

THE PRESENCE AND IMPACT OF PENTECOSTALISM IN NIGERIA

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0. Introduction

In order to understand the presence and impact of pentecostalism in Nigeria, we examine briefly the religious arena in Nigeria before the explosion of the contemporary pentecostal spirituality. We have to categorise and identify the nature of pentecostalism, its influence and impact on Christianity in the country.

The global pentecostalism is interwoven with various forms of “independent” churches in Nigeria. It is therefore difficult to identify pentecostal churches from various African Initiated Churches (AIC) in Nigeria. For the sake of clarifying the complex situation, we have to do a typological study of pentecostal phenomenon in Nigeria. This throws more light on the different forms of Christianity in the country. Our focus on the global pentecostalism is highlighted by a nutshell presentation of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria. At this juncture, we attempt a synthesis of the impact and influence of pentecostalism in Nigeria, as a contribution towards a renewed Christianity today.

1. Historical Overview of the Nigerian Christendom

The advent of Christian faith in Nigeria is usually identified with the evangelisation mission of the Portuguese in 15th century.¹ The early western

¹ “The Christianity of the Maghrib had virtually disappeared by the eleventh century, and, in 1317, Dongola Cathedral, in Nubia, became a mosque. The modern phase of missionary activity in Africa, and elsewhere, began with the foundation of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792. Christianity in Africa, in the centuries between the Church of Clement and Augustine, and that of the nineteenth century, has three main themes: continuing life of the Coptic and Ethiopian churches, some strikingly unsuccessful attempts to ‘convert’ Muslim North Africa, and the history of the Catholic churches founded in the black Africa, initially by the Portuguese” (E. ISICHEI, *A History of Christianity in Africa from Antiquity to the Present*, SPCK, London 1995, 45).

But the present Christianity in Nigeria antedated the Baptist Missionary Society mission in Africa in 1792. It is a product of the Portuguese missionaries in 15th century. Elisabeth Isichei writes: “The first Portuguese ships anchored off the coast of the west-central Africa kingdom of Kongo in 1483. Catholicism survived, in an indigenized form, until the late nineteenth century, when a new wave of missionary activity began. It was introduced into the Niger Delta kingdom of Warri in the 1570s; despite long periods without missionaries, it endured until the mid eighteenth century” (E. ISICHEI, *A History of Christianity in Africa from Antiquity to the Present*, 45).

missionaries to Nigeria attempted to build the Christian faith in the country on the category of “Church-State relationship.” The kings were targeted for conversion and the churches were built around the palaces of the converted kings. This effort yielded fruits, and the Catholic faith in particular was rooted in the people of Warri and Benin.²

According to a testimony recorded in 1644:

In the city of Warri there is a church with an altar, a crucifix, statues of Mary and the Apostles, and two candlesticks alongside. The Black people come into this church with the rosary constantly in their hands, just as proper Portuguese do. They recite it together with other popish prayers. Outwardly they show themselves very religious. They also know how to read and write and are eager for Portuguese books, pens, ink and paper.³

Unfortunately, the Church in Warri did not grow, mainly because the faith did not develop from the religious conviction of the people, but it was a kind of diplomatic

This affirmation of Isichei becomes clearer from the explanation of C. A. Imokhai in his presentation of the evolution of the Catholic Church in Nigeria. He writes: “Several attempts have been made by a number of religious orders and missionary societies to establish the Catholic faith in Nigeria since the fifteenth century, with varying degrees of success. The Portuguese priests of the Diocese of Lisbon made the first attempt during the age of exploration. The King of Portugal was interested in the conversion of West Africa which was assigned to him through the Papal Bull of Demarcation. Even though the conversion of his territory to the Catholic faith was not the primary aim of the Portuguese expeditions in the fifteenth century, it formed a very special mission dear to the heart of the King” (A. O. Makozi - G. J. AFOLABI (eds.), *The History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria*, Macmillan Nigeria Publishers Ltd, Lagos 1982, 1).

Therefore, the cradle of modern Christianity in Nigeria is the Kingdom of Warri because of the arrival of Catholicism there through the Portuguese missionaries. Christianity in Nigeria could therefore be situated in the second epoch of Christianity in Africa according to Fortunatus Nwachukwu’s division. The first epoch of Christianity in Northern Africa collapsed, living behind only the Egyptian Coptic communities and the Ethiopian Church which were not capable of carrying out the mission to the sub-Sahara Africa. “Africa had to wait until 15th century before it received a remarkable “second missionary journey” of the Christian Faith, one which unlike the first, went beyond the Roman Africa, Ethiopia and their nearest vicinities, to confront for the first time the dwellers of the tropical and sub-tropical Africa and the islands – that is, Black Africa” (F. NWACHUKWU, *The Birth of Systematic Theology in Contemporary Black Africa: An Investigation into New Interpretations of the Christian Faith by the Newly Evangelized*, Romae 1994, 18).

² “Both the King of Portugal and his missionary priests adopted the early missionary strategy used in the conversion of Europe to Christianity. By this approach, efforts were directed to the ruler of the state, in the hope that with his influence over the lives of his subjects, his conversion would automatically mean the conversion of his entire state to Christianity” (A. O. Makozi - G. J. AFOLABI (eds.), *The History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria*, 6).

³ THE CATHOLIC SECRETARIAT OF NIGERIA, «A Brief History of Catholic Church in Nigeria», (www.cbcn.org/aspscripts/page1.ASP). E. Isichei writes: “In 1644, when Antonio Domingos was on the throne, quite a different picture was given of the Warri Church: ‘And the Negroes enter this church with paternoster in their hands all the while, like true Portuguese people, and they read these, as well as other Popish prayers. They appear to be most godly, and can also read and write, and are eager for Portuguese books, pens, ink and paper.’ Christianity also modified traditional religion: offerings of human and animal sacrifices were abhorred, and no *feticeros* (traditional religious specialists) were permitted” (E. ISICHEI, *A History of Christianity in Africa from Antiquity to the Present*, 61-62). See T. Hodgkin, *Nigerian Perspective* (2nd edn.), Oxford University Press, London 1975, 173. The church in Warri was at that time a kind of model church, since the practice of the Catholic faith was not simply a matter of ruling class, but practiced by ordinary people who were converted to Christianity.

relationship with the king of Portugal. To this effect, in a moment of spiritual crisis, the people found the solutions in the traditional religion, which offer them more meaningful relationship with the divine.⁴

The Christianity of this epoch in Nigeria (15th – 18th centuries) could be described as “palace’s diplomacy with the West,” as the African monarchism of the period was inseparable from the traditional religion, the kings were not really converted to Christianity, but they only allowed a few and sporadic incorporation of Christian elements into the royal cults. The kings were considered evangelised by the missionaries, but the people knew that they were their traditional religious leaders, who were only in a diplomatic relationship with the western missionaries. This situation did not warrant an authentic Christian conversion of several people.⁵

This led to a new wave of missionaries arriving in Nigeria between the 19th and 20th centuries. The protagonists of this wave were protestant missionaries and their approach was “abolitionism” of the slave trade which was closely linked to the early western missionaries’ endeavours in Africa. Their main focus was to preach the abolition of slavery, and to separate the Christian faith from the colonialism.⁶

According to F. Nwachukwu:

The second and the third epochs of the Christian faith in Africa are historically connected. For, I the "filthy commerce of slaves" dealt a deadly blow on the "second journey", the move to assuage and, consequently, to abolish this commerce provided the spring-board for

⁴ “The Olu who came to power in 1733 seems to have reverted to traditional religion. A statue of Christ was smashed because it failed to end a drought, for example”(E. ISICHEI, *A History of Christianity in Africa from Antiquity to the Present*, 62).

⁵ “Missionaries tended to concentrate on kings, and some royal conversions were politically motivated and superficial. Even where they were sincere, the lack of missionary personnel tended to mean that the masses had no real instruction in Christian belief, even if they welcomed baptism”(E. ISICHEI, *A History of Christianity in Africa from Antiquity to the Present*, 72).

⁶ The relationship of the Christian faith to the colonialism was not clear for the people. The Christian faith was seen as part of the product of the colonialists. Associated with colonialism was the shameful fact of slave trade. Hence colonialism and slave trade contributed immensely to discredit the Christian message and perhaps could be said to be some of the main reason for the failure of the 15th century Christianity in Nigeria. Elisabeth Isichei affirms: “The great weakness of the Christian enterprise in black Africa in the Middle Years was its close association with the slave trade. There was a basic contradiction between converting Africans and purchasing them as slaves”(E. ISICHEI, *A History of Christianity in Africa from Antiquity to the Present*, 71).

John Egbulefu writes: “The shameful slave trade and the frantic search for wealth that was sometimes hidden behind the real pastoral activities of Christian missionaries of that time, meant that Christianity became interwoven with commerce and consequently compromised her credibility and conditioned the integrity of the Christian. So the Christian religion was no longer able to impress the people nor could it put down roots or become embodied in them”(J. O. EGBULEFU, «The Church in Africa Towards the Third Millennium: The Present Problems of the Young African Church as the Occasion for the Synod», *Omnis Terra* 24(1990)211, 415).

the third visit of the Christian Church to African continent. Both the missionaries who, by the middle of 19th century resumed the efforts to evangelize the continent, and the colonial adventurers and explorers, although with certainly differing, if not contradicting motivations, claim to have been moved this time by the goal of stopping the trade. The missionaries tried to replace the slave markets with Churches and schools, while the colonial politicians tried to replace the same with raw-material supplying centres and political protectorates. Thus, right from the start, this third venture ran the risk of laying foundations that would create future difficulties in the form of the confusion of the Christian Church with colonialists.⁷

The emerging church offered solace to the afflicted and sought to re-connect the common folks to the original sense of communalism that was shattered by the colonialism and slave trade. Nevertheless, the people were still suspicious of the western missionaries, despite the mitigated separation of the Christian faith from the project of colonisation.

A new atmosphere was created for the birth of a new Christianity in Nigeria, when the faith was no more tied to the apron string of the palace officials and the colonial masters. The missionary strategy was now to identify with the lower class, the wounded and the traumatised members of the society.⁸ It should be noted that:

late 19th century and early 20th evangelisation in Nigeria initially attracted slaves, outcasts, the poor, the disabled and all the marginalised. It is a statement on the Christian missionary orientation to outcasts and underprivileged. This alienated the greater number of the native peoples... Nonetheless, prominent people like John Okenia, Balogun of Abeokuta and Chief Idigo of Aguleri were converted. Catechists, catechist-teachers and lay people played immense role in the spread of the faith during this period. Both they and the foreign missionaries showed heroic faith and endured trials to help the church establish in southern Nigeria.⁹

The emerging Church was different from that of the “first missionary” epoch between 15th and 18th centuries. Nevertheless, a lamentable observation is the fact

⁷ F. NWACHUKWU, *The Birth of Systematic Theology in Contemporary Black Africa: An Investigation into New Interpretations of the Christian Faith by the Newly Evangelized*, 20.

⁸ “Catholic missionaries had little success in the nineteenth century, partly because of limited personnel and high mortality rates, partly because of a mistaken mission strategy. Like their counterparts elsewhere, they concentrated on redeeming slaves and founding Christian villages, such as Topo, a coastal settlement near Lagos, or Aguleri, near tributary of the Niger. By concentrating on the ‘poor & castoff creatures’, they reduced the general acceptability of the new religion”(E. ISICHEI, *A History of Christianity in Africa from Antiquity to the Present*, 162).

