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Pentecostalism and Charismatic Movements in Nigeria: Factors of Growth and Inherent Challenges

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Introduction

Since about 1986, i.e. in the past 46 years and within our own generation, we have witnessed certain fundamental changes in the way Christianity is perceived and practiced in Nigeria, and in other parts of West Africa. The most substantial change is associated with a kind of spirituality brought into existence by the rise of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. This new religious effervescence is part of what is generally referred to as the Charismatic Renewal, a revivalist movement within the Christian church with global dimension. From its old form as a sectarian religion in Africa in the early twentieth century, by the 1990s Pentecostalism has moved into the public domain to become a global religion, and has thus attracted the attention of the media, the generality of Christians and non-Christians and scholars of religion.

This new Christianity was at first identified with young men and women who labelled themselves as pastors and evangelists despite lacking any pastoral or theological training. Nevertheless, they actively engaged other Christians and non-Christians, exhorting them to repentance from all sins, to receive Jesus Christ as their saviour and thus become “born again.” This old evangelical message received a new impetus as the young puritan preachers, as van Dijk, a Dutch scholar called them, went about in public places, preaching and praying to deliver people from every kind of malevolent spiritual forces.¹

Lagos in the 1970s and early 1980s was reputed for breeding a type of preachers that operated mainly in *molues*² and in other public conveyances exhorting Nigerians to repentance. In the new millennium, not only do they preach and pray, they also collect offerings, a reflection of the changing economic situation of the society. Very often in their prayers they see Satan and his cohorts of demonic spirits. “Vampires” and “blood sucking demons” on the pot-holed and poorly maintained Nigerian roads, which they assail with “*Holy Ghost Fire*” and the blood of Jesus.

Their sermons centring on healing and miracles, breakthrough programmes for economic success and upward social mobility, deliverance from satanic oppression, and divine protection from perceived enemies, and advertisements of conventions and special programmes provide utopian escape from deteriorating socio-economic and political conditions.

This new evangelism was also promoted by and through literature, crusades, camp meetings, “Fire or Holy Ghost power” conferences, “Holy Ghost Nights,” healing and deliverance services, etc., which were constantly and generously advertised in the media. By the mid-1980s, the young puritan

¹ Richard A van Dijk, “Young Puritan Preachers in Post-Independence Malawi” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 62, No. 2 (1992), pp. 159- 181.

² Big commercial buses conveying up to 80 people usually crammed together with about a half standing.

preachers were already establishing their own religious groups as bases for their new evangelism. Within a decade of their existence, many of these groups have become independent Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, adding a new fervour to African Christianity. Overall, by the early 1990s, Charismatic and Pentecostal churches were visible and could not be ignored because they were reshaping the religious landscape of Africa.

Pentecostal and charismatic movements constitute one of the dominant forms of religion in Nigeria affecting millions of educated young people. They are very articulate, upwardly mobile and very westernized in outlook. However, their basic religious cosmology is rooted in the African worldviews of spirits, evil, and fear of the present and the future. Moreover, their social goal is congruent with the general aspirations of African traditional quest for long life, money, power, success and fame in a competitive but dislocated society.

One major factor that makes this religion to achieve public recognition is the proliferation of numerous Pentecostal and Charismatic groups and churches under apostles, prophets, general overseers and self-styled bishops. They erect billboards at street corners and function in rented or temporary spaces while publicizing their activities with the electronic and print media amidst a very competitive religious landscape. From about ten independent Charismatic organizations in the mid-1970s largely restricted to south-western Nigeria, the number had grown to over five thousand groups across the country by 2000. By 2000, the membership had become substantial with about 8 million of the estimated 48.42 million Christians in Nigeria,³ about two million of the Christian population in Ghana,⁴ and not less than 400,000 in Cameroon and Cote d'Ivoire, and about 300,000 each in Benin and Burkina Faso, about 150,000 in Togo, and about 2,000 in Niger Republic.⁵ It is remarkable that within four decades the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements have moved from being a fringe religion into a position of social and religious prominence in many countries.

The rapid expansion of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in Nigeria is linked to their modernizing tendencies and strategies, to a pragmatic approach to social and religious issues affecting the lives of millions in disruptive socio-economic and political contexts, such as were evident in many African countries in the late 1970s through the 1990s. There were also

³ Figures worked out from Annual Percentage Growth and other reports released by the National Population Commission between 2002 and 2007.

⁴ Data culled from the *National Church Survey 1993 Update* (Accra: Ghana Evangelism Committee, 1993), pp. 1 - 15.

⁵ Data condensed from information gathered during personal field works in Cote d'Ivoire in 1996, and 1997. See also Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk, *Operation World*, 21st century edition, (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Lifestyle, 2001), pp. 140- 1; 208- 9 and 624- 5

emphases on healing to counter every difficulty of life and every form of malevolent spiritual forces, and an emphasis on success and material prosperity to empower believers for upward social mobility in a competitive capitalist environment (Ojo, 1995; Marshall, 1991, 1992). These emphases form a continuation to traditional cosmology of power and evil in the African society.

Previous studies on African Pentecostal and Charismatic movements have largely been historical and situated within specific countries. Ojo (1988a, 1988b) examined the growth of Charismatic movements in Western Nigeria, while Ruth Marshall (1992) focused on their socio-political involvement in the public sphere. Gifford (1992), from various perspectives, presented the growth of Charismatic movements in many countries within one edited volume. Gifford (1994) further described the characteristics of major Charismatic organizations in Ghana. Some recent works are anthropological in content. For example, Birgit Meyer (1992) examined the construction of a cosmology of power in modern Ghana. Meyer's recent works have focused on the connection between Pentecostalism and popular media culture (2000m 2003). Hackett (1998) examined linkages in the appropriation of the media and media technology by Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in Nigeria and Ghana.

