

## Chapter Fifteen

# “Born of Water and the Spirit”: Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity in Africa

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Pentecostalism is the fastest growing stream of Christianity in the world today, and in the verdict of Harvey Cox, the movement is reshaping religion in the twenty-first century.<sup>536</sup> This observation by Cox is very instructive for our purposes in this chapter, which deals with one of the most significant developments in African Christianity since the middle of the twentieth century—the rise, growth, and impact of Pentecostalism. Here we trace the major historical developments, identify the different types, and discuss some of the salient theological orientations of Pentecostal/Charismatic renewal movements in Africa. The experiential and versatile nature of Pentecostalism has allowed African Christians to take their spiritual destiny into their own hands by deploying within local contexts a religion with a global outlook. The observation by Cox is important because earlier in his book *The Secular City*, he had joined “death of God” theologians and sociologists of religion to predict the demise of Christianity under the weight of modernization. Cox’s recent work, *Fire from Heaven*, is one among a number of recent publications that affirm the growing importance of Pentecostal churches and Charismatic renewal movements in world Christianity. Other publications on Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity include: Poewe, *Charismatic*

<sup>536</sup> Harvey G. COX, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1996); H.G. COX, “The Myth of the Twentieth Century: The Rise and Fall of Secularization”, in *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, 28, 2/3 (1999), 6-8.

*Christianity as a Global Culture* (1994), Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (1997); Dempster, *The Globalization of Pentecostalism* (1999), Anderson and Hollenweger, *Pentecostals after a Century* (1999), and Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit* (2001). Among publications that specifically address or devote significant space to African Pentecostal/Charismatic issues are: Anderson, *African Reformation* (2001), Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (1998), Kalu, *Power, Poverty and Prayer* (2001), and Corten and Marshall-Fratani, *Between Babel and Pentecost* (2001).

Our focus in this chapter falls on specific African initiatives, appropriations, and contributions to the growth, significance, and impact of Pentecostalism on the continent. The differences in the nature of Pentecostal/Charismatic phenomena make the issue of definitions and nomenclature important for our study. "Pentecostalism" may be understood as that stream of Christianity that emphasizes personal salvation in Christ as a transformative experience wrought by the Holy Spirit; and in which such pneumatic phenomena as "speaking in tongues", prophecies, visions, healing, miracles, and signs and wonders in general, are sought, accepted, valued, and consciously encouraged among members as evidence of the active presence of God's Spirit. The coterminous designation "Charismatic" derives from St. Paul's expression *charismata pneumatika*, "Gifts of the Spirit" (I Corinthians 12-14), and which he uses to refer to those "extraordinary graces" attributable to the experience of the Holy Spirit. The key to our definition of Pentecostalism is Acts 2:38. In that passage, Peter explains the process of incorporation into Christ as requiring repentance from sin, and baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ culminating in a forgiven life. Following this initial step, Peter assured the enquirers: "you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit". Adult "baptism by immersion" is generally presumed to be what was being referred to here, and so is widely regarded by Pentecostals as the proper symbolic way of receiving the born again into the church. This process of incorporation into Christ is further justified from Jesus' statement to Nicodemus: "no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5). There are wide ranges of groups in Africa that give space to the presence of the Holy Spirit. Here we will follow conventional usage and retain "Pentecostal" for churches and denominations claiming the Biblical Pentecostal heritage as found in the Gospel of St. John and Acts of the Apostles cited above. The expression "Charismatic" is restricted to Pentecostal renewal movements that operate within historic mission denominations or mainline churches.

