian mission that unites evangelism, discipleship, moral formation, justice, compassion, and public responsibility. Ultimately, further researchers should critically examine how the Black Social Gospel Theory can be contextually adapted to Nigeria without neglecting the country's diverse theological, cultural, and denominational realities. Research should focus on developing and evaluating practical models that integrate evangelism, discipleship, social justice, ethical leadership, community development, and advocacy for vulnerable groups. Such scholarship would provide the empirical evidence needed to move beyond general recommendations and formulate sustainable strategies for strengthening Christian faith, restoring public credibility, and ensuring the long-term spiritual and social relevance of Christianity in Nigeria.

Recommendations

1. Nigerian churches should move beyond measuring success primarily by membership, attendance, and church expansion. Greater emphasis should be placed on sustained discipleship, biblical formation, spiritual maturity, and Christ-like character. This is consistent with the argument that denominational and numerical expansion does not necessarily correspond with genuine spiritual maturity or transformative Christian growth.
2. Christian should deliberately integrate Christian teaching with ethical living, compassion, honesty, accountability, and social responsibility. Christian profession should be demonstrated through practical conduct in homes, workplaces, communities, and public life, particularly because a disconnection between religiosity and moral practice can weaken Christian credibility.
3. Church leaders should demonstrate integrity, transparency, servant leadership, and responsible stewardship. Leadership development should incorporate theological competence, ethical formation, accountability, and sensitivity to contemporary Nigerian social challenges. Such an approach is important for restoring public confidence in Christian institutions and strengthening the Church's witness in society.
4. Churches should create meaningful opportunities for young people to participate in worship, leadership, evangelism, social action, and decision-making. Youth ministries should address contemporary concerns and provide opportunities for young people to develop spiritually and contribute meaningfully to the Church's mission. Intentional participation and discipleship are essential for ensuring intergenerational continuity within Christianity.
5. Churches should strengthen marriage and family ministries through biblical teaching, parenting programmes, premarital and marital counseling, and intergenerational discipleship. Strong Christian families can provide an important foundation for transmitting Christian beliefs, values, and practices to succeeding generations.
6. Nigerian Christianity should respond more actively to poverty, corruption, inequality, insecurity, unemployment, and other forms of social injustice. The Church should combine evangelism with practical service and advocacy for human dignity and justice. This recommendation reflects the Black Social Gospel emphasis on connecting Christian faith with social ethics, justice, and transformation. It is also consistent with contemporary scholarship emphasizing the contribution of religious institutions to social development in Africa.
7. Christian teaching should be communicated in ways that meaningfully engage contemporary Nigerian society, including appropriate use of digital media, indigenous languages, creative communication, and culturally relevant approaches. Such contextualization can enhance the Church's capacity to communicate its message effectively while responding to changing social realities.

8. Churches and Christian organizations should periodically evaluate their theology, worship, discipleship structures, leadership practices, social ministries, and engagement with society. Such self-examination should identify areas of weakness and generate practical strategies for renewal through prayer, repentance, spiritual formation, mission, and social transformation.

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