Ojo (1997) investigated cross-cultural missionary activities of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements as an important part of the African initiative in Christian missions in the twentieth century. Marshall-Fratani and A. Corten (2001) largely examined Pentecostal movements in Africa with the context of trans-nationalism and globalization. Furthermore, Ukah (2008) details how the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria has deployed Biblical and secular doctrines to create new transnational identities and, hence, create, huge social and financial capital. On a broader scale, Kalu (2008) re-interprets Pentecostal movements in Africa from an African cultural perspective. Regional analysis in other parts of Africa has been provided by Allan Anderson, Van Dijk, Karla Poewe, David Maxwell, Asonzeh Ukah, Musa Gaiya and other.

In this article, I wish to submit that the Pentecostal and Charismatic successes in Nigeria and in West Africa have been due majorly to their ability to simplify the complexities of modern life in such a way that everyone connected to the religion succeeds in negotiating and finding answers to problems of modern urban life caused by social dislocation and the failure of centralized state. Hence, the transformative power of Pentecostalism in Africa is due to its presentation as an alternative centre of power to solving human needs.

The Religious Foundation of Charismatic Christianity

Pentecostalism is a religious phenomenon that emphasizes the presence and activities of the Holy Spirit in more dynamic ways in the lives of Christians, and which also insists that baptism of the Holy Spirit is a second experience

after the conversion experience; indeed, the Pentecostals identify the Pentecostal experience as the most identifiable mark of a Christian. It is also accepted that baptism of the Holy Spirit renews the lives of Christians, and it also renews the Church and makes it better placed to confront the challenges of society.

The Charismatic Renewal is usually associated with the belief that there is another important experience after the conversion experience called baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is believed to impact a dynamic spirituality in the lives of believers. Indeed, there are evidence and testimonies to affirm this fact. The events in Acts 2 and similar passages in chapter 10 and 11 form the basic Scripture references to the experience of baptism of the Holy Spirit. In fact, Allan Anderson has remarked on the primacy of religious experience associated with the Holy Spirit and charismatic gifts as the foundation for Pentecostal spirituality through the ages.⁶

Pentecostal beliefs have been associated with Christianity since the Montanist movement in the second century. But Pentecostalism became a global phenomenon in the early twentieth century and was institutionalized and transformed into new denominations within its first twenty years in the United States. Its modern American roots are associated with the black holiness preacher, William Seymour and the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles in 1900, which was institutionalized in the Apostolic Faith Mission, Foursquare Gospel Church, Assemblies of God, and other smaller denominations. In the 1960s, Pentecostal spirituality penetrated many mainline Protestant churches when some evangelical Christians claimed the Pentecostal experience of baptism of the Holy Spirit and its accompaniment of speaking in tongues.⁷

Though rejected by their mainline Protestant counterparts, Pentecostal spread gradually but surely to some Anglican, Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian churches; and by 1967, to the Roman Catholic Church. This latter Pentecostal outpouring is referred to as Charismatic Renewal, and the resulting independent groups as Charismatic movements. Charismatic Renewal later became a worldwide phenomenon absorbing other local developments through American televangelism of T. L. Osborn, Oral Roberts, William Braham, Franklin Hall, etc. and through organizations such as Reinhard Bonnke's Christ for All Nations and Demos Shakarin's Full Gospel organizations deeply rooted in Pentecostal spirituality.

⁶ Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004), pp. 19-38.

⁷ Richard A. Quebedeaux, 'Charismatic Renewal: The Origins, development, and Significance of Neo-Pentecostalism as a Religious Movement in the United States and Great Britain 1901-74' (D. Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1975), pp. 80-7; See also Dennis J. Bennet, *Nine O'clock in the Morning* (Eastbourne, 1970).

There have been several claims of the influence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians in Africa. In Nigeria, there were instances of Christians in the Anglican Church in the first decade of the twentieth century who emphasized the work of the Holy Spirit in local revival groups. One of such was led by Garrick Sokari Braide, a prophet and evangelist in the Bonny area of the Niger Delta. Likewise, Moses Orimolade and the other pioneer prophets of the Aladura churches in Western Nigeria equally paid attention to the work of the Holy Spirit. The Aladura churches in the 1920s and 1930s emphasized the centrality of God's power and prayer to address all human problems. Moreover, in the 1960s in Isoko area of Delta State, an evangelist, Adam Igbudu, led a group which was called Olezi (i.e. Holy Spirit).

The Olezi partly inspired Michael Marioghae, a 1964 graduate of the University of Ibadan, who moved from the Anglican Church and established his own church, the Holy Spirit Mission, in the 1980s in Benin City. This new church further indicates a continuing affinity to the power of the Holy Spirit. Overall, Charismatic Christianity as a new religious phenomenon is still grounded in the pneumatic elements of African Christianity, and to some extent forms continuity with existing strands of African Christianity.