⁹ THE CATHOLIC SECRETARIAT OF NIGERIA, «A Brief History of Catholic Church in Nigeria», (www.cbcn.org/aspscripts/page1.ASP). Cfr. E. ISICHEI, *A History of Christianity in Africa from Antiquity to the Present*, 156.

that this new form was not a unified Christian message. It was a dissemination of Protestantism and Catholicism which were more or less fighting for a supremacy in the new world. The Nigerian people who embraced this shattered Christian message, will never know the unifying power of the gospel. This is a terrible historical accident for Christianity in Nigeria. The seeds of this evil will eventually blossom in the “normalisation” of multiplication of churches in Nigeria, engendered in pentecostalism.¹⁰

It is accepted that the Christian message can easily be made to conform to the cultural milieu and intellectual conviction of the people. Since this was the situation in Europe, why will it not be possible also in Africa? This awareness and conviction prompted an African form of Christianity, considered to be a real faith encounter with Christ, that is permeated with authentic African values, customs and mores. Hence in the late 19th century, an independent Christianity emerged in Nigeria.¹¹

A particular in-road of independent Christianity in Nigeria was the impetus of revivalistic movements. Some churches emerged in 1916 due to religious revival among Nigerians through the activities of Garrick Sokari Braide,¹² an Anglican lay reader. The emerging religious revival in the separatist wing concluded in the formation of the Aladura congregation in the Yorubaland. “They adopted the African religious spirituality and charisma without the traditional cultic paraphernalia. They were puritanical; they preached the importance of prayer and fasting and renunciation of all forms of idolatry.”¹³ This could be considered the beginning of pentecostal Christianity in Nigeria, as these revivalistic movements championed an experiential manifestation of the Spirit in the life of believers. These movements gave various forms of expression to the Christian faith in Africa, creating problem of orthodoxy

¹⁰ Cfr. E. ISICHEI, *A History of Christianity in Africa from Antiquity to the Present*, 75-76, 155.

¹¹ “By the late 1920s, and in the middle of the influenza epidemic that came after the First World War, visions, dreams and prayer led some to tap the spiritual resources of the gospel, emphasize healing, incorporate African symbolism, use African musical instruments and African leadership. There was more scope for women, as there was with the Montanists of the early years. African indigenous churches (variously referred to as Zionists in Southern Africa, Aladura in West Africa and Arathi in East Africa) changed the face of Christianity in twentieth-century Africa” (O. KALU, «Africa, Christianity In», *Encyclopedia of Christianity*, 10-11).

¹² Cfr. E. ISICHEI, *A History of Christianity in Africa from Antiquity to the Present*, 286-287.

¹³ M.A. B. GAIYA. «The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria», an Occasional paper of the Centre of African Studies, University of Copenhagen, July 2002, 4.

and faithfulness among Christians. They opened the door of syncretism to Christianity, and at the same time unveiled the danger of undermining the moral imperatives of the Christian message in Africa.¹⁴

To this effect, the present context of Christianity in Africa could be described as problematic. The problem is pointed out by Elochukwu E. Uzukwu when he writes:

Sometimes one hears that religion has become a disease in Africa, that religion is an obstacle to the development of the continent. Some allege that right from the time of slavery to our own day, the African religious vision of the world substitutes escapism for facing the social, political, and economic challenges of the continent. The enslaved blacks in America developed the Negro spirituals as a means of carrying their burden without being liberated from it, without even knowing that heavy hands were unjustifiable laid on them. The poor in Africa pour into independent churches, healing homes, sects, and charismatic groups and delight in highly emotional or culturalist liturgies in order to drown their pains in the irrational/emotional instead of questioning the very structure which produce such pain or oppression.¹⁵

This lamentable situation remains either a strong point of Christianity or its critical irrelevancy to Africans. The colonial master exploited the people culturally and socially, making a shipwreck of them economically and deforested them of energetic man-power, while the missionaries created a vacuum in their religiosity, leaving them in an unbridgeable void between the earth and the sky.¹⁶ This is the anecdote of political, economical and religious woes of Africa in general.

In the words of Uzukwu:

The colonial ideology is that of domination and exploitation of the colonized, intended to derive maximum profit from minimum investment. To realize this objective, the colonizers went ahead to deny the being of the colonized, their person, their culture, their worldview. In its place was installed the person, the culture, and the universe of the colonizer for the

¹⁴ “The history of all Christian missions is a theme in counterpoint, the intricate and ever-changing relationship between Christianity, the cultural packaging in which it is presented, and the culture of the host community. To the missionaries, Christianity was inseparable from their own cultural inheritance, and their converts acquired many cultural traits that had nothing to do with religion, so that the nobility of the Kongo became counts or marquises, with family names such as da Silva. Despite this, African Christians inevitably understood Christianity in terms of their own culture, and incorporated many of its insights. As we have seen, scholarly opinion is sharply divided as to when this becomes inculturation, and when syncretism” (E. ISICHEI, *A History of Christianity in Africa from Antiquity to the Present*, 46).

¹⁵ E. E. UZUKWU, *A Listening Church. Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll 1996, 26.

¹⁶ Cfr. E. ISICHEI, *A History of Christianity in Africa from Antiquity to the Present*, 73.

realisation of the interests of the latter. The successful implementation of this ideology alienated the colonized.¹⁷

From this background of alienation, the Christian faith in Africa seems to wear a look that reminds the people of the colonial domination. It is on this ground that some often consider the Catholic Church in particular, as an enduring present of colonisation and western culture in Africa.

The inability of the mainline churches established by the western missionaries to foster Christian principles that are culturally liberating and anthropologically enhancing, and religiously fulfilling in African context, is the bedrock of this unfortunate situation. According to Ogbu Kalu:

A significant aspect of the nineteenth century was that as missionaries sowed the seed of the gospel, Africans appropriated it from a primal, charismatic world-view and read the translated scriptures in that light. Indigenous agencies recovered the spiritual resources of the gospel and challenged missionary Christianity to be fully biblical. This set the stage for the decolonization process that followed the world wars. New forces such as the implosion of the state challenged the heritage of African Christianity; and the collapse of the dictatorial states and attendant poverty probed the tensile strength of the church's stewardship. Inexplicably, charismatic and Pentecostal spirituality resurfaced to provide the energy for growth and sustainability in the midst of hostile circumstances.¹⁸

To this end, the attempts to decolonise Christianity aimed at making it, an authentic faith encounter in a local context.¹⁹ Independent and pentecostal groups are considered to be the vanguards of this consciousness in Nigeria. I. Hexham and K. Poewe-Hexham observes: "Initially these churches reacted against both political and social discrimination. But they rapidly outgrew the negativity of protest to develop rich theologies that emphasize healing and the gifts of the Holy Spirit."²⁰ The initial

¹⁷ E. E. UZUKWU, *A Listening Church. Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*, 29.

¹⁸ O. KALU, «Africa, Christianity In», *Encyclopedia of Christianity*, 11.

¹⁹ "The political and liberation ring of popular religiosity in Africa has maintained from the time of the emergence of independent churches. Being a product of the social, political, economic, and religious revolutions in colonial Africa, they cannot be excluded with a wave of the hand as simply the emergence of the irrational; they fully form part of the solution to these problems. Some of these churches separated from the parent missionary churches either because of the racist discriminatory policies of the missionaries or because of the insufficient attention paid to the African spiritual, human, and cultural values"(E. E. UZUKWU, *A Listening Church. Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*, 27-28). Cfr. O. KALU, «Africa, Christianity In», *Encyclopedia of Christianity*, 10.

²⁰ I. HEXHAM - K. POEWE-HEXHAM, «South Africa», in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 230.

intend of these Churches was to suppress the agony of religious colonisation. For the protagonists, this could not be done effectively under the canopy of the colonial churches, therefore secession was considered inevitable. This could be considered as a kind of defend mechanism, fostering freedom and preparing ground for African questions to be answered with African categories from the perspective of the gospel values.²¹

One of the essential characteristics of the nascent African Christianity was the emphasis placed on prayer in the power of the Holy Spirit. The peculiar situation in the Nigerian society of the early 20th century contributed immensely to this spiritual consciousness. There was abundant poverty and terrifying diseases. There was an acute present of the demonic in the society and the epitome of the demonic was seen in the witchcraft. Prayer was seen as the immediate way of combating these evils. According to Isichei: “Despite the sacrificial generosity of their richer members, the African churches could never compete. The issues that concerned them scarcely impinged on the lives of villagers or the new urban poor. These craved, as they had always done, physical and spiritual healing, and protection from the multitude of evils against which the poor are powerless. When African prophets arose who spoke to these needs from the depths of their own religious consciousness, they counted their converts in hundreds of thousands.”²²

Their emphasis was on dreams and visions. Healing and exorcism were seen as logical consequences of the divine intervention through prayer. God reveals his plans and ordinances to those who pray and even reveals his personal name to them, empowering them with the spiritual gifts.²³ Professor H. Olu Atansuyi argues that African Instituted Churches took into cognizance the socio-cultural context of Nigeria both in theological formulation and pastoral orientation. God intervenes in the world events to order them for the benefit of those who pray to Him. In his words:

²¹ Cfr. E. and I. WEAVER, *The Uyo Story*, Mennonite Board of Missions, Elkhart, Indiana 1970, 71-72; E. ISICHEI, *A History of Christianity in Africa from Antiquity to the Present*, 179.

²² *Ibid.*, 180-181.

²³ Cfr. J. D. CARTER, «Celestial Church of Christ», in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 468-469.

This group came simultaneously from various angles in this nation in a way conducive to the Nigerians, taking into consideration the culture, customs and manners of the land in which they lived and relating their God particularly to the life of their people. This group of people of God put their fingers on the religion of Christians as the primary source of the social, moral and religious decay of the day. It led the first open battle against Christians in Nigeria, first, on the level of religious loyalty and secondly on the level of ethical responsibility. Like Prophets of Old, they regarded sound theology and proper ethic as the two handles of the plough which they must grasp firmly if they would plough a straight furrow for the Lord.²⁴

These churches did not only introduce an intensive practice of prayer into Nigerian Christianity, but also seek to liberate Christianity from the western practices. They seek to indigenise Christian faith in the country through the religious parameters of African Traditional Religion. Harvey Cox observes:

African independent Christians seem proud that they have not forsaken the spiritual customs their ancestors passed on to them before the whites came, even though the first missionaries urged them to abandon these "remnants of superstition." They believe that God was already present in Africa before the Europeans arrived and that many of the ways Africans worshipped then are better than the ways the missionaries taught them. The result is a thoroughly "Africanized" version of Christianity.²⁵

With the accentuation of prayers and spiritual gifts by the emerging African Indigenous Churches, the Christian faith in Nigeria was given a pentecostal direction. Atansuyi maintains:

The basic truth which the (Aladura) taught their early converts were like that of the teachings of the Apostolic Church rather than the administrative procedures that quench the spirit of togetherness. Their prayers were not stereo-typed. Their charismatic attitude bestowed tremendous Pentecostal powers and blessings upon the believers. The African Instituted Churches concept of the Church is that of the spiritual and invisible Church, therefore, their determination is to practice all the ideals of Christianity and its peculiar association with the heavenly host. In this respect, the Church is organized and ruled by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and charismatic experience is given prime place in the worship of the Church.²⁶

These churches marked the beginning of pentecostal phenomenon in Nigeria.

²⁴ H. O. ATANSUYI, «Gospel and Culture in the Perspective of African Instituted Churches», in *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal Charismatic Research*. <http://pctii.org/ccyerj/cyber3/aic.html>.

²⁵ H. COX, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century*, 247.

²⁶ H. O. ATANSUYI, «Gospel and Culture in the Perspective of African Instituted Churches», in *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal Charismatic Research*. <http://pctii.org/ccyerj/cyber3/aic.html>.

3. Explosion of the global Pentecostalism

The explosion of the global pentecostalism in Nigeria emanated naturally from the religious and political scenario of the country between 1950 and 1970. The historical context of these decades is very vital for an in-depth understanding of what I may term Nigeria spirit and hazard. The goal of self –affirmation was glaringly evident in the projects of the nationalists, seeking liberation from the clutches of the European imperialism.²⁷

In spite of the opposition generated by this spirit there was undeniable attraction for the western system and perhaps a kind of childish longing for the “white man’s apple.” This longing and attraction will remain a constant hazard in the African culture generally.²⁸ From the spirit of this epoch, any situation that was wholeheartedly in conformity with the pre-colonial status quo, that fostered self-esteem and cultural identity, and perhaps offered practical solutions and gave greater impetus for liberty was a welcomed phenomenon.