In *The Household of God*, Leslie Newbigin casts Pentecostalism in terms of a “third force” in Christianity, following the Protestant emphasis on the Word, and the Roman Catholic emphasis on the Sacraments.<sup>537</sup> In Africa, the precursors of Pentecostalism were indigenous prophet figures, many of whom were persecuted out of historic mission denominations for pursuing spiritualities sometimes scandalously perceived by church authority as belonging to the “occult”. Prophets William Wadé Harris of the Gold Coast (Ghana), Garrick Sokari Braide of the Niger Delta, Simon Kimbangu of the Congo and others, challenged Africans to throw away their traditional resources of supernatural succor and turn towards the living God of the Bible. God alone, they taught, was able to rescue people from the fear of witchcraft, medicines, and principalities and powers before which inimical forces inherited mainline Western theologies just cringed. Many of these nineteenth and early twentieth century revivalistic prophetic campaigns only resulted in independent churches when the prophets had left the scene. The prophetic movements were thus followed by the emergence of the popular Spiritual, Aladura, or Zionist churches known collectively as “African Independent” or “African Initiated” churches (AICs). The AICs aimed at restoring to the African church the vitality of the presence of the Holy Spirit, which was seen as accounting for the “dry denominationalism” of the mission churches (see chapters 10 and 11 of this volume). Healing became their single most important activity, but many of them strayed into therapeutic methods that were not Christian. Subsequently, it has become contentious to regard these older AICs as Pentecostal. In any case most AICs belong to separate associations from those formed by mainstream Pentecostals. Except in southern Africa where Zionist churches are still doing well, AICs are no more paradigmatic of African Christianity. Nevertheless they are considered important for challenging the mission denominations into rethinking their resistance to Charismatic renewal. The emphasis of the AICs on healing, and their worldview of mystical causality in etiology and diagnosis are retained in the healing and deliverance sectors of African Pentecostal ministries and churches.

In terms of periodisation, it is pertinent to note from the outset that since the twilight years of the Aladura era in the 1970s, African Pentecostalism has blossomed in many directions. Classical Pentecostal denominations, some of which have roots in the 1901 Charles Parham and 1906 William Seymour Azusa Street revivals of North America, have

<sup>537</sup> Leslie NEWBIGIN, *The Household of God* (London: SCM, 1953). The expression “third force” is owed to Henry P. van Dusen.

gained much prominence in Africa. In South Africa, for example, the Assemblies of God, Apostolic Faith Mission, and the Full Gospel Church of God belong to this tradition. The bulk of classical Pentecostal churches operating in Africa, however, were initiated locally; foreign assistance often came later. Other Pentecostal collectivities found in Africa include: New [independent] Pentecostal Churches (NPCs), trans-denominational Pentecostal fellowships like the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International (FGBMFI), Women Aglow, and Intercessors for Africa; and Charismatic renewal groups of the mainline churches. These together with itinerant international Pentecostal preachers and prophets have taken over the religious landscape as the new faces of African Christianity. So in Africa today, we do not only have major Western mission-related Pentecostal denominations such as the Assemblies of God originating from the USA, but also African-initiated ones like William F. Kumuyi's Deeper Christian Life Ministry, which started in Nigeria in 1973. In addition, there are the multitudinous "mega" independent NPCs like Mensa Otabil's International Central Gospel Church in Ghana and Andrew Wutawanashe's Family of God in Zimbabwe, which were also born out of local initiatives.

As with the African initiated classical Pentecostal denominations, all these churches are now proliferating internationally. African Pentecostal churches have become a dominant force in Western Europe and North America providing participants the religious context to "sing the Lord's song in foreign lands". The fact that African religions have emerged in Europe not as primal forms but in terms of Christianity is itself evidence of the growing strength of the Christian faith in modern Africa. Current research indicates how African churches, particularly those from the Pentecostal stream, have re-crossed former mission boundaries forcing missionary countries to take note of the upbeat mode of African Christianity.<sup>538</sup> To this end, the largest single Christian congregation in Europe since Christianity began is Nigerian Pastor Matthew Ashimolowo's Kingsway International Christian Centre (KICC) in London. Pastor Matthew Ashimolowo founded KICC in 1992, and has within ten years grown to become the biggest church in Europe. At the beginning of the year 2000, KICC, together with its satellite congregations in the UK,

<sup>538</sup> See for instance, Gerrie TER HAAR, *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe* (Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998); Rijk VAN DIJK, "Time and Transcultural Technologies in the Self in the Ghanaian Pentecostal Diaspora", in André CORTEN & Ruth MARSHALL-FRATANI, *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), 216-234.

claimed a membership upwards of 6,000 adults. The Church had started to develop a 5000-seating capacity auditorium and office complex in East London where it is located. Into the twenty-first century, the fast trend of forming Pentecostal churches has not abated. NPCs split very often as pastors claiming “new visions” continue to establish “new altars”. Charismatic renewal movements operate unofficially as ecumenical organizations and may on occasion grow bigger than the local churches within which they operate. The lay-orientation of Charismatic movements accounts for their success. Ordained clergy, who are not charismatic themselves, often feel their pastoral authority under threat leading to friction with lay charismatic leaders. The end results have always been secessions that increase the number of independent Pentecostals in the system.