Charismatics, by tracing their roots to New Testament times, are attempting a renewal of the Christian faith through their claim that they are restoring whatever vitality that may have been lost in the existing Protestant and Roman Catholic churches. Moreover they are saying that apostolic Christianity is grounded in the experience of "being baptized in the Holy Spirit" as a second blessing and definite experience, following and different from the conversion experience. This inward experience of baptism of the Holy Spirit, as they claim, is often identified by the initial and outward sign of speaking in tongues and the exercise of the gifts of the Holy Spirit – principally the gift of healing and demonstration of power – mostly in miracles and in personal social transformation.⁸

Both Pentecostals and Charismatics believe in the Pentecostal doctrines of baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues. However, Charismatics are trans-denominational and more ecumenical in their Pentecostal expression than the Pentecostals, who often come from the classical Pentecostal denominations such as Apostolic Faith Mission, Assemblies of God, Foursquare Gospel Church, The Apostolic Church, Elim Gospel Church, etc. Charismatic Renewal in the 1960s and early 1970s carried with it no desire to form any independent fellowship as the Pentecostal assemblies did in the early decades of the twentieth century. However, since the 1980s, many Nigerian

⁸ See Michael P. Hamilton, ed. *The Charismatic Movement* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975), p. 7; Nils Bloch-Hoell, *The Pentecostal Movement* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1964), pp. 1-2.

Charismatic groups have adopted independent existence with regular Sunday services. This denominational identity came as a result of growth and the demands of governance and management of the scarce resources of these new churches.

Pentecostalism: A Dynamic Spirituality

Contemporary Charismatic Renewal movement in Nigeria is due partly to the intense religious awakening among youths who were connected with the Scripture Union in war-torn Biafra (Eastern Nigeria). This began in 1968. However, it was from the University of Ibadan that the revival became a national phenomenon. In January 1970 revival broke out when some students in the Christian Union claimed to have been baptized in the Holy Spirit in a private prayer meeting. Though a small group, three of them who were leaders of the Christian Union, boldly shared their Pentecostal experience. Within a short time, more students accepted the experience, and it soon spread to other Christians groups such as the Student Christian Movement (established in Nigeria about 1937) and Scripture Union (established in 1887), and to other universities. In fact, by 1973, the revival was so strong that some Christian students hoisted a big banner at the gate of the then University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) with a bold inscription, "Welcome to Jesus University."

A rising tide of evangelistic and pentecostalizing activities characterized the Renewal in its early years in Nigeria, and this doctrinal emphasis eased its rapid geographical spread. Moreover, from the mid-1970s, the leaders of the Charismatic revival who were graduating from Nigeria's higher institutions shortly established independent Charismatic groups to share and propagate their Pentecostal experience, and to continue their campus activities. By 1974 more than ten Charismatic organization had been established by graduates already influenced by the revival. Some of the earliest groups were the Hour of Freedom Evangelistic Association, Onitsha,⁹ established in 1970. In 1971, the Souls Harvesters was formed in Warri;¹⁰ the Master's Vessels Group in Umuahia about 1972; and the Deeper Christian Life Ministry was established in Lagos in 1973.¹¹

⁹ Established by Stephen Okafor, who now holds a Ph.D. degree in Theology and others in Onitsha from their involvement in evangelistic activities under the Scripture Union.

¹⁰ Established by Emmanuel Onofurho, a graduate of the Auchu Polytechnic.

¹¹ For more about this organization, see M. A. Ojo, 'Deeper Life Bible Church in Nigeria', in Paul Gifford, ed. *New Dimension in African Christianity* (Nairobi: All African Council of Churches, 1992), pp. 135- 156. M. A. Ojo 'Deeper Life Christian Ministry: A case study of the Charismatic Movement in Western Nigeria', *Journal of*

The Redeemed Christian Church of God was not part of the revival as it was originally an Aladura church founded in 1952. It became a Pentecostal church by a gradual process, and was fully transformed under the leadership of Enoch Adeboye. These groups originally were inter-denominational or non-denominational, and they functioned only during week days, with their members still claiming to be members of the existing non-Pentecostal churches. By the early 1980s, several Charismatic organizations had become new independent denominations when Sunday services were begun. In their early years, the Charismatic organizations were rather amorphous, and membership was not clearly defined, but by the mid-1980s this had changed as more independent Charismatic groups proliferated. Soon after, paid clergy, mostly associates of the founders and later some who were trained in their own Bible schools emerged, and by the late 1980s some were erecting their own church buildings.

Generally, independent Charismatic churches are led by solitary figures who are either entrepreneurs or visionaries. Their charisma is reflected in their activities as preachers, healers, prophets, organizers, counsellors, etc. Moreover, their authoritarian leadership is overbearing on their organizations, which they manage almost as personal empires, with little recourse to any constitutional framework. To the members, the pastors are not ordinary men. They are “men of God,” “the anointed,” “Baba” or “Papa,” “Daddy G. O.,” “the Anointed men of God,” “the men with power-packed messages” and lately, “the Rev. Dr” or “Evangelist Dr”. They are also “the Holy Spirit-soaked demon destroyers,” the bishops and archbishops, who are chauffeured with bodyguards. There is a matching public image to these personal descriptions. Overall, the founders and leading pastors have achieved a kind of celebrity status through the command of large followership and the effective use of the media.

By the beginning of the new millennium, most mainline Protestant denominations that have been conservative and have opposed the Pentecostal resurgences were beginning to be influenced by the Charismatic Renewal. The student groups in the denominations such as the Baptist Student Fellowship, the Methodist Evangelical Movement, the Anglican Youth Fellowship or the Evangelical Fellowship of Anglican Communion (EFAC), etc., were the avenues for the penetration of Pentecostalism into these denominations. As opposition lessened, worship services in some of these denominations were rejuvenated and restructured to accommodate Pentecostal flavour. Eventually, the Charismatic Renewal and its accompanying Pentecostal spirituality became symbols of change within an evangelical milieu. From an advantage of hindsight, an evangelical scholar, Emiola Nihinlola, was right when in

Religion in Africa, 18 (1988), pp. 141–162.

reference to the sweeping Charismatic Renewal, he recommended to his Baptist people: “Don’t Reject It, Don’t Adopt It, Study It, Moderate It, and Experience It.”