The global pentecostalism surfaced within this context. Luke Mbefo analysing the religious scenario of the period observes that there was dissatisfaction among members of the missionary churches in the country. Their religious yearnings were not met adequately by the liturgical ceremonies of these churches. He writes:

Their (members of mainline churches) expectations from the churches were not met. The missionaries of the older churches failed to address the type of questions the African situation raised for them: witchcraft, demon possession, haunting by evil spirits, the cult of ancestors; the use of protective charms, talisman; sorcery and the traditional dancing form of worship at the shrines. The tendency among the missionaries was to dismiss these questions as due to ignorance arising from a pre-scientific mentality.²⁹

This general dissatisfaction opened door for new religious experiences among members of the mainline churches in particular and the general populace at large. The

²⁷ Cfr. L. N. MBEFO, *The True African: Impulses of Self-Affirmation*, 18.

²⁸ “Only the Africans themselves can rise to this challenge by assuming the responsibility imposed by their knowledge of their past. This is the knowledge of the influences – both positive and negative – that have gone into their making. By working to integrate these influences creatively and fruitfully, they would be poised to reshape the destiny of Africans and their continents in a way that lends balance and stability to the current experience of chaos and disarray. One may support that such a reconstruction of the African project must exploit the metaphysical vision that always been associated with Africans”(L. N. MBEFO, *The True African: Impulses of Self-Affirmation*, 18-19).

²⁹ L. N. MBEFO, *The True African: Impulses of Self-Affirmation*, 107.

desire for a religious experience will become a constant hazard in the country, compelling people to constantly change their ecclesial affiliation base on their current and prevailing religious feelings.

From his/her deep or ingrained religious psyche, God is a natural experience for an African.³⁰ An African seeks to win the benevolence of God in order to change his/her fortune in a positive manner. It is only God that can destroy enemies and set him/her free. An African calls on God naturally in every life situations because he/she knows that God is capable of making his decision and justice known. An African therefore approaches God with his whole life – body and soul – and surrender every facet of his existence to the divine scrutiny and mercy. This religiosity of a typical African person squares up with our understanding of the religious spirit of Nigerians at the decades.

Therefore in a church where theology and spirituality do not meet these yearnings, do not take into consideration these dispositions and impulses, and do not articulate them at the level of practicability and functionality, the Christian faith becomes ineffective and could be thrown away as a remnant of the colonial evil.

Prophets of these churches are then not lacking in disciples when they establish healing homes for sickness, promise barren women children or an open future to the despondent. They have only to pray for you and God will solve all your problems. An attentive listening to bidding prayers reveals that for most Nigerians, prayer means a catalogue of problems for God to solve. A church that refuses to address these problems is in perpetual danger of losing members.³¹

It was not logical for the global pentecostalism, emphasising the experiential works of the Spirit and the Full Gospel to explode in Nigeria.

According to Kenneth J. Archer:

Pentecostalism began as and continues to be a complex, heterogeneous and eclectic movement in both theological and social composition. During the period that ran roughly from the American Civil War to the Great Depression, American society was caught in the vortex of change as mass immigration, urbanization, and industrialization re-sculptured the North American landscape. As a result, societal problems became much more complicated and acute. Yet ‘most public-spirited Protestants still felt that the

³⁰ D. ZAHAN, «Some Reflections on African Spirituality», in J. K. OLUPONA (ed.), *African Spirituality: Forms, Meanings and Expressions*, Crossroad Publishing Company, New York 2000, 5.

³¹ L. N. MBEFO, *The True African: Impulses of Self-Affirmation*, 108.

key to a better life together lay in personal moral reform.’ Thus the most prevalent evangelical Protestant attempts to reform urban life was based on principles of private action and personal responsibility.³²

This observation is a very good eye opener for us to understand the reality of the pentecostal explosion in Nigeria from the global perspective. The American Civil War was a very significant factor leading to the spread of pentecostal spirituality at the beginning of the 20th century in America. Depression and general malaise of the populace are logical consequences of war. In this context, there is a remarkable influx of people to urban environments. Nevertheless, the effects and ruins of war called for a reflection on the reality of private responsibility and the societal renewal. This situation offered fundamental religious motives for pentecostal renewal. Pentecostalism founded a natural ambient in Nigeria, as the people were coming out of the colonial domination and were immediately confronted with the evil of civil war.

The social deprivation theory as applied to pentecostalism is eloquently supported by the explosion of pentecostalism in Nigeria. The fundamental factors for the spread of pentecostalism are often identify in the 3-D (deprivation, disorganisation and defective) of the social deprivation theory. Pentecostal experience is bound to thrive in a context where people are deprived, disorganised and made defective.³³ Kenneth Archer sustains that “social deprivation was an important facilitating and for some an enabling factor, but it was not the cause of one’s conversion to Pentecostalism. People embraced the new Pentecostal faith because of its ‘scripturally’ appealing message and its self-authenticating and community validating religious experience(s).”³⁴

It seems that this observation explains the Nigerian pentecostalism in particular. We cannot doubt that the startling reality of disorganisation and deprivation in the society and the ineffectiveness of the mainline churches to address the situation

³² K. J. ARCHER, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic for the Twenty-First Century. Spirit, Scripture and Community*, T & T Clark International, London 2004, 12.

³³ *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

scripturally and to offer a pragmatic hope for a new order, contributed to the explosion of pentecostalism.³⁵

4. Typologies of Pentecostalism in Nigeria

At this juncture, we are in a position to offer a synthesis of the various facets or branches of pentecostalism in Nigeria, in order to deepen our understanding of the pentecostal Christianity in the country. This is an ecclesiological re-elaboration of the typology of Christian groups in Nigeria by Musa Gaiya, where he identifies Sunday Worshippers and Sabbath Worshippers as churches that can serve as a typology of independent churches and Miracles, Prosperity, Faith and Holiness groups as typology of pentecostalism in the country.³⁶ He built his typology around the classical Reformation themes of *Sola Scriptura* and *Scriptura et Traditiones*.³⁷

³⁵ Cfr. O.B.E. J. AMATA, *The Nigerian Pentecostal Movement: The People, The Purpose and the Power* (2 edition), 19-20.

³⁶ Cfr. M.A. B. GAIYA. «The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria», an Occasional paper of the Centre of African Studies, University of Copenhagen. July 2002, 5-6.

³⁷ The use of these words to explain pentecostal typology is perhaps a unique usage of Musa Gaiya. He gives no explanation of the terms. We are going to borrow these terms and understand them thus:

Sola: for us this means only the African culture (Nationalism). It is an affirmation that only one source of belief system is sufficient for one's religious life. Hence the only source of Christian faith is African metaphysic and tradition and this is affirmed as being sufficient for a meaningful and successful religious life.

Scriptura: this means an affirmation of the Christian Bible is the only source of authentic Christian life. The Bible is self sufficient. It contains all necessary and salvific principles for a meaningful and successful Christian life. Therefore, there should be nothing in the church that is not in the Bible and the church polity and ministry should adhere strictly to the words of the Bible. The Bible is therefore accepted as the only norm for Christian life in these churches but from an African hermeneutic.

Scriptura et: this means "Bible plus." The Bible is accepted as a useful revelation of God, but there are other revelations of God that are not in the Bible. To this effect, Christian life cannot be based exclusively on the Bible. The church must look for something else in addition to the Bible in order to foster a meaningful religious life in the society. Hence the Bible and African tradition in particular are essentials for an effective Christian life in these churches.

Traditiones: this implies recognition of cultural traditions of various societies as having significant religious purposes. Judeo-Christian revelation is seen as one of the religious traditions of the world. This tradition is not and should never be seen as an exclusive tradition in man's search for a meaningful relationship with the divine. To this end, all religious traditions should be incorporated to enrich one's spiritual and religious life. Therefore the purpose of the church is to bring together various religious traditions for a meaningful and successful relationship with the divine.

We can therefore see a progression in the religious evolution of African Christianity. The initial contact with the western missionaries deteriorated into a religious antagonism, which led to the formation of *sola* churches, a rejection of the Bible and western form of Christianity in affirmation of African culture. The subsequent trend seem to return to the affirmation of the Bible as the word of God in *scriptura* churches, and to use this word of God to explain African religious life. The third stage, there is a conscious recognition of the Christian Bible and the African tradition as two indispensable sources of religious life in *scriptura et* churches. And finally, there is a kind of ecumenical progression to the level of a cosmic relationship, where religious life is no longer seen as Christianity and African Traditional religion exclusively but incorporating, various religious traditions of the world in *traditiones* churches. Hence a successful and meaningful Christian existence is seen as a synthetic harmonization of various religious

We will follow his classification, since it offers us a clue to the historical evolution of Nigerian Christendom, the appropriation and metamorphosis of evangelical Protestantism in the country.

4.1. African initiated form of Christianity - *sola* churches

The *sola* churches³⁸ are those churches that are founded on the principle of a unique and self-emanating theology developed around national and cultural experiences of the people. These churches are completely African in ecclesiology and unilateral in ministry. The meeting point with the global Christianity consists in the utilization of the universal theological categories as developed in the western theology. The *sola* churches reconstruct the western theology in the spirit of African nationalism. The western theology offers categories for an elaboration of an African cosmology and cosmogony as African theology for the local situation.³⁹

They are generally known as Orthodox /Africanist churches. They hold on to the orthodox beliefs as understood and developed through the analysis of the Christian faith with an in-depth projection of African cultures, using the language of the western theology.⁴⁰ The *leitmotiv* of this projection is not for mutual enrichment of the *Africanism* and *Westernism*, but a radical secession from the western church,

traditions, a concretization of religious pluralism. History will determine whether this is the omega point of pentecostalism, the in-gathering of the seeds of Logos in the Church through the power of the Spirit.

³⁸ The use of the word church here as in other contexts, if not otherwise indicated, is in inclusive sense to identify any assembly with Christian inspirations. We do not understand church in theological and ecclesiological parameters here, because these assemblies or communities lack the basic criteriology of identification as a church which include baptism, priesthood, Eucharist and Apostolic Succession through the local bishop. At most these “churches” could be described ecclesologically as ecclesial communities, since they are various individuals who seek to live and practice particular aspect of the Church’s life. Cfr. A. DULLES, *The Catholicity of the Church*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1985, 137.

³⁹ This attempt at elaboration of African theology from the categories of the western Christian theology was not limited to these churches. Some theologians of the mainline churches were also convinced of this need. One of them was Vincent Mulago. According to Bénézet Bujo: “Vincent Mulago is without doubt one of the great pioneers of African theology. As such, he did not limit himself to a well-defined domain of classical theology, but touched upon the whole of the question of having to do with revelation and liable to be re-thought in African contextual terms”(B. BUJO, «Vincent Mulago: An Enthusiast of African Theology», in B. BUJO – J. ILUNGA MUYA (eds.), *African Theology: The Contribution of the Pioneers*, vol. 1, 16).

⁴⁰ The story of African Christian initiative in the colonial church throw more light on the motives and birth of these *sola* churches. “Some Africans gave voice to indigenous feelings against Western cultural iconoclasm and decision-making in colonial churches. Using the promise in the Psalms that Ethiopia shall raise its hands to God, ‘Ethiopianism’ became a movement of cultural and religious protest. It delved back into its history to recover and re-contextualize its black traditions of emancipation which had been hidden from the consciousness of black peoples by colonial domination. In its religious guise, it breathed the hope that Africans would bear the burden of evangelization and build an autonomous church devoid of denominations and free of European control”(O. KALU, «Africa, Christianity In», *Encyclopedia of Christianity*, 10).

and creation of a new branch of Christianity that is purely African inspired and oriented.

The following congregations represent this typology in Nigeria: *United Native African Church, Christ African Church (Bethel), United African Methodist Church, Kingdom of God Church and New Life Church*, etc. African nationalism remains the founding and enduring principle of these churches both in doctrine and worship. Their link to pentecostalism consists in their fostering of the “spirit-guided” liturgy and the “letting-flow” of emotion in worship, as a guise of establishing contact with the divine.⁴¹

4.2. African initiated form of Christianity - *scriptura* churches

The Bible is the sole authority in these churches and all doctrines and practices must necessarily be built on a biblical antecedent whether as a normative or as an historical antecedent. Their theology is based on biblical analogy.⁴² Their identifying characteristics are the Bible, African spirituality and western theology, particularly health and wealth theology. They demonstrate an immense attraction to the Bible, but the Bible is interpreted from the perspective of African spirituality rapped in the categories of material-well-being of believers in this world.