Whichever of the groups listed here is being referred to, Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity appeals for its legitimacy primarily to the biblical Pentecost predicted in Joel 28, and fulfilled in Acts 2. Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity is a religion of the heart, so worship in these movements and churches is characterized in the main by spontaneity and pneumatic manifestations. Rijk van Dijk has written extensively on Pentecostalism in Malawi. His articulation of the spirituality of Malawi’s “young born-again preachers” ties together the characteristic features of Pentecostal/Charismatic movements especially in African contexts. The Christianity of the “born-again preachers” is characterized by: a strict morality seen in their zero tolerance for the use of alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, and drugs. They fulminate against adultery, violence and theft. Frequenting bars, hotels and discos are castigated as “satanic habits”. These negative injunctions are balanced with clear demands for a rejuvenated strict morality put forward in an atmosphere of “religious excitement and emotionalism”. During evangelistic campaigns, repentant sinners are invited to surrender evil objects, which in African contexts include anything from stolen goods and offensive weapons to traditional amulets and charms. In this vein, traditional religious functionaries and Islamic “Malams” are constantly castigated in African Pentecostal discourses as purveyors of instruments that serve as conduits for demons. In Malawian Pentecostalism, van Dijk describes how worshippers seeking new birth are “urged to step forward at the Altar Call in order to receive the “infilling” of the Holy Spirit, which is stressed as the single most important way to become cleansed of worldly, defiling forces.” Following this process of rupture with the past and encounter with the Spirit, the born-again is

considered so empowered that “the forces of darkness, witchcraft, [and] evil spirits, can no longer hold sway over his or her life.”<sup>539</sup> As one Pentecostal preacher averred, when you have the Spirit, you are like the traffic police officer in uniform: “when you raise your hand, the “traffic of evil” powers must stop. The Holy Spirit is like the police uniform, he gives you identity. Once you put him on, you have authority.” Thus a familiar African Pentecostal chorus is rendered: “we conquer Satan, we conquer demons, we conquer principalities, we conquer powers; so sing hallelujah.” Elsewhere it is said of Chisanpo’s Pentecostal Christians that: they “long for secure employment and happy domestic life”. “Security” is a recurrent notion in their Pentecostal discourse, “evoking the born-again condition as a refuge from witches who kill children and ruin successful business enterprises, tragedies all too familiar to the impoverished residents of Chisanpo township” in Malawi.<sup>540</sup>

It is important to acknowledge that although African Pentecostalism has resulted largely from local initiatives, indigenous founders and leaders in some cases worked in active collaboration with foreign Pentecostal missions. The Assemblies of God churches were for instance invited by local Pentecostals seeking protection from the religious hegemony perpetrated by historic mission denominations at the turn of the twentieth century. Classical Pentecostal churches did not become mass movements initially. They shot into prominence from the 1970s due to a combination of socio-religious factors, including opening up to younger university evangelical Christian leadership, rapid urbanization, and the collapse of African economies. The Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA), led by Archbishop Ezekiel Guti with an estimated membership of over 600,000, is one of the largest in that region. Guti was originally part of South Africa Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM), founded in 1908, until 1959 when he was expelled together with a small band of followers after disagreements with white missionaries. The Assemblies of God Church in the West African state of Burkina Faso was established in 1921. From a registered membership of only 125,000 at their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1972, Assemblies of God churches in Burkina Faso now count nearly 400,000 members. In the case of Burkina Faso, it is instructive that this rapid

<sup>539</sup> Richard VAN DIJK, “Young Born-Again Preachers in Post-Independence Malawi: The Significance of an Extraneous Identity”, in Paul GIFFORD (ed.), *New Dimensions in African Christianity* (Nairobi: AACC, 1992), 55-56.

<sup>540</sup> Harri ENGLUND, “The Quest for Missionaries: Transnationalism and Township Pentecostalism in Malawi”, in CORTEN & MARSHALL-FRATANI *Between Babel and Pentecost*, 241-242.

growth has occurred in tandem with the country's political and economic difficulties, numerous cases of "madness" observed among redundant migrant workers returning from collapsing rural plantations, and the appearance of new incurable diseases; and all this in the face of the State's inability to intervene in the crises.<sup>541</sup> The theologies of the Pentecostals firmly address these issues.