Initially, classical Pentecostals and Charismatics were sceptical about the Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement because, until its emergence, the Roman Catholic Church has been labelled the great Babylon of the book of Revelation. But it did not take long for both Catholic Charismatics and Protestant Charismatics to start meeting together regularly for prayers. However, the one major distinction in Nigeria between Catholic Charismatics and Protestant Charismatics is that the latter tend to establish independent Charismatic churches in furtherance of their Charismatic experience, while Catholic Charismatics prefer to remain in the Roman Catholic Church.

Charismatic movements are uniquely modern, imbued with a can-do mentality, market-oriented, success-directed, very optimistic, and charismatic in style, with ever growing multi-ethnic congregations largely using English as a medium of communication. In addition, Charismatics manifest a shrewd pragmatism and a triumphant entrepreneurial outlook particularly as enlistment and marketing strategies. Hence, they prefer self-advertisement in public places using the media: newspapers, billboards, handbills, banners, TV and radio advertisement, etc. These characteristics have enabled the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements to propagate their doctrines to the upwardly mobile, educated middle class who live in urban areas.

Three streams of Pentecostalism can be discerned in Nigeria. The first are the classical Pentecostal churches many of which resulted from the activities of Western missionaries in Nigeria. Among them are the Foursquare Gospel Church, Apostolic Faith Mission, The Apostolic Church and the Assemblies of God Church; these were introduced into Nigeria in the 1930s and 1940s. The second type includes the indigenous Pentecostal churches, which resulted from the visionary experiences and activities of some men and women between the 1920s and 1950s. Though initially rooted in the Aladura spirituality, by the 1960s they had become Pentecostal in doctrine and practice, following their affiliation or association with foreign Pentecostal churches. Among these are the Salem Gospel Mission with headquarters in Ile-Ife, the Gospel Faith Mission with headquarters in Ibadan, and the Redeemed Christian Church of God. The third category, which is the most visible of Pentecostal Christianity, is the newer Charismatic churches, which emerged from a revival on the university campuses in the 1970s. Even though the Aladura churches share certain common doctrinal emphases with the Pentecostals, both are different in terms of membership, marketing style, pastoral leadership, access to global media, and the methods of communication.

Although the social prominence of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements and the intensity of their religious activities are clearly noticeable, it is still necessary to provide some statistics which will give a concrete picture of

this new religious phenomenon. The census of November 1991 put the country's population at 88.51 million, of which 23.43 million were in Western Nigeria, with 54% of this figure being Christians.¹² Rapid population growth at an annual rate of 2.98% puts the country population in 2000 at 115,289,674 of which 48.42 million across the country were Christians.¹³ The 2006 census figure showed a national population of 140,003,542, of which 61.60 million were projected to be Christians.¹⁴

Therefore, extending the 1963 figures of religious affiliations into projections, 44% of the country's population in 2006 were Christians. About fifty-one per cent of these Christians were Protestants, while Roman Catholics constituted twenty-one per cent; the Indigenous African Churches number about eight per cent, while the Pentecostal and Charismatics constituted about nineteen per cent; other Christians, including Sabbatharians, constitute the remaining one per cent. All over the country, Pentecostals and Charismatics number about 11.7 million. About eighty per cent of these are in the independent Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, while the rest are still in the mainline Protestant churches.

Recent Developments within the Charismatic Movements

In their early years, the Charismatic organizations were rather amorphous, and membership was not clearly defined. In fact, most organizations claimed then that they only existed to provide avenues for Bible studies and prayer meetings to Christians, whom they hoped would inaugurate renewal within their established churches. However, with numerical growth over the years, the quest for leadership opportunities, personal ambition, opposition from established churches and the need for pastoral care for converts have all contributed to the emergence of Charismatic organizations as an independent

¹² National Population Commission, *Census News 1992–1991 Population Census (Provisional Results)* (Lagos, 1992), p. 8.

¹³ "Nation's Population to hit 160m by 2010" *Vanguard* (Lagos), April 17, 2002. The percentage is estimated to have risen from 34.5% in 1963 to about 44% in 2000 largely as a result intense Christian evangelization through the elementary and secondary institutions, Christian health and social services.

¹⁴ By geographical spread, the three geopolitical zones of the North have a combined population of 75,025,166. North-West has 35,786,944; North-Central, 20,266,257; and North-East, 18,971,965. On the other hand, the combined population of southern states is put at 64,978,376. The South-West has 27,581,992; South-South, 21,014,644; and South-East, 16,381,729. From the figures of the census, the annual percentage growth was put 3.2%. (see *Vanguard*, Lagos, Nigeria, January 10, 2007, p. 1). See also "Legal Notice on Publication of the Details of the Breakdown of the National and State Provisional Total 2006 Census" *Federal Government of Nigeria, Official Gazette*, No 24, Vol. 94, May 2007, pp. 1-25.

movement. A sociological rationale for this is that over a period of time charisma becomes institutionalized. When this happens, the religious group adopts some organizational structure and assumes an independent denominational existence.