These churches are generally known as Pentecostal / Charismatic churches. They are the *core churches* of the global pentecostalism in Nigeria. They attempt to build a synthesis that seems to be faithful to the word of God based on the African experience. It is only the materialism of the western society that interests them, while

⁴¹ The background of Odo ancestral cult in Igboland illuminate how African beliefs can easily be changed into Christian practice and be given pentecostal interpretation. “In northern Igboland, a sample study of sixty-eight deities... shows that the dominant concerns of the primal religion are nature deities, ancestral deities, and spirit force – that is, spirits which enhance, preserve, or destroy life and fortunes. They are linked: land is sacred because the ancestors are esconced(sic) in her womb and the ancestors imbue spirits which assist their progeny to live and enjoy the good things of life to a venerable old age. These deities provide protection from the envy and competition of others. Spirit forces could be tapped for both salient and destructive purposes. Thus the core element of the primal religiosity in this culture theatre is the cult of the ancestors”(O. U. Kalu, «Ancestral Spirituality and Society in Africa», in J. K. OLUPONA (ed.), *African Spirituality: Forms, Meanings and Expressions*, 61-62).

⁴² Cfr. W. W. MENZIES – R. P. MENZIES, *Spirit and Power – Foundations of Pentecostal Experience*, 110.

the whole theological edifice of the mainline churches has little or no influence in their doctrines and practices.⁴³

Nevertheless, in harmony with the global pentecostalism, we can identify the three faces of pentecostalism in these *scriptura* churches in the country. Examples of these churches under the classical pentecostalism include: the Apostolic Church of Nigeria, etc. The Neo-pentecostal conglomerations are represented by the *Deeper Life Bible Church*, the *Church of God Mission*, the *Latter Rain Assemblies*, etc. The third wavers could be identified with churches or ministries like *Household of God* of Chris Okotie, *Christ Embassy* and many churches of the Living Faith or Positive Confession inspirations.⁴⁴

Moreover, there is a unique aspect of this typology in the Nigerian pentecostalism, which is heavily dependent on Aladura spirituality, with a theology that could be described as African shamanism.⁴⁵ The most significance representative of this brand is the *Synagogue of all Nations*.

Another typology of the pentecostal /Charismatic churches initiated by Nigeria are the prosperity churches, following the trend of American materialism. Perhaps this is the most appealing aspect of pentecostalism in Nigeria. These churches are scattered all over the country. The principal representatives are the *Church of God*

⁴³ Arch Bishop B. A. Idahosa was a man that brought a new insight in the Pentecostal World of Nigeria, when the move began it had a wide spread over the Country especially at the western and eastern part. Arch Bishop paved the way with his message having under the under tune that the children of God are not beggers(sic) but Kings and Princes with a Priestly heritage of God. Untill(sic) Arch Bishop began this move no Nigeria preacher could boldly declare it. The church was seen and known as a place for the gathering of the poor with no hope of ever getting better in life, those whose hope was only achieving heaven”(O.B.E. J. AMATA, *The Nigerian Pentecostal Movement: The People, The Purpose and the Power* (2 edition), 34). Cfr. R. EDWARDS, *African Legends of Faith Series (vol. 1) Archbishop Benson Andrew Idahosa: An Apostle of Faith*, ALOF Publications, s.l. 2005, 40-45.

⁴⁴ Cfr. H. W. TURNER, «Pentecostal Movements in Nigeria», in *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, 1(June 1972), 39.

⁴⁵ “In the face of the vast unknown enveloping so much of human experience, past, present and future, every sociocultral community finds way to explain and to cope with the mystery of evil and the ominous signs encountered in the course of life. Even the perplexities and anxieties arising from the ordinary sufferings, pains and ambiguities met at every stage of the human sojourn need plausible explanations and remedies that are at least hopeful, if not always effective. In the absence of the religious beliefs, and the scientifically grounded laws, theories, and hypotheses used in the modern western world to explain the hidden factors influencing life and sometimes yielding malign fruits, or causing catastrophic consequences, the traditional Maasai people rely not only on their religious beliefs and practices, but also on the skills of prophets, diviners, medicine and ritual experts”(E. HILLMAN, *Toward an African Christianity: Inculturation Applied*, Paulist Press, New York and Mahwah, N.J. 1993, 63-64). Cfr. J. C. MA, Animism and Pentecostalism: A Case Study, in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 316.

Mission founded by Benson Idahosa,⁴⁶ the *Living Faith Church Worldwide*, etc. Many of these churches also integrate the third wave's inspiration.

Another brand of this *scriptura* churches is the "faith churches." These churches are developed around the theology of Faith Homes⁴⁷ in the United States and the practice of Aladura churches of western Nigeria.⁴⁸ These churches forged the initial message of classical pentecostalism with African spirituality. Their principal representative is the *Redeemed Christian Church of God*, the most widely spread pentecostal church in Nigeria.⁴⁹ Finally there is the brand of holiness movement, a continuation of the Wesleyan and Keswickan tradition of classical pentecostalism. It represents a conservative wing of the Nigerian pentecostalism. The only significance representative of this typology is the *Deeper Life Bible Church* of William Kumuyi.⁵⁰

From the above typological exposition, it is obvious that the Nigerian pentecostalism is rooted on both African and Western traditions. An interesting part of this revelation is that, all these traditions are appealing to Nigerians, and we cannot pinpoint the most favourable of these different pentecostal typologies. They offer responses to the spiritual yearnings of the people based on their pre-pentecostal Christian formation and their life experiences. The current situation reveals the unique influence of African prophetic churches on pentecostalism. It seems that the marriage between African spirituality and the Euro-American Christianity is meant to be indissoluble, in particularly in the Nigerian pentecostalism.

J. K. Olupona analyses the situation thus:

⁴⁶ Cfr. O.B.E. J. AMATA, *The Nigerian Pentecostal Movement: The People, The Purpose and the Power* (2 edition), 49-51.

⁴⁷ Cfr. R. M. RISS, «Faith Homes», in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 630-632.

⁴⁸ H. C. ACHUNIKE, *The Influence of Pentecostalism on Catholic Priests and Seminarians in Nigeria*, Africana First Publishers Limited, Onitsha 2004, 15.

⁴⁹ Cfr. O.B.E. J. AMATA, *The Nigerian Pentecostal Movement: The People, The Purpose and the Power* (2 edition), 53-57.

⁵⁰ Cfr. M.A. B. GAIYA, «The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria», an Occasional paper of the Centre of African Studies, University of Copenhagen. July 2002, 8-11; O.B.E. J. AMATA, *The Nigerian Pentecostal Movement: The People, The Purpose and the Power* (2 edition), 58-60; A. U. ADOGAME, «Deeper Christian Life Mission (International)», in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 574.

There is continuity between prophetic African churches and the pentecostal-charismatics. Both churches are engaged in what we could term the African primal quest for the sacred and the transcended: the quest for healing, well-being, material success, and long life. Both establish some degree of religious independence in that, unlike the mission churches before them, they are not under larger foreign mission. Both groups of churches also derive their success from their appeal, however unacknowledged, to African spiritual sensibilities. For example, African prophetic churches and pentecostal-charismatic churches, while both condemning African ritual practices such as divination, ancestor veneration, traditional medicine, and healing, paradoxically share other aspects of indigenous orientation, such as visions, dreams, healing, “spirit” possession, and divine revelation.⁵¹

It is the convergence of African spirituality in the pentecostal churches that gives fascination to pentecostalism in Nigeria.

4.3. African initiated form of Christianity - *scriptura et churches*

This group of churches rely on the Scripture and something else. They hold that the totality of the religious dimension of man is not revealed in the Judeo-Christian Bible exclusively. The Bible offers valid knowledge of God just as other “scriptures” and metaphysical experiences, even when they are not documented. They all constitute a valid patrimony of man’s encounter with God.⁵² These churches are known as Aladura, Zionist, or Spiritual. Their theology is constructed around the religious principles of the Bible, African charismatic “sciences” and African occultism. They are combination of Christian spirituality and African cultic and occult worship in a guise of pentecostal spirituality.⁵³

⁵¹ J. K. OLUPONA, «Africa, West», in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 12.

⁵² Cfr. P. J. RYAN, «African Muslim Spirituality: The Symbiotic Tradition in West Africa», in J. K. OLUPONA (ed.), *African Spirituality: Forms, Meanings and Expressions*, 301.

⁵³ “When Christian missionaries and colonial governments tried to suppress accusations of witchcraft, many people believed that they were protecting evil witches. Belief in witchcraft affects, both for good and for bad, the ways in which people understand the world and the ways in which they relate to each other. Witchcraft is a key issue in the spirituality of many Africans. The curing of witches and the eradication of witchcraft are also key issues in many independent Christian churches in Africa” (M. F. C. BOURDILLON, «Witchcraft and Society», in J. K. OLUPONA (ed.), *African Spirituality: Forms, Meanings and Expressions*, 181-182). We are not affirming that the something else incorporated by these churches is witchcraft. But it is reasonable to see it is a metaphysical system that is deeply rooted in African religious consciousness.

The evangelical wing of this typology is *Christ Apostolic Church* and its splinters. While the Zionist/Spiritual representation are *Cherubim and Seraphim Church, Church of the Lord, Christ Army, Celestial Church of Christ, Christ Holy Church*, etc. An interesting fact is that an unsuspected Nigerian will identify these churches as classical pentecostal churches, since they foster experiential manifestations of the Spirit, with particular attraction to speaking in tongues as a medium of communication with the divine.

4.4. African initiated form of Christianity – *traditiones* churches

Another typology of the pentecostals in Nigeria is those churches which are developed around vitalistic⁵⁴ and syncretistic principles gathered from African traditions, and the religious encounters of Africans with other world religions.⁵⁵ At times, their syncretism is too obvious to be masqueraded as pentecostalism. Nevertheless, their use of the Bible, and response to religious questions readily cover them under pentecostalism.

This typology is built around Christian principles, African spirituality and metaphysical power, and occult materials whether African or foreign.⁵⁶ It is more often classified as Neo-pagan organisations or churches. The most significance embodiment of this typology in a camouflage of pentecostalism are *El-Messiah Spiritual Temple, Brotherhood of the Cross and Star*⁵⁷ and various healings homes scattered in every angle of the country.

⁵⁴ Cfr. M. N. NKEMNKIA, *African Vitalogy: A Step in African Thinking*, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi 1999, 172-174. Originally published as, *Il pensiero africano come "vitalogia"*, Città Nuova Editrice, Roma 1995.

⁵⁵ This is usually manifested glaringly in the religion of Africans in Diaspora. Cfr. R. E. EASTMAN – M. WARNER-LEWIS, «Forms of African Spirituality in Trinidad and Tobago», in J. K. OLUPONA (ed.), *African Spirituality: Forms, Meanings and Expressions*, 404.

⁵⁶ The main motive of these churches is the belief in the wholistic nature of man and the need to offer all round religious solution to every imaginable life situation based on the philosophy of cause and effect. To be able to offer this integral spiritual solution, there is need to incorporate anything that functions and that is pragmatic. This wholistic vision of spirituality was not given attention in the missionaries churches. According to B. Bujo: "It is only from this holistic principle that one can understand why an African Christian goes to church in the morning and the diviner or the sorcerer in the evening. The Church leaves him in the ditch in his search for help concerning such essential questions as fear, suffering, illness and other"(B. BUJO, *The Ethical Dimension of Community: The African Model and the Dialogue between North and South*, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi 1998, 18).

⁵⁷ Cfr. A. U. ADOGAME, «Brotherhood of the Cross and Star», in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 443.