African initiated classical Pentecostal denominations, such as the Christ Apostolic Church, the Church of Pentecost, and the Deeper Christian Life Ministry, are among the most popular in modern Africa. These Pentecostal denominations normally possess well-defined doctrinal orientation on issues such as the baptism of the Holy Spirit and "speaking in tongues". This may be illustrated with the West African examples of the Church of Pentecost and Christ Apostolic Church that as we will note below, started under the auspices of the Welsh Apostolic Church from Bradford. The Constitution of the CoP, for example, states among others: "all believers in Jesus Christ are entitled to receive, and should earnestly seek the Baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire according to the command of our Lord." According to the CoP:<sup>542</sup>

"This is the normal experience of the early church. With this experience comes power to preach and bestowments of the gifts of the Spirit. When the believer is filled with the Holy Spirit, there is a physical sign of 'speaking in tongues' as the Spirit of God gives utterance. This is accompanied by a burning desire and supernatural power to witness to others about God's salvation and power."

The CoP, now an international organization with branches all over the world, is one of three "apostolic" churches to emerge from the initiative of a Ghanaian Pentecostal, Apostle Peter Anim (1890-1984), and his later collaboration with the Welsh Apostolic Church missionaries, James and Sophia McKeown in the 1930s. Anim's Pentecostal experience predated the contact with the McKeowns by more than a decade. In 1917, Apostle

<sup>541</sup> Pierre-Joseph LAURENT, "Transnationalization and Local Transformations: The Example of the Church of Assemblies of God in Burkina Faso," in André CORTEN and Ruth MARSHALL-FRATANI (eds), *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), 256-273.

<sup>542</sup> Emmanuel Kingsley LARBI, *Pentecostalism: the Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Accra: Center for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, 2001), 278.

Anim triggered a revivalist type campaign around the eastern region of Ghana through the formation of a local prayer group with Pentecostal orientation. So Anim's experience, started as a personal quest for spiritual renaissance which he recounts as follows:

“I was faced with the necessity of contending for a deeper faith and greater spiritual power than what my primary religious experience was able to afford, and I began to seek with such trepidation to know more about the Holy Ghost.”

Anim's Christian life had been affected by a Philadelphia based Faith Tabernacle movement and later in 1922 by another USA-based group, the Apostolic Faith, whose name they later adopted. In the midst of these developments Anim had come into contact with Pastor Odubanjo of Nigeria, who had himself seceded from the Faith Tabernacle movement and was seeking affiliation with the UK Apostolic Church. Odubanjo and Anim worked together and achieved the affiliation, and it was through that process that James McKeown was posted to Ghana as a missionary to help Apostle Anim. A faith-healing doctrine of Anim's group in which members were debarred from using medicine led to a series of intractable conflicts between Anim and McKeown; the collaboration eventually faltered under those strains. The two parted company with each leader being followed by some members; by 1953, the fallout in the relationships among Pastor McKeown, Apostle Anim, and the UK Apostolic Church, under whose auspices McKeown worked, had produced three main classical Pentecostal churches: Apostle Anim's Christ Apostolic Church, James McKeown's Church of Pentecost, and a UK affiliated Apostolic Church of Ghana. The Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) of Nigeria is another example of an indigenous classical Pentecostal church started by an African, Joseph Ayo Babalola. Babalola, a Yoruba, was originally Anglican who later became a pioneering Aladura prophet. In 1928, whilst operating a steamroller, Babalola claimed to have heard Jesus Christ call him to preach the gospel and heal the sick using holy water. He initially affiliated with the Faith Tabernacle movement. Babalola's prophetic ministry was to take off in 1930 when it is claimed he brought a dead person back to life. Aided by a hand-bell and a Bible, Babalola traveled through Yorubaland spreading his revelatory message of repentance, holiness, renunciation of idolatry and witchcraft, and healing the sick using water made holy through prayer. Faith Tabernacle later merged with the British Apostolic Church. Following a subsequent schism in the Apostolic Church, Babalola and others formed the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) in 1941.