The Charismatic organizations adopted many strategies to maintain their denominational tendencies. Sunday services were introduced to strengthen midweek activities of the early years; residential retreats or camp meetings with offer of free food, lodging and transportation soon gave way to regular and better organized national conferences or crusades. Tracts and personal evangelism of the early years were replaced by regular newsletters and periodicals with the aim of linking members. The messages shifted from personal evangelism and the baptism of the Holy Spirit to healing, miracles and prosperity. To a large extent, these changes were conditioned by the socio-economic changes in the society. The 1970s were economically prosperous years for many Nigerians, so it was easy and affordable to give free food, lodging, etc., to followers attending retreats. By the early 1980s, the country had begun to experience economic difficulties, hence the management of the scarce resources through streamlining and routinisation.

Emphasis on evangelism soon developed into a consciousness of missions with much political significance because Charismatics insist that Nigeria, as the acclaimed “giant of Africa,” should be a bastion for the evangelization of the continent. Unlike the existing Protestant churches, the Charismatic movements have made significant strides in indigenous African missions, and their missionary activities have spread to many parts of Africa and beyond. Two of the most successful indigenous mission agencies are Calvary Ministry formed in 1975, initially with the aim of promoting missions to Muslims, and later advancing cross-cultural missions all over Africa. Second is the Christian Missionary Foundation, based in Ibadan and formed in 1981, which initially promoted missions to rural areas.

In the 1970s and 1980s, many Charismatics held on to the conviction that Nigeria has been blessed because God wants Nigerians to use the resources of the country to evangelise Africa. In addition, the expansion of Nigeria's political influence, particularly the country's contribution of the liberation struggle in Southern Africa in the 1970s opened the eyes of Charismatics to the possible influence of Nigerian Christians in other African countries.

Largely through the formation of indigenous mission agencies, mostly non-denominational for the recruitment, training, sending, supporting and supervising missionaries, and through the territorial extension of branches of Charismatic organizations to new areas, Charismatic missions is advancing rapidly all over Africa.

Typology of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements in Nigeria

Charismatic organizations show interesting variety. Some are large while some

are small. Each has its uniqueness and often appeals to different classes of people. Using the paradigm of power and piety, two major impetus of Pentecostal religion, I have attempted a classification of the movements into six distinct groups.¹⁵ Crucial to the life and activities of the Charismatic movement is the articulation and appropriation of new forms of power in very pragmatic terms to mediate and address contemporary needs of Africans. This classification is based on the perceptions of how Charismatics believe the world and individuals would be redeemed from the malevolent forces, and for members to achieve personal empowerment.

First, **the faith seekers** are conversionist and they manifest this attitude with vigorous evangelistic activities directed at the individual. They insist that the individual has to undergo certain experiences that will transform his or her egoistic outlook to one that acknowledges a creator God and his plan of redemption for the world. In terms of social and economic characteristics, they are generally from the lower level of the socio-economic ladder, their asceticism compensates for the inequality they suffer, and they often distance themselves from the values of the secular society.

Second are **the faith builders** who emphasize the realization of human potentials in the individual to overcome contemporary difficulties of life. Most of these groups tend to prosper in the urban areas and among the educated middle class. Faith builders rely on harnessing the potentials of the individual, but which are construed as divine favours. They also believe that Christians must be wealthy; hence material success, measured by owning big cars, nice clothing and fat bank deposits, is the mark of true spirituality. In terms of social and economic characteristics, they tend to accept the values of the secular society, though certain aspects of their doctrinal emphases tend to regulate the “ethical” ways of acquiring wealth and achieving success. Members of faith builders groups are those seeking rapid social mobility through material comfort or social recognition.

I call the third group **the faith transformers**. They resemble the conversionists but are more concerned with seeking the conversion of large and isolated ethnic groups rather than individuals. They are traditionally the mission-sending agencies sending full time missionaries to work among “tribal” peoples. They are also ascetic largely because they lack any viable economic base and support for the demanding task of missions. Certain feelings of heroism keep them going.

The fourth group, **the Reformist**, are those who have been influenced by Pentecostal spirituality and found within the mainline Protestant

¹⁵ This discussion in this section is an update version to an earlier typology. See Matthews A. Ojo, “African Charismatics” in *Encyclopaedia of African & African-American Religion*, edited by Stephen Glazier, (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 2-6

denominations and want to remain as members but are seeking renewal of these churches according to their own self-defined religious values. They are literalists who see their denominations as their religious inheritance which must be improved upon. They also see their activities in their churches as God-ordained. In the past two decades, their activities in the Anglican churches have been noticed in the Evangelical Fellowship of the Anglican Communion (EFAC) or the Anglican Youth Fellowship. In the Baptist faith they make up the Baptist Student Fellowship; in the Methodist church they form the majority of those in the Methodist Evangelical Movement; in the Roman Catholic Church as the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, and similarly in other denominations. Socially, they are characterized as second or third generation Christians in these churches; they belong to the middle class; they are educated and have shared in the Charismatic Renewal experience on the campuses.

I identify the fifth category as **the Deliverance churches**. They constitute a new phenomenon within Nigerian Pentecostalism. They are preoccupied with healing and thus act as “forensic experts” viewing African cultural roots as being responsible for the contemporary dislocation in the lives of individuals and the society as a whole. They often associate evil with some traditional names, the origin of what they call “generational” or “ancestral” curses”, and prescribe a total break with ancestral roots. Their prescriptions are ritualistic in manner – certain kinds of prayers, disconnection with the cultural roots, including changing of names, etc. Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, which is now spreading to many African countries where Nigerians are found, best represents this.