Their types with less Christian and pentecostal externalisation include the *Reformed Ogboni Fraternity*, *Arousa Cult*, *Kingdom of God* (in Delta State), *Godianism*, etc. It is the quest for spiritual experiences, and the desire for life transforming miracles that make this typology attractive to many people, even when they may have doubts about their Christian authenticity.⁵⁸

4.5. African initiated form of Christianity - sabbath worshippers churches

Another group of Christians that could be considered as pentecostal in the country are some Christians who worship on (Sabbath) Saturday. In continuity with the Old Testament practices and teachings, they hold on to the theology of the seventh day as the day of the Lord, and thus as sacred day observed by Jesus himself. These churches depend on the scripture and African traditions for their theological understanding and pastoral ministry.

There are handful of these churches in Nigeria, such as: *Riches of Christ*, *Holy Sabbath of Christ*, *Universal Church of Christ*, *God's Holy Sabbath*, *Christ Healing Sabbath*, *Living Faith Sabbath*, *Holy Sabbath Church of God*, *Universal Praying Church*, etc. Since these churches tend also to emphasise the phenomenon of the Spirit, healing and prophecy in particular, they make up a special branch of Christians in the country, since "they do not confess Jesus as Lord."⁵⁹

In conclusion, our study of typology of pentecostalism in Nigeria reveals that we cannot understand pentecostalism in the country unilaterally and that it is not homogenous phenomenon. Some of the churches that exhibit pentecostal characteristics may not be accepted as pentecostal churches.⁶⁰ As we noted, the core churches of the global pentecostal movement in Nigeria are churches that belong to

⁵⁸ "Some writers have incautiously romanticized the African indigenous churches as the African contribution to world Christianity; however, this characterization must be qualified, since the movement has widened beyond the pale of Christianity" (O. KALU, «Africa, Christianity In», in *Encyclopedia of Christianity*, 11).

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Cfr. H. COX, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century*, 246.

the *scriptura* typology. In spite of this general feature, they have their own peculiar beliefs and theological framework.

Let us immediately note that the focus of this work on the influence of pentecostalism in Nigeria, is mainly on the churches of pentecostal/charismatic tradition. Despite their peculiar traits, there are still general features that bring them together. Hence the churches of our focus:

are evangelical churches founded by African leaders who have adopted radical spiritual conversion, often called “born again,” through baptism of the Holy Spirit, recalling the Day of the Pentecost. As in the prophetic independent African churches before them, the charismatic churches emphasize speaking in tongues, divine healing, and miracles. In addition, they profess that the material success and prosperity of their members are signs of divine grace and benevolence.⁶¹

Nevertheless, since the modern pentecostal movement as a global phenomenon could not be limited to these African churches, and many pentecostal realities in the country may not be accepted in the global pentecostalism. There is need to identify the churches or groups that can generally pass the test of conformity to the global pentecostalism, and as such validly representatives of pentecostals in Nigeria.

5. Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria: Origin, Doctrine and Practice

The phenomenological growth of pentecostalism in Nigeria has called for a kind of controlling and umbrella organisation in order to harness the vital resources of this response to the Christian faith in the country. This seem to be the reason behind the birth of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria in 1985.⁶² It is an umbrella organisation of all pentecostal congregations and churches in the country.

⁶¹ J. K. OLUPONA, «Africa, West», in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 14.

⁶² “The founding fathers of the PFN were right on target when Feb 10, 1985 the idea to constitute themselves into an association was mooted. The forum to midwife the association was well chosen – the Greater Lagos for Christ crusade organised by Dr. Umai Ukpai”(P. B. EWENLA, «From the Editor: We Have Come of Age», in *PFN News*, 1(February 2005)2, s.p.).

According to O. B. E. Josiah Amata: “The founding fathers of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria had in mind a common objective which is, to bring together under once umbrella Holy Spirit filled Christian Churches and organisations that believe and are into the practice of the full gospel message of the Acts of the Apostle chapter two, in an independent and autonomous Christian fellowship...”⁶³

Nevertheless, not all congregations, ministries or churches that are considered pentecostal belong to this organisation. Membership of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria⁶⁴ is a voluntary identification of such groups with the universally or nationally organised pentecostalism.⁶⁵ The PFN does not necessarily exercise authority over all pentecostal bodies in term of doctrines and practices. It is rather an avenue for a-coming-together of like-minded individuals in order to foster an integral vision of pentecostalism in the country. It is a cooperative body of the approved pentecostal churches and groups in the country. It is not a legislative body to any congregation, but rather a coalition for the furtherance of the “pentecostal gospel” and ends.⁶⁶

The Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, even though it does not exercise legislative authority, has certain doctrinal parameters for all churches or groups that are willing to identify with the organisation, and consequently with the global pentecostalism.⁶⁷ These parameters serve as the fundamental articles of faith of all pentecostals churches in the country, without necessarily setting ceiling level for individual congregations articulation of her doctrines and beliefs.⁶⁸

Unfortunately, there are some amplification of beliefs that may push an individual pastor or founder outside the confine of pentecostalism and as such may not be recognised by the Fellowship. The basic beliefs of the Pentecostal Fellowship

⁶³ O.B.E. J. AMATA, *The Nigerian Pentecostal Movement: The People, The Purpose and the Power* (2 edition), 88.

⁶⁴ “Membership of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria shall comprise Pentecostal Churches and Pentecostal Organisations in Nigeria”(2002 PFN CONSTITUTION, Art. Three).

⁶⁵ Cfr. O.B.E. J. AMATA, *The Nigerian Pentecostal Movement: The People, The Purpose and the Power* (2 edition), 87.

⁶⁶ Cfr. PENTECOSTAL WORLD FELLOWSHIP, «Who We Are», <http://www.pctii.org/PWF/about/aboutus.htm>.

⁶⁷ “The fact that somebody says he is a Pentecostal, does that make him one? Are you in agreement with the standards? It is the standards that determine whether you can belong to the fellowship or not. If anyone is not part of us, it is either he is not meeting the standards or he wants to be a lone ranger”(M. OKONKWO, *Two Decades After: Our Scorecard*, in *PFN News*, 1(February 2005)2, s.p.).

⁶⁸ Cfr. 2002 PFN CONSTITUTION, Art. Five: Articles of Faith, §1-11.

of Nigerian are in line with those of the Pentecostal World Fellowship, only that there are some peculiar understanding and emphasis based on the socio-religious and cultural context of the country.

Much of the ideals of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria are pursued through her annual Conference organise in different cities in the country.⁶⁹ The essential practices of the Fellowship which enable her to pursue her goals effectively include the followings:⁷⁰

1. To uphold one another in prayer, co-ordinate prayer meetings in the country as pentecostal networks.
2. To support and encourage one another in the task of missions and evangelism.
3. To promote Christian fellowship and cooperation among pentecostals throughout the country.
4. To provide means of consultation and cooperation among the members and related agencies.
5. To share mutual concerns and insights relating to any crucial spiritual and temporal issues of the Church.
5. To administer relief in times of crises. This enable the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria to participate in the worldwide humanitarian services, giving information and cooperation when necessary.
7. To promote exchange of personnel in special areas of ministry.
8. To disseminate helpful information and up-to-date statistics for the benefit of the Church.
9. To voice to the world and governments in defence of the faith, social justice, and persecuted Christian in the country.
10. To encourage missions partnerships among participating pentecostal groups nationwide. Speaking to the government on behalf of pentecostal believers

⁶⁹ Cfr. 2002 PFN CONSTITUTION, Art. Thirty: Responsibility of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, §10.

⁷⁰ This is an adaptation of the aims and objective of the Pentecostal World Fellowship to the Nigerian context. The principal inspiration of these material is the mission statement of the Pentecostal World Fellowship. Cfr. PENTECOSTAL WORLD FELLOWSHIP, «Our Mission and Purpose», <http://www.pctii.org/PWF/about/aboutus.htm>. Their resonances are found in the 2002 Constitution of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, Article Two, §a-j. Cfr. O.B.E. J. AMATA, *The Nigerian Pentecostal Movement: The People, The Purpose and the Power* (2 edition), 88-89.

everywhere and especially in areas where persecution exists or where individual rights and freedoms are compromised.

11. To serve as a cooperative fellowship whereby educational institutions approved by individual Pentecostal churches of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria would be recognized by other churches in the country and perhaps jointly train their ministers in such institutions and also to assist in the recognition of such institutions by the government for professional education.

11. To pursue the fulfilment of the Lord's command to evangelize the lost in the shortest possible time, providing them an opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel in all of its fullness, by encouraging and assisting one another, promoting harmonious relationships, and seeking the most effective means of its accomplishment under the dynamic leadership of the Holy Spirit.

These are the essential practices of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria that are in harmony with the Pentecostal World Fellowship. The effective realisation of these purposes and their appropriate co-ordination is the onus of the Biennial Conference of the General Assembly as its apex tier co-ordinated by the National Officers.⁷¹

According to Amata: "There is a PFN structure in all levels of the federation but its activities and effectiveness are limited to the involvement of Pentecostal churches and organisation. Yes, PFN has members and great mouth piece in Nigerian Pentecostalism but till date is still unable to capture the totality of Nigerian Pentecostalism. Close chart with officers and executive members of the fellowship revealed that PFN is made of more heads with no body to govern. And even the heads are just there as figures unwilling to carry their crowd along with the PFN's vision."⁷² Nevertheless, Peter Ewenla is proud that: "From obscurity in 1985, the PFN has today grown to become a force to reckon with. It has taken its rightful place in virtually every sphere of our national life: spiritually, politically, socially,

⁷¹ Cfr. O.B.E. J. AMATA, *The Nigerian Pentecostal Movement: The People, The Purpose and the Power* (2 edition), 92.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 101.

economically.”⁷³ It could therefore be said the presence of global pentecostalism in Nigeria is yet to find a *modus operandi* that is capable harnessing pentecostal realities in the country. To that effect, pentecostalism could easily foster a kind of religious and spiritual anarchy in Nigeria.

The Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria should pursue an honest programme of enlightenment for ordinary Nigerians who in their religiosity, are becoming preys to an “organised exploitation” in the name of pentecostalism. The Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria should be able to identify and warn Nigerians of Neopaganism and the returned to sorcery and witchcraft in the camouflage of spiritual or pentecostal churches. It is therefore the responsibility of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria to join forces with the mainline churches to make Christianity more credible in the contemporary Nigerian society.

6. Impact of Pentecostalism on Churches in Nigeria

According to P. D. Hocken: “In Nigeria below the Islamic north, all the denominations are experiencing renewal. Prayer and fasting and signs and wonders of healing and deliverance are common.”⁷⁴ This observation indicates the impact of pentecostalism on the mainline churches in Nigeria. The explosion of pentecostalism introduced into Nigeria a spirituality that was not fostered by the initial western missionaries. It inaugurated an approach to faith and ecclesial polity that is glaringly different from the initial practices of the mainline churches. Pentecostalism has awakened a tremendous yearning for a primal spirituality in the country.⁷⁵

The pentecostal spirituality was highly welcomed among the poor of our society,⁷⁶ hence by the majority, since most Nigerian Christians then, were poor

⁷³ P. B. EWENLA, «From the Editor: We Have Come of Age», in *PFN News*, 1(February 2005)2, s.p.

⁷⁴ P.D. HOCKEN, «Charismatic Movement», in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 510-511.

⁷⁵ “Until the Nigerian Civil War, prophetic churches were of minor importance in eastern Nigeria. There was a tendency to look down on them as superstitious and unsophisticated. All this has changed since 1970” (E. ISICHEI, *A History of Christianity in Africa from Antiquity to the Present*, 290).

⁷⁶ “The Pentecostals were noisy and to many people disorderly. Their worship was beyond understanding to those without knowledge of the inner spirituality that undergirded the movement. On top of this, most Pentecostals were

economically. This impetus finds support and tremendous enthusiasm among Christians of various denominations and ecclesial affinity, since it addresses the raw spiritual desire of man.⁷⁷ The explosion of pentecostalism in the mainline churches is an invitation to churches to reconsider their Christian testimony and proclamation of Jesus Christ as the Saviour and Redeemer of all people.⁷⁸

The vital issue in this context is the historical fidelity of the Church to her apostolic origin. Can the community of the Apostles be made evident in the present Church? Is there anything like a “experiential Christianity”? A proper understanding and honest desire to clarify these questions will offer us historical and theological parameters for understanding the impact of pentecostalism on the mainline churches as “the promise and the power of old were believed to be closed at hand.”⁷⁹

The charismatic renewal in various churches and general quest for an effective spirituality among Christians of all denominations are the effects of pentecostalism. The penetration of pentecostal spirituality into the mainline churches constitutes a theological and ecclesiological obstacle for many theologians.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, it is undisputable that pentecostal experience and spirituality have come to stay in most churches in Nigeria today.