In *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (1987), Dayton identifies a common four-fold pattern in Pentecostal theology: Christ as Savior, Christ as Baptizer in the Spirit, Christ as Healer, and Christ as the soon coming King.<sup>543</sup> African classical Pentecostal theology falls within this four-fold pattern, so early members of Christ Apostolic Church, for example, drew parallels between their experiences of spiritual gifts and the biblical Pentecost. Sanneh explains that whereas in some of the independent Aladura churches, “the sense of Christ’s unique life and work was only rather vaguely glimpsed behind all the color and sound of processions and testimonies, in the CAC, Christ occupied a central place.” The CAC stressed the Bible as the written authority for its doctrines and although it did not abandon them completely, it placed less emphasis on visions and dreams stressing that spiritual gifts “should be brought in conformity with Scriptural teaching.”<sup>544</sup> Indigenous classical Pentecostal churches therefore stress not just new birth, but also personal holiness, Bible Study, evangelism, and baptism in the Holy Spirit. Believers are expected to dress modestly and do away with semblances of flamboyance, materialism, and extravagance, in short worldliness in life. In the CoP and Deeper Life, for example, men and women neither sit nor dance together in church. In the case of Kumuyi’s Deeper Life, Ojo shows how the Apostolic Church in which he served as a leader for a considerable while influenced a number of his holiness prescriptions.<sup>545</sup> It is from similar apostolic church backgrounds that a number of classical Pentecostal churches emerged in Africa. Women are also expected to cover their hair during worship, a situation that contrasts sharply with that of the NPCs, in which women may be tacitly encouraged through the example of the wife of the head pastor to makeup in order to reflect “God’s glory”, his goodness and favor. In the history of African Pentecostalism, the puritan or holiness ethic resurfaced strongly in the 1980s when local Christians felt scandalized by moral compromises involving American televangelists. In the “controlled materialism” of the NPCs, Christians are required to take an upbeat approach to life.

<sup>543</sup> Donald W. DAYTON, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1987), 21ff.

<sup>544</sup> Lamin SANNEH, *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 195-196.

<sup>545</sup> Matthews A. OJO, “Deeper Christian Life Ministry: A Case Study of the Charismatic Movements in Western Nigeria”, in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 28, 2 (1988), 141-162. Ojo discusses how some of the rigid prescriptions are being relaxed to accommodate present trends.

Unlike the new Pentecostals, the use of excessive jewelry is not permitted in the indigenous classical Pentecostal churches and in almost all of them, including the Assemblies of God, women may serve in other capacities, but are not admitted into the ordained ministry. In recent years, however, classical Pentecostals have been forced to relax puritan ethics with regards to physical appearance in order to sustain the interests of young people. The forceful impact of Pentecostal movements in the 1970s, also renewed murmurings against the non-interventionist nature of mainline church theologies, and subsequently heightened the rate of drift of members into Pentecostal churches. These developments re-awakened the older mission churches to the need to tolerate renewal groups within their ranks. The principle underlying the formation of Charismatic renewal movements is captured very aptly in the title of Cephaz Omenyo's book on renewal groups within mainline denominations: *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, for that is what Charismatic renewal groups are.<sup>546</sup> Charismatic renewal movements in Africa, born entirely out of lay initiatives, simply aim at integrating renewal phenomena within existing mainline denominations in order to renew them from within. The formation of these movements constitute one way in which to understand how African Christians actually set to work in practical ways the Christian message as understood in their vernacular Scriptures in which God was encountered as Holy Spirit. An international example here is the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement, which having started in Duquesne, USA in 1967, now operates within Roman Catholic denominations worldwide with the African versions being among some of the most dynamic.

Rudolf Otto laments the inability of "orthodox Christianity" to recognize the value of the non-rational aspect of religion, thus giving the "idea of the holy" what he expresses as "a one-sidedly intellectualistic approach."<sup>547</sup> Pentecostalism is a response to such cerebral Christianity, and wherever it has appeared, the movement has defined itself in terms of the recovery of the experiential aspects of the faith by demonstrating the power of the Spirit to infuse life, and the ability of the living presence of Jesus Christ to save from sin and evil. This is even more so in Africa where religion is a survival strategy, and where spirit-possession with its emphasis

<sup>546</sup> Cephaz N. OMENYO, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism: A Study of the Development of Charismatic Renewal in the Mainline Churches in Ghana* (Amsterdam: Boekencentrum, 2002).