Finally, **the Modernists** are the old Aladura (African Independent Churches) members who believe that they have to present their faith in a more acceptable form to a more enlightened society. Some have sympathy for Pentecostal spirituality or have shared in Pentecostal activities, and are mindful of the marketing success of the Charismatics, which they want to replicate in their own constituency. T. B. Joshua's Synagogue Church of All Nations with headquarters in Lagos is also an example, but its preoccupation with physical healing shows its affinity as well to the Deliverance churches.

This typology, which could be applied to other African contexts, provides an analytical framework to make an in-depth enquiry and avoid generalization as has been found in some existing literature on African Pentecostalism. More important, this typology further indicates that Pentecostalism in Africa displays a wide variety of focus and trajectories. Overall, this typology is also one of my special and original contributions to the discourse on Pentecostalism, and provides one of the ways I have tried to renovate the study of African Christianity.

Doctrinal Emphases and Practices

Pentecostals are intensely biblical, so most of their doctrinal emphases are

rooted in the literary interpretation of Bible verses. Moreover, the teachings are often backed up with personal testimonies that make them relevant to most situations. Almost all Pentecostal and Charismatic organizations agree on the major doctrines of the Christian faith like the Incarnation, the Trinity, the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, the sovereignty of God, the death and resurrection of Christ and the expectation of the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ. As already noted, Pentecostals and Charismatics emphasize the baptism of the Holy Spirit and its accompaniment with speaking in tongues as *new* and *additional* experiences after conversion. In addition, to these are certain emphases which include the following:

Healing: The Power in the Blood of Jesus

Healing and miracles are central to and constitute one of the illuminating expressions of the religious idea of Nigerian Charismatics. With copious references to the Scriptures, Charismatics insist that good health is the will of God for every Christian, and the individual who is not in a state of health, is not benefiting from God's blessings. The emphasis is very wide in its scope and application, and presently comprises of four major areas. The first is physical healing, and the second is "casting out demons," which is termed *deliverance*. In recent years, another scope which has developed is healing over difficulties of life, which is termed "Success and Prosperity." Lastly is, healing over the political and socio-economic conditions of a nation, which is termed "Prayer for the Nations." These four aspects of healing are found in varying degrees among Charismatic organizations in the country.

Prosperity: Power of Wealth

This new emphasis became distinct in the mid-1980s largely through the teaching and TV broadcast of the late Archbishop Benson Idahosa of the Church of God Mission Incorporated with headquarters in Benin City. "Prosperity," as defined by David Oyedepo of Winners' Chapel, "is a state of well-being in your spirit and body. It is the ability to use God's power to meet every need of man. . . . In prosperity you enjoy a life of plenty and fulfilment. Prosperity is a state of being successful, it is life on a big scale" (*Weekly Faith Digest*, published by Living Faith Church, No 89/20, p. 3.).

Evangelism and the New Birth: Powers to Transform the World

Charismatics often claim that the new birth is essentially a spiritual experience which must be distinctly experienced at a specific time and occasion, and which must be manifested in one's lifestyle. Hence, they tend to reject one's previous backgrounds, which may include baptism, confirmation, Christian parentage, prayer and fasting, activities in the church, among many others. As already noted, evangelistic activities flow from this premise.

Marriage and the Home

Charismatic movements have also shown concern for the ways in which the marriages and sexual behaviour of their members influence spirituality, hence leaders of Charismatic organizations have paid attention to these spheres by writing numerous books on courtship, the Christian home, sexuality, the “sin” of polygamy, etc.

Lessons to be learnt from the Charismatic Renewal

1. One of the most acknowledged characteristics of the Pentecostal movement in Nigeria, even from its inception in the early decades of the twentieth century, is the dynamism and innovation it has brought to the practice of Christianity in the country. Across the country there has been a substantial religious awakening and deepening of faith for Christians. As a renewal movement, it is a religion that calls for intense religious experiences, and also calls attention to the texts of the Scriptures. It is still spreading across many denominations partly because its doctrinal emphases are contextually relevant to the contemporary situation facing millions of Nigerians.
2. The proliferation of these new churches and their activities offer many challenges to existing churches. First, religious experience plays a crucial role in the life and thought of the Charismatic movements. Charismatics are attempting to integrate experience into doctrinal system that has developed without reference to the experiential side of Christianity. The experience that is greatly emphasized is that of the Holy Spirit which was strongly reflected in the lives of the early Christians.
3. Moreover, the simplicity of the means used by the Charismatic organizations enabled them to reach the masses at the grassroots. The movements are laying a new emphasis on spontaneous oral expression, and thus they are answering the contemporary need for experience and authenticity. The emphasis on experience in Pentecostal theology makes the theology itself quite difficult to assess from a non-Pentecostal viewpoint.
4. In its early years, the Charismatic renewal was a movement of the laity, the widespread interest in the Holy Spirit, individual religious experience and the claim of the priesthood of all believers contributed greatly to strengthen this common fellowship without regard to status. Members call themselves brothers and sisters, and even the leader or founder was called similarly. Hence, the Renewal fostered communal

living, as Charismatics try to live their lives on the model of the Early Church. This is a challenge to the established churches for a re-discovery of *koinonia* within the churches.