The presence and the realness of the divine power is intrinsic to African worldview.⁸¹ The question of the cessation of charism and miracles, the divine that will not intervene in the living situation and in everydayness of the people was only a

poor, underprivileged, uneducated, and out of touch with the latest theological trends that preoccupied most Protestantism. Such movements as Modernism and the social gospel were unknown to most Pentecostals, and those few who were aware of these trends vehemently denounced them. In fact, there was a great deal of mutual ignorance on all sides. The popular response to the lowly Pentecostal churches and people was to dismiss them as “Holy Rollers” who, despised as they were, fulfilled a useful function by ministering to the poor and outcast who felt unwelcome and out of place in the increasingly rich and sophisticated mainline churches” (V. SYNAN, *The Century of the Holy Spirit*, 149).

⁷⁷ Cfr. C. O. EBEBE, *The Impact of Pentecostalism on the Catholic Church*, Letatalk, Port Harcourt 2004, 10.

⁷⁸ Cfr. O. A. ONWUBIKO, *The Church in Mission: In the Light of Ecclesia in Africa*, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi 2001, 431.

⁷⁹ C. BORLASE, *William Seympour: A Biography*, Charisma House – A Strange Company, Lake Mary, Florida 2006, 50.

⁸⁰ “The argument that the physical phenomena associated with enthusiastic phenomena have a parallel with hypnosis is a strong one. However, as a means of assessment, it is still questionable. It does demand that the term ‘sign and wonder’ should be used with caution, but if a person responds in a strongly physical and emotional way, then one still has to ask, ‘To what are they responding?’ In other words, the phenomena themselves need to be assessed because on their own they could indicate the work of the Spirit, or some other force. Consequently, one should not say that because a person has fallen down or shaken during prayer this is a sign of the Spirit. Such experience is too ambiguous to be a reliable criterion of assessment” (D. MIDDLEMISS, *Interpreting Charismatic Experience*, SCM Press, London 1996, 252).

⁸¹ Cfr. J. K. OLUPONA (ed.), *African Spirituality: Forms, Meanings and Expressions*, xxiv.

bitter theological pills that many Africans were advised to swallow but only to hang at their throats. The outburst of charismatic experience in the historic churches of the West and its diffusion to Africa was seen as the divine way of proofing the western theology of mechanistic world, where God is a hidden and silent observer, to be an existential unbelief of some western missionaries. Therefore, charismatic experiences in the mainlines churches in Nigeria as “manifestation of spiritual gifts and evident power of the Holy Spirit are being lived and seen as normal Christian life and not as the expression of particular movement.”⁸²

This explain why charismatic Christianity soon flourished in almost all historic churches in Nigeria. You don't need to know the theology of baptism in the Holy Spirit to be healed by God and to become instrument of healing to others. One does not need to belong to pentecostal churches to learn how to develop voluptuous praise of God. It is not pentecostalism that endows one with the capacity to dance before the awesome present of the Lord. Pentecostalism does not introduce visions and dreams, they are available wherever the living God is present. In short, the charismatic experience is the disentangling of Christianity from the western “existential and pastoral unbelief” and making Christ what He really is: the power of God to save in time and in eternity.

In today's Christian scenario in Nigeria, it is almost impossible to imagine an authentic minister of God devoid of spiritual gifts. Charismatic spirituality in Nigerian mainline churches is better described as an appraisal of an in-depth religious consciousness, or as an un-concealment of the divine and an in-breaking of the fundamental religious expectations among the people.

7. Areas of Pentecostal Re-Awakening in Nigerian Christianity

Pentecostalism has eaten deep into the religious consciousness of the contemporary Nigerian society and its influences and repercussions can be observed

⁸² P.D. HOCKEN, «Charismatic Movement», in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 501.

across religious strata in the country. We are moving into a new religious culture developing from the contemporary pentecostalism. There are certain basic indicators of this emerging religiosity in Nigeria. The following are the basic aspects of the Christian faith that is given an enthusiastic attention and few ways-of-being Christian that are provoked or encouraged by the pentecostals. Let us therefore point out some positives and negatives impacts of pentecostalism.

7.1. Positive impacts

The following are some of the positive impacts of pentecostalism in the contemporary Christianity in Nigeria. These are nevertheless, exclusive to the Nigerian situation, they could be noted wherever the pentecostal spirituality is fostered. Moreover, they are not manufactured by or introduced ex nihilo, by the pentecostals. They only helped the people to appreciate and give due attention to these dimensions or aspects of the Christian faith. The African context make them interesting and desirable in the churches. These should be encouraged for an effective Christian witness today.

7.1.1. Holy Bible

Pentecostalism has reawakened a general desire and love for the Bible as the written word of God, and as a perennial document of authentic Christian moral life. Many Christians are nowadays taking the Bible seriously and it is no longer consider as a book meant for the clergy. There are many Bible study groups in the mainline churches in Nigeria and some of them are operating vital ecclesial ministries.

For instance, Catholics are finding biblical support for much of the presupposed doctrinal and devotional practices of the Church.⁸³ It is now common to hear from Catholics and mainline Protestants alike: “the Bible says,” and many

⁸³ Cfr. J. AZODO, *Who and What is Born Again*, SNAAP Press Ltd, Enugu 1993, 13.

biblical passages are becoming a regular prayer motives for many Christians.⁸⁴ This awakened interest in the Bible is helping people to realise that prayer is not a monologue but a dialogue between God and his children. The Bible remains an authoritative word of God and it is through the Bible that God dialogues with a believer.

7.1.2. Music

Religious music in Nigeria has witnessed a remarkable innovation since the outburst of pentecostalism. Many people had discovered a new dimension of being a Christian through the so called gospel music. The fluidity of pentecostal rhyme and rhythm has made it easy for people to sing and play the same tune in various languages and in diverse cultural ambiances. Pentecostal music is homogenising the cultural spectrum of the country. The youths of various ethnics background and religious affiliations can now come together to sing and enjoy a common religious tune.

According to Columbanus Udofia: “Music is a central part of African culture and especially in African religious culture.”⁸⁵ Pentecostalism has really fostered the flourishing of African rhythm in Christian worship, making the Church more at home in the African soul. The presence of pentecostal music and accompaniments has helped many young Africans to realise that religious services can be “pleasurable” and has created a common identity for people of various denominations and ethnics in the one big family of God. Moreover, pentecostal music has reawakened the religious life of the people. Many churches are now giving attention to the formation and training of choristers in the church. Resources are being allotted for the provision of a state of art musical instruments as singing and dancing is becoming an integral

⁸⁴ Cfr. C. O. EBEBE, *The Impact of Pentecostalism on the Catholic Church*, 26-27.

⁸⁵ C. A. UDOFIA, *The Uses and Gratifications of Contemporary Christian Music in the Lives and Religiosity of Nigerian Youth Living in Lagos*, Rome 2004, 38.

part of the liturgy. Pentecostalism has led to the integration of African music into Christian worship in a very significance manner and style.⁸⁶

7.1.3. Spirituality and prayer life

There is no doubt that pentecostalism has awakened in Nigerians an eagerness for spiritual life in the secular world, and a desire for an experiential communion with God in prayers. People are now giving serious attention to their prayer life. There is a noticeable guest for a spirituality based on a personal relationship with the Lord, which for instance in the Catholic Church is manifested in love for private Eucharistic adoration.⁸⁷

Pentecostalism is noted for encouraging a spirituality that abhors confinement and standardization, while provoking an intimate experience of the Holy Spirit.⁸⁸ Many Nigerians are now after a spirituality that is manifested in power, since an in-breaking of the divine in the ordinary is a proof of the validity and authenticity of a religious life of an individual. In this context, Achunike observes that: “People are looking for men of God and Spiritual masters and the results their encounter with these men of God will yield for them.”⁸⁹ To this end, religious pragmatism is becoming a feature of spirituality and prayer in Nigeria.

7.1.4. Preaching – proclamation – teaching

One of the outstanding impacts of pentecostalism is a general interest in the preaching, proclamation and teaching of the Christian faith in the country by the mainline churches. Unfortunately much of these are done from apologetic or polemic

⁸⁶ “Also of positive values are their biblically based hymns, songs, and choruses. They may lack proper theology... Charismatic Hymns, choruses and praises and chants have gained entrance into Catholic Liturgy. Priests now start preaching with singing. Homily punctuated with sensible Charismatics singing should be encouraged. Scripturally based hymns, when rendered in African rhythms, are always inviting and melodious”(H. C. ACHUNIKE, *The Influence of Pentecostalism on Catholic Priests and Seminarians in Nigeria*, 106).

⁸⁷ Cfr. L. SCHUBERT, *Miracle Hour: A Method of Prayer that will change your Life*, United States of America 1991.

⁸⁸ Cfr. H. C. ACHUNIKE, *The Influence of Pentecostalism on Catholic Priests and Seminarians in Nigeria*, 95-96.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 99.

motives.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, there is an earnest effort to expound the Christian faith and moral, which has led to much evangelistic renewal across churches.

The attention that is given to the Bible by the pentecostals as the sole authoritative source of preaching the good news and of teaching the Christian faith and morals have provoked theologians and pastors of the mainline churches to give a new zeal to the ministry of the Word.⁹¹ This zeal for evangelisation has led to the incorporation of courses in evangelisation - methods and techniques of evangelisation - are becoming more conspicuous in the curriculum of seminaries and theological faculties in the country.⁹²

According to Donatus Udoette: “Many bishops and priests are not teaching the people what they are supposed to know about God and his word. They do not give the faithful the needed understanding that the Eucharist is word celebrated; that it is the word of God that gives meaning and significance to the sacraments.”⁹³ This desire for a renew commitment to the preaching and teaching of the Christian faith is a contribution of pentecostalism.

Many preachers in the mainline churches were educated and sophisticated salesmen in possession of the best products in the market, but woefully lacking in skills and disastrously unable to market their products. It is the success of the pentecostals that brought this observation to lamplight, and in the last few years, the situation is fast changing and the pulpits in the mainline churches are becoming fountain of enrichment and nourishment for the faithful.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Cfr. J. PETERS, *Scripture Alone? 21 Reasons to Reject “Sola Scriptura,”* TAN Books and Publishers, Rockford (Illinois) 1999; T. NELSON, *Which Bible Should You Read?*, TAN Books and Publishers, Rockford (Illinois) 2001.

⁹¹ “The preacher, like the theologian – or rather, the preacher who ought to be a theologian- speaks about the God he or she has encountered by retrieving, explaining and communicating doctrines. Doctrines have functions which include the specification of what it means to be a Christian disciple. The preacher, in proclaiming the word, specifies what it means to be a Christian disciple, and invites his or her audience to become authentic Christians”(A. A. AKINWALE, «Doctrinal Function of Preaching in Catholic Tradition», in THE MICHAEL J. DEMPSEY CENTRE FOR RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL RESEARCH (DOMINICAN INSTITUTE, IBANDAN), *Preaching In Contemporary Nigeria*, 99).

⁹² Cfr. C. MUORAH, *The Pentecost Experience: A Manual for Acts II Process Training*, Symac Printing & Design Limited, Fegge (Onitsha) 1996.

⁹³ D. UDOETTE, «New Religious Movements in Nigeria: Challenges to the Church in the New Millennium», 43.