<sup>547</sup> Rudolf OTTO, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950 [1923]), 3.

on direct divine communication, intervention in crises, and religious mediation are central to religious experiences. The ministries of healing and deliverance have thus become some of the most important expressions of Christianity in African Pentecostalism. Charismatic movements practice “healing and deliverance” widely within their mission churches because it is in high demand. For example, before he was recalled to Rome in 1982, “healing and deliverance” was the speciality of Zambian Catholic exorcist, Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo. In most of Africa, Charismatic renewal movements, where they have been tolerated along with such ministries to the possessed and oppressed, have helped historic mission denominations to recover from the hemorrhage they used to suffer by the drift of their members into Pentecostal churches. The Charismatic Renewal Movement itself benefits tremendously from trans-denominational fellowships like the FGBMFI and Women Aglow. Members of Full Gospel and Aglow are expected to remain “responsible church members” serving as Bible study leaders and preachers, and in the process heightening what has since the 1980s, become known as the “pentecostalization” of historic mission Christianity. Thus, Pentecostalism has through its various streams, become such a forceful movement in Africa to the extent where churches refusing to integrate its spirituality in one form or another know they face atrophy.

The Intercessors for Africa have meanwhile also continued to function around the continent as trans-denominational groupings like the FGBMFI. Intercessors for Africa have set themselves the task of “redeeming the land” of Africa by doing warfare against powers inhabiting that space as a result of satanic African traditional rituals, and the activities of territorial spirits, that is, fallen angels who are hampering development on the continent. One of the major inspirers of this phenomenon is Fuller professor of missions, Peter Wagner. He has visited African countries, including Ghana in 1996, to talk about territorial spirits and how to combat their activities. In the hermeneutic of the Intercessors, even international financial institutions like the IMF, World Bank, and others operating from Islamic countries are demonized as agents of Satan perpetrating hardship in Africa. It is considered that the land must be redeemed, because “the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness of it” (Psalm 24:1). Principalities and powers whether they exist in the heavens, on the earth, or inside the earth, must be dealt with for their pauperizing influence on African societies and governments. According to one of the leading exponents of the Intercessors for Africa movement:

“Satan expanded his hold over the earth by deploying his principalities and powers to cause and spread spiritual wickedness

in this world. People have been deceived into worshipping idols, gods and Satan by building altars, offering sacrifices, creating groves and high places. Thus, Satan strengthened his hold over families, communities, cities, and nations.”

So the land must be redeemed through intercession because as outlined in Colossians 1:19-22, God through Christ has reconciled all things unto himself: “whether they be things on earth or things in heaven.” In short, “we need to pray and ask God to deliver us from slander against our land.”<sup>548</sup> This worldview ties in with the redemptive and empowering thrust of African Pentecostal theologies. The phenomenon of interceding for nations is now being given further practical expression as African Pentecostals move into Muslim dominated countries on the continent as missionaries. Trans-denominational groups like Pioneers Africa are the main recruiting agencies.

The NPCs of Africa, clearly the most high profile of African Pentecostal groupings, have deep roots in the students’ Evangelical movements of the 1950s and 1960s—Student Christian Movement, Scripture Union, and Campus Crusade for Christ. Most of the founding leaders of NPCs came from this evangelical background. Conservative Evangelical Christianity with its emphases on the authority of the Bible, the Cross of Christ, and personal holiness, existed in Africa’s second cycle institutions through the Scripture Union (SU), and in the universities through the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES). Conservative Evangelicalism also encouraged “responsible church membership” in existing churches, but the evangelical view that the Holy Spirit must not be sought as a subsequent experience following new birth proved counterpoint to grassroots experiences. With time, however, precisely by the late 1970s, generations of young people passing through the post primary educational system had acquired new pneumatic spiritualities that did not fit into the mainline churches in which they were supposed to worship. The evangelical movement in Africa’s second cycle and tertiary institutions simply became charismatic at the grassroots. Having been exposed to Holy Spirit experiences, the new generation of African Christians started to form independent churches to avoid the encumbrances associated with existing denominations with their stereotypical Christian traditions. The movement started in the late 1970s, but the Rheinhard Bonnke Harare Fire Conference for pastors of 1986

<sup>548</sup> Emeka NWANKPA, *Redeeming the Land: Interceding for the Nations* (Accra: ACP, 1998), 7-19.

served as a launching pad for many young men and women seeking to establish their own churches. The Flaming Fire of God Ministries in Zambia formed by Billy Lubansa from the DR Congo resulted from the founder's participation in Harare 1986. His influence since then has extended much further to Cameroon where he is credited with hosting several international crusades and in the process spawning many other new Pentecostal ministries.<sup>549</sup>