5. Charismatic movements have brought worship nearer to ordinary people, because people play a spontaneous part in worship through singing, dancing, singing and praising God. People have reacted in various ways when the liturgical forms of the Charismatic movements are brought face to face with the liturgical forms of the existing evangelical churches. Although, this is the area where the distinctiveness of the movements is clearly seen, yet it is the area that has caused much distaste for other Christians. Evangelical Christians have considered the enthusiastic charismatic worship as too emotional, and the claims of baptism in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues, and the manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit as not totally Scriptural. However, Charismatic worship has restored to the centre of the liturgy genuine praise and a deep spirituality. Consequently, the current dynamism in worship in Protestant Churches cannot be separated from the influence of the Charismatic Renewal.
6. The success of the Charismatic movement in terms of their doctrinal emphases and dynamic worship calls attention to all Christian ministers to dynamic preaching, lively liturgy and life-changing biblical exposition, which are contextually relevant to the needs of Christians. Each time I peruse through published testimonies I am impressed about how people respond to the messages of the Charismatic movements, and how the needs of their members are met. For example, Charismatics preach deliverance to cope with hindrances of the traditional society, they preach prosperity to encourage their members to achieve their personal goals, and they hold regular healing services to address health needs. For the mainline Protestant churches to make any meaningful impact in contemporary Nigeria, their ministers must give messages suitable to the aspirations of their members.
7. It is important to note that most pastors of the Charismatic organizations are bi-vocational. Although, it was the structural weakness of ordaining poorly trained men and women that made them to adopt this orientation in the first instance, it later became a strength for the movements. There is little distance between the bi-vocational minister and his congregation. The minister experiences the same frustration and hardship of taking transport daily to work, he knows the pains of delayed salaries, and knows intimately the culture of

corruption in officialdom, etc. Hence, he is able to minister effectively to the needs of his congregation. In short, the bi-vocational minister is much more flexible in his operation than the non-Pentecostal pastor.

8. Charismatic movements are continually creating new avenues of ministering to Christians. This is clearly reflected in the areas of Christian drama. Although, the staging of drama has been part of the Church's festive occasions for a long time, Charismatics have recently lifted this up by the professionalization of Christian drama. Two outstanding Christian drama organizations are the Mount Zion Faith Ministries and the Watchtower Drama Ministries established in 1985 and 1993 respectively. Both of them are based in Ile-Ife, Western Nigeria, and are using live Christian drama on stage as well as film and video productions to spread the gospel. In combining traditional African cosmology (world of spirits, witches, and the occult powers) with Christian messages, the dramas make the gospel intelligible to the masses of the people. Protestant denominations have something to emulate and must seek ways of refocusing its media ministry to meet contemporary challenges.
9. The captions of their publicity materials are as attractive as the messages they preach, and have been successful in providing responses to pressing needs in the society and in the life of churches in contemporary Nigeria. 'Breakthrough', 'End-Time Winners', 'Grace and Power', 'Good Bye to Poverty', 'Triumphant Over All Difficulties', are samples of the captions of their advertisements. Charismatic organizations have been successful in appropriating marketing techniques to gain the attention of the public and win converts. Such aggressive methods are what the older Protestant churches in Nigeria ought to adopt if they have to achieve relevance in modern Nigeria.
10. Charismatic organizations have challenged the existing churches to invigorate evangelism and missions. Although, they have won more converts from the existing churches, it is obvious that their evangelistic activities are remarkable. In addition, in comparison to other non-Pentecostal churches, the Charismatic movements have embarked on indigenous initiatives in Christian missions within and beyond Africa. It has been easy for Charismatics to undertake evangelism, because many of them have consistent lifestyles to back up their preaching.
11. Most members of the Charismatic organizations, as already pointed out, are youths and most of them have come out from the existing churches to join the Charismatic organizations. What that calls for is

an examination of appropriateness of the youth programmes in the existing churches. Therefore, the established churches ought to overhaul their youth and student programmes.

12. Furthermore, the theology of the Charismatic movements affirms the belief in the spiritual world and reality of evil powers. Hence, Charismatics have incorporated into their services such pragmatic discourse that shows Jesus as all-powerful over other powers. Charismatics preach it, caption it, dramatize it, and recently there have been a growing literature of conversion experience from the occult world into the Christian faith. The established churches are therefore challenged to demonstrate the reality of spiritual forces in the lives of Christians.
13. Intense prayer life has been a distinctive for Charismatics. For example, in the early years of the Charismatic Renewal in Ibadan, prayer was central to the movement. Most people who claimed the Pentecostal experience have achieved such in prayer groups. Since continuing in prayerfulness is vital for the full effect of baptism in the Holy Spirit to manifest, prayer has become an essential religious requirement for Charismatics. Individual prayer life is encouraged, while corporate prayer is part of the liturgy of many Charismatic organizations. In fact, Charismatics point out that regular prayer life is essential to spiritual growth. Prayer has been the vehicle for witnessing healing and other miracles. Protestant churches are therefore challenged to restore prayer to its proper place in their programmes.
14. Lastly, services in Pentecostal and Charismatic churches are lively, warm, usually participatory, though often noisy, with clapping and dancing to choruses during praise worship sessions. There is ample opportunity to display emotion. Charismatic movements have brought worship nearer to the ordinary people, because the people play a spontaneous part in worship through singing, dancing, singing praises, etc. Although, this is the area that has caused much distaste for other Christians. Nevertheless, Charismatic worship has restored to the centre of the liturgy genuine praise and a deep spirituality.