⁹⁴ “The zeal of the Pentecostal pastors in executing their ministry should be encouraged among priests. Already some priests imitate their zealousness. Young priests now take their priestly calling seriously and do everything possible to maintain their call as priests and try to revive their parishioners through retreats, organized prayers, crusades, night vigils and Eucharistic adorations”(H. C. ACHUNIKE, *The Influence of Pentecostalism on Catholic Priests and*

7.1.5. Liturgy – worship

According to Hilary Achunike: “Liturgy deals with the way people worship God. Pentecostals take worship seriously and allow it to penetrate and influence their lives. Indeed for the Pentecostals, worship is a 24- hour-a-day, seven-days–a–week experience of God.”⁹⁵ The pentecostals attention to worship and vibrancy of pentecostal celebrations have led to a change of attitude towards liturgical celebrations in the mainline churches.

The faithful are responding to the call for active participation at the liturgical functions due to the stimulus from the pentecostal churches.⁹⁶ The guiding principles for preparing for any liturgical function is built around the experience of the people and not simply in conformity to a foreign styles of worship. Many Nigerians Christians generally welcome the pentecostal styles of worship, since this seems to respond to African religious sentiments.

Donatus Udoette observes:

It is not long... since the Catholic Church introduced into her liturgy the singing of choruses, playing of local instruments, clapping of hands and dancing. Hitherto it was forbidden by an unwritten law to do these things. The Church was supposed to be as quiet as possible so that one would not distract the presence of God in the Spirit.⁹⁷

It is now taken for granted that some of these basic anthropological dispositions of Africans could become useful and powerful tools for glorifying God and edifying a worshipping community.⁹⁸

Taking cue from the pentecostal churches, women for instance are now assuming responsibility at public worship in the mainline churches.⁹⁹ Much functions

Seminarians in Nigeria, 106). Cfr. I. ACHA, «Using God’s Gift to Build God’s Community», in *Encounter* 6, (2002-2003), 130.

⁹⁵ H. C. ACHUNIKE, *The Influence of Pentecostalism on Catholic Priests and Seminarians in Nigeria*, 66.

⁹⁶ Cfr. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (4 December, 1964), n. 14.

⁹⁷ D. UDOETTE, «New Religious Movements in Nigeria: Challenges to the Church in the New Millennium», 41.

⁹⁸ Cfr. J. HEALEY – D. SYBERTZ, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, 260-261.

⁹⁹ “Some observers have noted the similarities of these Christian women leaders not only to the prophetesses of African Traditional Religion, but also to the Montanist movement of the early Church, which gave positions of authority to women. It has been pointed out that the discriminatory attitude of the western churches toward women is, in matters of religious tradition, quite alien to Africa. My reading of the women founders and leaders of the African Instituted Churches leaves me convinced that African women like Captain Abiodun reflect the leadership of women in African

that do not require the character of ordination are now taken up readily by women at liturgical functions. This has given a unique touch to the liturgical assembly, where nobody is no more considered as a “pious spectator” at the sacred drama. Pentecostalism has attempted to offer women individuation and identity in the household of God, to embellish their authentic religious endowments. This inspiration is being taken over by the mainline churches in Africa.¹⁰⁰

7.1.6. Lay participation

Closely associated to the empowerment of women at the liturgical functions, is a general commitment of the laity to their Christian callings. The era when the Church was the exclusive affairs of the clergy is fast coming to an end. The platform of this awareness and vivification is the realisation that there is no sector of the people of God that is endowed with the monopoly of the spirituals gifts.¹⁰¹ The Church grows where there are manifestations of spiritual gifts, whether among the laity or the clergy, for the good of the whole community.¹⁰²

Now, there is an awareness that there is one Spirit but many gifts (cfr. 1 Cor. 12: 8-13). Each gift is meant for the good of the whole community and it is therefore an affront to the Holy Spirit, if any member of the community refuses to make his/her charismatic endowments available to the community. This pentecostal consciousness had really encouraged many faithful in the mainline churches to embark upon a ministry in their local community and beyond.

We are now witnessing a flourishing of charisms (whether ordinary or extraordinary) in the churches. Donatus Udoette sustains that it is the responsibility of every Christian to use his charisms for the building up of the Church, since all are

Traditional Religion. They are recognized by their followers as divine agents. Churches in Africa cry for the richness of this empowering and caring ministry”(M. A ODUYOYE, *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 1995, 126).

¹⁰⁰ Cfr. A. SHORTER – J. N. NJIRU, *New Religious Movements in Africa*, Pauline Publications Africa, Nairobi 2001, 29.

¹⁰¹ Cfr. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (18 November, 1965), n. 3.

¹⁰² Cfr. R. A. N. KYDD, *Charismatic Gifts in the Early Church*, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA 1984, 5-13.

members of the Body of Christ. “It is only in doing this that we bring glory and honour to the body of Christ of which we are members by virtue of our baptism and participation in the Holy Spirit...”¹⁰³ There is now a general disposition among the clergy to recognise and foster charisms among the lay faithful and to give them a proper space for growth and service in the Church.

7.1.7. Clerical and lay formation

The onslaught of pentecostalism had called the mainline churches to review the programme of formation of their pastors, in order to respond effectively, to the present situation in the country. And apart from the ministerial training in the seminaries and theological faculties, there are various denominational and interdenominational centres for training and formation of the faithful either for evangelical works or for their general Christian formation.

In the Catholic Church for instance, the emergence of School of Evangelisation initiated by Bishop Anthony Okonkwo Gbuji has responded to this need in a remarkable way. Many priests, nuns and lay faithful are being trained as evangelisers, well equipped to respond to the religious challenges of the moment. These schools are now common in Nigeria, offering training in evangelisation and ministry to those who may not afford professional theological formation.¹⁰⁴

7.1.8. Use of mass media

Another aspect of this response is the development of communication departments in various mainline churches, to inform the public about the works of salvation. Many bishops and priests are now regular guests in television and radio

¹⁰³ D. UDOETTE, *Charism and the Church*, 128.

¹⁰⁴ Michael Bassey is the director of the Witnessing School of Evangelisation in Uyo and Ikot Ekpene dioceses. Through the auspice of this school, he has together with Donatus Udoette written a *simple compendium* on the Holy Spirit to educate and inform “simple Christian who wants to live his Christian life to the full and would be willing to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with others with the view of making their own contributions toward the edification of the Church of Christ”(M. BASSEY – D. UDOETTE, *The Holy Spirit According to the Scriptures – A Catechesis on the Holy Spirit*, Joe Graph Publications, Ikot Ekpene 1999, iv).

stations, in their attempt to carry the gospel beyond the pulpit. Churches programmes and spiritual activities are given wider publicity in the mass media.

The pentecostals have encouraged the use of mass media for religious programmes, and this is fast becoming normal for the mainline churches in the country.¹⁰⁵

7.1.9. Ecclesial consciousness

Pentecostalism has really influenced the ecclesial consciousness of many Christians and their identification with their churches is becoming very strong. The Spirit is not just gathering people into a faceless mass, but into an organised Body of Christ. There is much personal solidarity with a local Christian community now.

“*My church*” is becoming a popular slogan among Nigerians. Expressions such as these are commonly used nowadays: “there is function in my church”; “come and worship with me in my church”; “my church does not discriminate”; “there is fasting in my church today”; “my church is growing because Jesus is the Lord in the church”; “my church is having her annual harvest and I must be there,” and similar ones. These indicate their sense of involvement and commitment to their worshipping community.

This ecclesial solidarity is now influencing the moral life of people in the society, since they believe that their actions or inactions will be attributed to their churches. There is a kind of spontaneous desire for an adequate ethical life, in order to meet up with the ethical standard of their churches among committed Christians. Achunike observes: “Many are now being cautious(sic) about their life style because they are aware that they are being watched. A priest is not going to cover his character with cassock or an establishment coat. People are demanding to know how their priests or pastors are living.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ H. C ACHUNIKE, «The Challenges of Pentecostalism to the Mainline Churches in Nigeria», 25

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 64.

This demands holiness and proper moral life, both from the sanctuary and the pew. The pentecostals teaching of born-again has much impact on the mainline churches, since every authentic Christian is expected to live a new life in Christ and to be guided by the Spirit.¹⁰⁷ Since there is no church that is contrary to holiness and righteousness of her members, many are compelled by their ecclesial consciousness to demonstrate an acceptable Christian moral standard in their public life, at least so that they do not tarnish the image of their church.¹⁰⁸

7.1.10. Church support (tithing)

The pentecostal churches are often indigenous congregations and as such there are no “mother churches” or “funding agencies” for their financing and sustenance. The support of the church rests solely on the local members. The commonly adopted mean of supporting the church is tithing.¹⁰⁹ The biblical practice of tithing is generally accepted by members, even when it is very demanding on the individuals.

This approach has proven to be useful and effective for the survival of pentecostal churches in the country. Many Christians in the mainline churches are also realising the “spiritual usefulness” of tithing, and are therefore, paying their tithes to support their churches. According to Hilary Achunike: “Tithe payment is becoming a common experience in the Catholic Church. Some young priests, in imitation of the Pentecostal pastors, urge that people pay their tithe but to the parish priest. Tithe payment is very common in parts of Lagos, as a result of Pentecostal influences.”¹¹⁰

Some bishops in Nigeria are devising tithing as a tactic, for calling the laity, to their responsibility of providing for the material needs of the Church. The response from the faithful of the mainline churches, especially the Catholics, who didn’t consider tithing, as an essential part of religious practices, is very positive. Many are

¹⁰⁷ Cfr. T. ONOYIMA, *The Catholic Charismatic Movement and the Church: Delivered at the Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu: 1984 Catholic Week* (2nd Edition), 22-26.

¹⁰⁸ Cfr. H. C ACHUNIKE, «The Challenges of Pentecostalism to the Mainline Churches in Nigeria», 66.

¹⁰⁹ Cfr. T. ADELAKUN, *Tithing: Key to Prosperity*, Victory Publishing House, Ibadan 1997, 7.

¹¹⁰ H. C ACHUNIKE, «The Challenges of Pentecostalism to the Mainline Churches in Nigeria», 93.

challenged by the pentecostals to assign 10% of their monthly income, for the support of their churches, while they still continue with their voluntary donations and offering to God.¹¹¹

7.1.11. Devotional practices

Pentecostalism is challenging some of the churches' traditional pious practices, that are ineffective for meeting the spiritual needs of today. Members of the mainline churches are incorporating from the pentecostals, new religious practices or devotions that seem to respond pragmatically to their religious and spiritual necessities.

The general result is a kind of syncretistic devotions by many Christians, in their search for a devotion that "works." Many protestants for example pray the Catholic's rosary, and do the station of the cross, while some Catholics are now practising "dry fasting", "seven/forty days fasting," tarring nights, camp prayers sessions in bushes, etc., depending on their religious disposition and the gravity of their spiritual problems.

One of the religious practices in pentecostalism that has come to stay in the Nigerian Christianity is speaking in tongues. Even though some mainline Christians do not allow speaking in tongues in their public liturgy, it is becoming a common phenomenon in organised para-liturgical functions of various churches.¹¹² There are priests and ministers who now openly encourage their members to pray in tongues even at liturgical celebrations. Some manifestations associated with the experience of the Spirit are now common among mainline churches both at public and private levels. Another pentecostal practice that is incorporated by many mainline Christians is voluptuous praise. Priests and pastors now urge the faithful to praise the Lord, and dancing before the Lord is fast becoming a pious practice.

A selective incorporation of the authentic African and universal Judeo-Christian values into private and liturgical life of the people through the influence of

¹¹¹ Cfr. T. R. KENDEL, *Tithing: Discover the Freedom of Biblical Giving*, Zondervans, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1982, 79.

¹¹² Cfr. C. O. EBEBE, *The Impact of Pentecostalism on the Catholic Church*, 29.

pentecostalism and New Religious Movements are considered by Donatus Udoette as a meaningful style of inculturation.¹¹³

7.1.12. Aesthetic of religious ambience

In the words of Achunike: “Pentecostals have a very high sense of aesthetic. This is evidenced in the architectural beauty of their churches and their interior decorations.”¹¹⁴ Pentecostalism has succeeded tremendously in influencing the aesthetic set-up of the mainline churches in Nigeria. One cannot but admire the beauty around the “sanctuary” of the pentecostal churches, which very often meets the state-of-art. Even personal dressing codes or habit of many pentecostal pastors will not leave much to be desired from a gentleman.