The major African inspirer behind the formation of NPCs, and the penchant of its leaders for a prosperity gospel, was the late Nigerian Charismatic, Archbishop Benson Idahosa. One of the cardinal worldviews of the new Pentecostals is, contrary to official evangelical opinion at the time, that it was possible to be born again and be fashionable. Idahosa was a protégé of several American televangelists, and his Church of God Mission International founded in 1972 was one of the first among such new Pentecostal movements in Africa. Idahosa's influence on modern African Christianity has been phenomenal. A number of leading Charismatic pastors in West Africa, including almost all the pioneers, were either trained at Idahosa's Christ for All Nations (CfAN) Bible School, or have drawn their inspiration from his success story. He traveled widely around Africa and beyond speaking at crusades and on the African continent in particular; he challenged young people to form their own Pentecostal ministries. Today NPCs may be found all over Africa's major cities meeting in converted cinema halls, refurbished abandoned factories and warehouses, or newly constructed large chapels with modern architectural designs that members appropriately designate, auditoriums. In Uganda, not only has the new Pentecostal phenomenon overshadowed that country's version of older AICs, the *balokole* movement, but we are also told that the new Pentecostal communions are "mushrooming in luxuriant fashion."<sup>550</sup> The NPCs, like the classical Pentecostal denominations before them, are very critical of the traditional rituals and religious symbolism that the older AICs keenly infused with Christian significance. In places like Kenya and Ghana, older AICs are feeling the heat from the new Pentecostal waves and are transforming themselves to survive.<sup>551</sup> The new churches preach a Faith Gospel that focuses on this-worldly blessings, and that is balanced with a

<sup>549</sup> Paul GIFFORD (ed.), *New Dimensions in African Christianity* (Nairobi: AACC, 1992), 295-296.

<sup>550</sup> GIFFORD, *New Dimensions*, 157.

<sup>551</sup> Paul GIFFORD, "Some Recent Developments in African Christianity", in *African Affairs*, 93 (1994), 525.

“healing and deliverance” theology built on an amalgamation of African traditional worldviews and biblical thought.

NPCs also have a special attraction for Africa’s upwardly mobile youth, a lay-oriented leadership, ecclesiastical office based on a person’s charismatic gifting, innovative use of modern media technologies, particular concern with congregational enlargements, and a relaxed and fashion-conscious dress code for members. In the prosperity discourse, there is continuity between coming to Christ and experiencing a redemptive uplift that is evidenced partly through the possession of material goods. NPCs do not encourage the use of religious symbols like the crucifixes and mounted portraits of Jesus in places of worship. The preferred decorations are potted plants and colors of various countries to underscore their international leanings. English is often the principal mode of communication where the church is an urban one, and there is an ardent desire to appear successful, reflecting a modern outlook and portraying an international image. Many of its leaders come from professional backgrounds and some have earned PhDs in their fields. To give practical expression to their new images as leaders of the born again however, independent Pentecostal pastors are now frequently “Dr”, “Bishop”, or both. The Prosperity Gospel espoused by NPCs hold that God wills spiritual and material prosperity for all believers and so every Christian must appropriate the victory that Christ has won over sin, sickness, curses, poverty and setbacks in life. Christians may appropriate these blessings through positive confessions of faith as found in “the prayer of Jabez” (I Chronicles 4:9-10), and also the faithful payment of tithes and offerings. Such giving is reciprocal, so the Faith Gospel teaches that “sowing” gifts of money and other valuables in the lives of “God’s anointed”, as the pastors are called, is one principal means of attracting God’s prosperity. Tithes and offerings, in keeping with this reciprocal giving, bring in millions in cash that enable NPCs to undertake gigantic and grandiose projects from internal resources. The theological outlook of the NPCs therefore tends to be more immediate, and this is reflected in everything they do. For instance, the words of the born again have performative effect, so debts, unemployment, unhappy marriages, and spiritual torments, may all be cursed in prayer whilst blessings of money, children, promotions at work and happiness, are claimed. The Kingdom is seen in earthly terms, and is established through the power of prayer, positive thinking, and adherence to the principles of success and prosperity such as giving.