Inherent Weaknesses of Charismatic Christianity

Charismatic movements emerged in Nigeria as protest and reformist movements in the early 1970s, championing a new spirituality that was redemptive, prophetic, triumphant, hopeful, and progressive, and which was also anchored on the premise that a vibrant religion must distance itself from

the values of the larger society and take a stand against society as a means of re-ordering it in a pietistic fashion. However, by the late 1990s, this religion that was originally sectarian, promoting a strict holiness ethos and functioning on the fringes of the established Church, had moved to the centre and had dissipated its energy. Moreover, it accepted the values of the larger society as it shifted attention to prosperity: a mechanism for upward social mobility and for material/secular self-aggrandizement. Hence, it is not strange to find the “SU” of the 1970s becoming the founder of prosperity preaching churches; to find men and women moving their memberships from conservative Deeper Life Bible Church to the liberal Winners' Chapel with its theology that supports accumulation of wealth; and to find many obscure evangelists calling themselves bishops and archbishops, gaudily cladding themselves in paraphernalia of pomp and power.

In its continuing evolution, Charismatic Christianity, despite its strength, has recently been promoting the self over the collective. It is encouraging hero-worshipping; and it has shifted the focus of its message from Jesus to projecting the image of the pastor and the founder overseer. In fact, some of the pastors have adopted flamboyant lifestyles and now move around in big and very expensive cars. Even before the controversy over Enoch Adeboye's private jet in March 2009, two other ministers of the movement were reported to have bought private jets in the late 1990s.¹⁶ In the spirit of the age, modesty is no longer a virtue that informs their lifestyle. These pastors carry themselves as celebrities, superheroes and business executives. According to Ogbu Kalu, these are the “big men of a big God.”¹⁷ In fact, Pentecostal pastors, just like the indigenous entrepreneurs of the mid-1970s, continue to desire bigger cars, flashy clothes, constant travels to the USA and Europe, and an enviable public image without any firm moral foundation. Thus, the frantic quest for power and celebrity-status has eroded from their brand of Christianity the moral values of evangelicalism with its glorious past.

We may then ask, what has made contemporary Nigerian Pentecostalism to follow in the same track of corruption with society and place emphasis on individualism and materialism to the neglect of the collective wellbeing of their followers? Does the contemporary Charismatic Renewal movement in Nigeria stand the chance of moving beyond hero-worshipping and personality adulation and engineer an ideology that will be redemptive to the Nigerian society? Why are General Overseers of Pentecostal churches too cosy with discredited politicians and business executives, consecrating them as pastors or

¹⁶These were the late Gabriel Oduyemi of Bethel Ministries, Lekki, and David Oyedepo. See *The Guardian*, November, 24, 1996, pp. B1 & B2.

¹⁷Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 103-122.

receiving large donations from them? Why are the media headlines about Pentecostal churches more about the pursuit of money and material wealth and less of holiness, frugality and redemptive sacrifice?

Do Pentecostal leaders care about the pain they inflict needlessly on innocent travellers caught in traffic hold-ups when they hold their monthly religious programmes? Unless the contradictions in contemporary Nigerian Pentecostalism are first resolved by the leaders themselves, our salvation and transformation may not be nearer as we thought. It is necessary, therefore, to call on the leadership of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries and the Redeemed Christian Church of God to responsibly and urgently consider alternatives to their monthly programmes that will not interfere with the welfare of other Nigerians travelling on the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway during the first week of each month. This appeal also goes to the (Winners' Chapel) with traffic hold-up along Sango Ota axis. Continuing to inflict pain arising directly or indirectly from their religious programmes can no longer be acceptable.

In a 2004 workshop on *"Pentecostal-Civil Society Dialogue on Public Accountability and Governance,"*¹⁸ I argued how the participatory ethos in Nigerian Pentecostalism, could overcome the individualism of greed, acquisitiveness and corruption that is endemic in the Nigerian society. Pentecostal leaders are, therefore, called upon to stop the descent into corruption and develop new emphases and values that will transcend self and materialism, but will cultivate discipline, accountability, and justice for the collective, and which will sustain long-lasting legacies. It is then that a renewed religion will stand in a better position of offering hope and new direction against the failures and hopelessness that the contemporary Nigerian society presently finds itself.

Conclusion

Pentecostal religious emphases are discourses of change, and these have provided philosophical and pragmatic pushing to the individual. Undeniably, Pentecostalism has become an overbearing symbol of change enhancing and transforming individual worldviews, relationships among groups, and promoting certain religious values such as progress, peace, retribution, truth, success, etc. Pentecostalism has continued to promote a significant piety

¹⁸ Matthews A. Ojo, "Pentecostalism Public Accountability and Governance in Nigeria," Plenary paper read at a workshop on Pentecostal-Civil Society Dialogue organized by Centre for Law and Social Action (CLASA) in Lagos on 18 October 2004. See <http://www.boellnigeria.org/documents/Matthew%20Ojo%20-%20Pentecostalism,%20Public%20Accountability%20and%20Governance%20in%20Nigeria.pdf>

mediated in the media. This new religious phenomenon has moved religion from its restricted private space to an open public space.

Moreover, the growth of Pentecostalism across the country has stimulated new forms of social relations that thrive on a Pentecostal sub-culture. There is an amorphous moral community held together by rituals – healing services, vibrant praise and worship, Bible study, etc. Besides, Pentecostalism has introduced new contents into the patterns of interpersonal relationship. A Pentecostal register has developed to sustain communication and social relations. The creation of the “enemy” through the demonization of the other has equally sustained a unique solidarity among Pentecostals.

Summarily, Pentecostalism has continued to redefine the relationships between the public and private spheres, between the powerful and the marginalized, and between social classes. It is not only by creating symbolic power for the marginalized but by democratizing and domesticating power to the grassroots. Consequently, Pentecostalism should be seen as a cultural matrix that is positive, progressive, challenging, promoting triumphalism and engendering fundamental change.