Therefore both the church set-up and the person of the pastors are influencing the mainline churches positively. Many Christians now pay attention to the beautification of their churches, and many priests and ministers in the mainline churches now pay more attention to their public decorum and posture (cfr. 1 Tim. 4:12).

Looking at the above influences of pentecostalism on mainline churches, it is obvious that pentecostalism is a force to reckon with in the contemporary Christianity. It has created permanent impact on the churches, and the Christian faith and practice cannot be the same after the explosion of pentecostalism. It needs an honest and prayerful disposition to assess whether pentecostalism is a blessing to the Church, waking the Church from her ivory tower and imperial romance to the reality of her mission as a spiritual entity, whose sole purpose and aim is to proclaim and continue the mission of Jesus Christ of Nazareth in season and out of season in the world (cf. 2 Tim. 4:2).

¹¹³ Cfr. D. UDOETTE, «New Religious Movements in Nigeria: Challenges to the Church in the New Millennium», 40-41.

¹¹⁴ H. C. ACHUNIKE, *The Influence of Pentecostalism on Catholic Priests and Seminarians in Nigeria*, 106.

7.2. Negatives and dangerous impacts

The following could be considered as negatives and dangerous impacts of pentecostalism in Nigeria today. We have therefore to seek a proper Christian equilibrium, from the light of the universal tradition of the Church.

7.2.1. Healing, deliverance, dream, vision, special knowledge, prophecy

Arising from the pentecostal spirituality, healing and deliverance are not just considered to be an extraordinary charism and peculiar grace emanating from the treasury of the Church, but they are seen as an ordinary right and privilege of every Christian. There is a tendency to separate spiritual gifts from the sacramental life of the Church, and at worst, sacramental mediation of graces are considered merely as ritualistic Christianity, lacking in power.

For some priests and pastors, there is nothing sacramental about healing and deliverance, but simply a ministration of a personal spiritual power by an individual. The Christian faith is seen as a manifestation of the power of Jesus in the everydayness of life. This unfortunately is degenerating into a superstitious Christianity, where experience is separated from doctrine. To this end, Donatus Udoette cautions: “Evangelisation in the new millennium will not yield much fruits if the Church is unwilling to break new grounds in response to the new situation of her existence.”¹¹⁵

Hence the practice of vision and dream, telling of prophecy are subtly entering into the “official Christianity” in the country. This situation is compounded by the explosion of the Marian visions across the globe, which is encouraging to African Christians, coming from the background, where dreams and visions of the angelic and deceased hosts, is very natural.¹¹⁶

The emphasis given to these phenomena in Africa can easily lead to a conclusion that there is an emergence of neo-paganism in a guise of pentecostalism

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 46.

¹¹⁶ Cfr. A. SHORTER – J. N. NJIRU, *New Religious Movements in Africa*, 99-100.

today. Many Christians are now out to “consult,” and spiritual direction or counselling is often confused with sorcery or divination. The resurgence of these experiences, therefore challenges the Church to reflect on her worldview and cosmogony, at least for the African Christians.

7.2.2. Clerical Flamboyancy

It seems that whenever and wherever there is a spiritual re-awakening, the clergies will take advantage economically. The material success of some pentecostal ministers has created a kind “ministerial jealousy” in Nigeria. The success and validity of ministers of God seem to be measured by their material flamboyancy. This cancer is eating deep into the fabric of Nigerian Christendom. The clergies are living far above many members of their congregations materially.

Achunike correctly observes: “Pentecostal flamboyant lifestyle affects priests and seminarians. This precisely because we belong to a society that is flamboyant, a society that worships wealth or money or possession.”¹¹⁷ The Church has never encouraged her ministers to live below an acceptable economy standard of their environment, while not discouraging the spirit of sacrifice and renunciation by them. The challenge of “living good and giving the best to God” encourages in pentecostalism, is having negative effects on the churches’ policies concerning clerical remuneration, and thereby calls for a re-evaluation of acceptable and dignify style of life by the clergies, in their witness to and identification with the Son of Man who had no place to lay his head (cfr. Luke 9,58).

7.2.3. Financial and material prosperity

The flamboyant lifestyle is not affecting the clergy only, but is becoming a terrible virus among the laity too. Pentecostalism with the message of abundant life and blessing, is making material prosperity a yardstick of the divine favour. Its being

¹¹⁷ H. C. ACHUNIKE, *The Influence of Pentecostalism on Catholic Priests and Seminarians in Nigeria*, 66.

affirmed that whoever is poor, is a sinner and not born-again. It is the prosperity of members of a church that shows which church is really worshipping God rightly. Therefore, it becomes pertinent for members to be prosperous and to abound in wealth as a testimony of divine encounter in the church.

Cosmas Ebebe informs us that:

prosperity gospel are impacting on the Catholic Church. Unsuspecting Catholics are meditating with King James Version of the Bible while some preachers are abandoning more authentic translations for loose versions. Fun-raising activities in the Church is gradually witnessing Pentecostal like anchor on prosperity like promise of automatic reward for every donation.¹¹⁸

This observation is not only true about Catholics, but it is a common phenomenon among various denominations in the country.

The dignity of members of the churches and congregations seems to depend on how much they can contribute for the developmental projects in the community. Many Christians now consider their financial status seriously, and there is a terrible stigma about bankruptcy or financial brokenness. Nowadays, the popular slogans among Christians include: I can never be poor in Jesus' name¹¹⁹; the God that lifted me up will not let me down! To this end, people may likely go into all sorts of corrupt practices, devoid of Christian justice and integrity in as much as they maintain or improve upon their financial position.

7.2.4. Sentimental and sensual exploitation of the human body for experience

Pentecostalism is an experiential religion. Faith is said to be real, only when it becomes experience, and a man with experience is acclaimed more useful and successful than a man with doctrine. This quest for an experiential religion is transforming religiosity and spirituality into sentimentalism. Every thing is being reduced to feeling and touching. Both the leaders and the led are imbibing this culture

¹¹⁸ C. O. Ebebe, *The Impact of Pentecostalism on the Catholic Church*, 36-37.

¹¹⁹ "I knew that God deals with people on covenants terms. From that time the yoke of poverty was broken in my life, and I knew I can never be poor!" (D. O. OYEDEPO, *The Force of Freedom*, 83).

unconsciously in the country. Music and religious practices or rituals must terminate at the level of experience: feeling good and being touched.

The body is *par excellence* a medium of experience. Even when there is no precise sacramental understanding or backing of a particular sign or symbol or ritual, it is a general tendency of practitioners of faith healing to explore the body maximally and much of these explorations are meant to let loose the unconscious eroticism. It is precisely here, that many faith healers following the examples of some pentecostal healers, are departing from the ethics of pastoral cares of the sick and the needy in the Church.

The appropriation of pentecostal and spiritualist bodily exploitation in the context of faith healing by some priests necessitates Achunike's caution that: "The holy oil is meant to be anointed to sick person on the forehead. Anointing of the holy oil should not be administered in the sacred parts of the human body male or female, particularly the opposite sex."¹²⁰ This "intimate anointing" desire by clients and offer by practitioners in a context of faith healing, is a provocation of the erotic, in order to foster feeling and experience in a religious context.

7.2.5. Close fraternity and discriminatory tendencies

"In their own congregations, neo-pentecostals call each other "brother" and "sister." They create a climate in which individuals help each other, finding them jobs and visiting them when they are sick."¹²¹ This is a fundamental re-awakening of the communal life of the early Christians which is in harmony with the African sense of communalism and togetherness.

The mainline churches are recapturing the sense of community and the moral imperative of being a "brother keeper." Nevertheless, this is opening up a risk of "over-fraternalisation," and is introducing a "spiritual ethnicity and religious nepotism" in the country. The unfortunate development about this awakening, which

¹²⁰ H. C. ACHUNIKE, *The Influence of Pentecostalism on Catholic Priests and Seminarians in Nigeria*, 112.

¹²¹ A. SHORTER – J. N. NJIRU, *New Religious Movements in Africa*, 97.

is devoid of Christian-ness, is the consideration of those outside the immediate church's family as "strangers."

Many churches are not able to overcome the myopic vision of the human society championed by some pentecostals, who considered themselves as the chosen race, called to live away from the world of sinners. Members of different churches tend to see their folks as brothers and sisters (and such with admiration). Unfortunately, the force of this fraternity and solidarity among themselves, disentangles them from unifying impulses of the wider human and Christian societies.

7.2.6. Spiritual titanism and religious tyranny or religious feudalism

Pentecostalism has involuntarily tightened personality cult in the contemporary Christianity. It has succeeded to turn attention of the faithful not simple to "deceased saints" but to the "living saints." This attitude is creating what we may call "spiritual titanism" among Christians, that is to say, those with spiritual gifts, exercise them in a titanic manner, using their gifts to lord it over others and to bring them to servitude.

It is a common observation in the pentecostal circles that the personality of the pastors commands more respect or admiration than what an authentic Catholic devotion, for instance, will reserve to the Blessed Sacrament, the real presence of Jesus Christ. Since there is a belief in their person as instrument or medium of divine power, the healers or miracles workers exercise tyrannical authority over their followers. Their commands and advices are unquestionable, while their whims and fancies are executed without second thought.

This unfortunate exploitation of the divine (spiritual gifts) for self-aggrandisement, is becoming a common feature (style) of some pastors or healers of the mainline churches in Nigeria. Elochukwu Uzukwu writes:

The problem of "priest-healers" has not left the Nigerian bishops at ease. A conference or consultation held in 1991 in which most of the well known "healers" participated does not seem to have introduced order and restraint in the exercise of this charism. Again I see the problem as related to the

“sacred power” of the priest. In Port Harcourt, Onitsha, Enugu, Orlu, and Aba dioceses, to name a few, our bishops find it difficult at times to exercise their supervisory ministry over the powerful “priest-healers.” The charismatic priests appear to be very conscious of their power – a power which is often times maintained through the exploitation of the superstitious and the irrational, of which distressed faithful are easy victims.¹²²

Some of the healers are exercising power in a tyrannical and dictatorial fashion, creating a kind of serfdom and harem around themselves, transforming the spiritual hunger and desire for God of the faithful into religious enslavement. They hold on to their power with the threat of curse, making their victims to believe that a separation from their “feudal holds” is an automatic malediction.

Uzukuwu believes that one may need to be a saint to be free from the intoxication of spiritual power. The situation is desperate, when the bishops themselves become afraid of those with spiritual gifts and demonstrate to be unable to offer healthy alternatives to their victims, in accordance with the perennial liberating ministry of the Church.¹²³

8. Conclusion

We have attempted to explore in this study, the presence and impact of pentecostalism in Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa. It is our belief that the situation in Nigeria may not be very different from many African countries. The face of Christianity in Africa, through the impact of independent and pentecostal churches is fast changing, and in several counts unfolding the essence of the perennial Christianity, if we must consider the New Testament as a valid and permanent identity of Christianity.

A church that is devoid of charismatic gifts and ministries, may be very far away of the New Testament, and perhaps becomes an existential unbelief of the story of Jesus Christ of Nazareth as told in the Gospels. African Christians bringing the realities of the New Testament into the awareness of the Church today, may not only

¹²² E. E. UZUKWU, *A Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*, 123.

¹²³ Cfr. *Ibid.*, 124.

be fostering African experiences, but rather showing the true face of Christianity in the secularised world. The Church in Africa is therefore out to bring to the forefront, the perennial image of Christianity today.

Pentecostalism should therefore be understood as a valid dimension of the Church's life and ministry, which loses its relevancy when it is being separated from the ecclesial ministry rooted in the Apostolic tradition. Hence, an authentic pentecostal consciousness does not belong to particular culture in the world, but an part of the New Testament response, to the question of man's relationship to God as made known through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are therefore bound to seek and articulate a model of the Church today, that will explicate theologically and ecclesiologically the reality of the Christian faith in the contemporary world, capable of making the encounter between God and humanity, an experiential reality.¹²⁴

¹²⁴ Cfr. D. P. UKPONG, *The Phenomenology of Pentecostalism in Nigeria – A Theological and Ecclesiological Reflection*, Rome 2006, 109-118.

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