NPCS belong to transnational networks and is reflected in their names, which invariably include the words, “world”, “international” or “global”: “Kingsway International Christian Centre”, “Living Faith World

Outreach”, “Christian Action Faith Ministries International”, “Global Revival Ministries”, and “International Central Gospel Church”. The favored church logo is the globe embellished with other Pentecostal symbols such as the dove, a lamp, Bible, or burning flame. The internationalism of the new Pentecostals has generated accusations that these African Pentecostal movements and their leaders are clones of USA-based televangelists. Contrary to this view, the international links must be understood in terms of visits abroad, visits of foreign evangelists to Africa, and to some extent the adaptation of the American Pentecostal Bible School culture. Ray McCauley, founder of Rhema Bible Church of South Africa, for instance, regularly ministers in several countries including Germany, Australia, the United States, Zimbabwe and the DR Congo, and his bookstores stock the books, video and audiotapes of influential foreign evangelists notably Kenneth Hagin and Rheinhard Bonnke.<sup>552</sup> Much inspiration has also been drawn from foreign, mainly North American televangelists, in the formation of these new churches. Oral Roberts, T.L. Osborn, Morris Cerullo, Benny Hinn, and Rheinhard Bonnke are a few of the international evangelists who have influenced the formation and development of new Pentecostal churches in Africa. Of these foreigners, one of those with the most enduring effect on Africa is Evangelist Morris Cerullo, whose establishment of the “Morris Cerullo School of Ministry” has benefited many new Pentecostal leaders.

The foreign influences, as noted, have come from personal visits, and access to the media ministries of international evangelists: book publications, and audio and videocassette tape recordings. The global view and international character that the NPCs take of their movement are what has led to submissions that Africa’s new Pentecostals are North American creations. Together Brouwer, Gifford and Rose deny that the Christianity evolving through NPCs “is a genuinely African construct, arising from African experience and meeting African needs.”<sup>553</sup> Liberia is an exceptional case in which large numbers of pastors acted as agents for North American churches and Bible Schools operating in that country. The internationalism of the new Pentecostals has simply resulted from “a multi-source diffusion of parallel developments encompassing Europe, America, Africa, and

<sup>552</sup> Irving HEXHAM & Karla POEWE, “Charismatic Churches in South Africa: A Critique of Criticisms and Problems of Bias”, in Karla POEWE (ed.), *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 61.

<sup>553</sup> S. BROUWER, P. GIFFORD & S.D. ROSE, *Exporting the American Gospel: Global Christian Fundamentalism* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

Asia.” These parallel developments, as Hexham and Poewe note, “are grounded in core ideas and elementary religious experiences that are told to a pattern within the discourse of Christian testimonies.”<sup>554</sup> Pastors, evangelists, and prophets, travel widely promoting North-South and South-South co-operations as speakers at Pentecostal meetings, which are now dubbed conferences and summits.

African Pentecostal churches differ from the older AICs in several respects. The concentration of charismatic power in the personality of the prophet has been replaced among Pentecostals with a new theology of empowerment based on the accessibility of the Holy Spirit to each individual. There is thus an anti-hierarchical tendency within the African Pentecostal movements; so although the prestige or anointing of an extraordinary gifted charismatic person makes for differentiation, the leader is only a first among equals. Thus, one of the most distinguishing theological features of modern African Pentecostalism is its radicalization of the biblical idea of the priesthood of all believers. The Pentecostals emphasize that God is directly accessible in the experience of the Spirit, thus in principle destroying the necessity of every kind of external priestly mediation. The special anointing of the leadership still makes for differentiation and their personal psychology and religious orientation is crucial in shaping the lives of the churches they lead. In spite of the belief in the “priesthood of all believers”, Simeon Kayiwa founder of the Namirembe Christian Fellowship of Uganda, is for his large following, “a mighty man of God with overflowing anointing.” Like all the others who lead such churches, it is his spiritual gifts that “brought the church into being, and preserve it.”<sup>555</sup> The ecclesiology of the new churches follows the New Testament principle particularly evident in Pauline thought that participating in Christ is like functioning as a member of the human body. Each part has by definition, a function within the body, hence the reference to the believing community as the “body of Christ” (I Corinthians 12:12-31). The *charismata* or “gifts of grace”, as exercised by an individual or groups of believers, constitute their “ministry”. The different ministries are coordinated within the local church, to make it charismatically functional. Within a single local new Pentecostal church, one may find diverse team ministries, such as praise and worship, healing and deliverance, counseling, welcome and ushering, video and tape recording, prayer force, youth and children, and publications. These ministries are built around the collective

<sup>554</sup> HEXHAM & POEWE, “Charismatic Churches”, p. 61.

<sup>555</sup> GIFFORD, *New Dimensions*, p. 159.



belief in spiritual gifts and the fact that even natural talents are conferred by God and should be employed in his service through Christian ministry.

In the hands of its African agents, Pentecostalism also addresses itself to the structures of oppression that consign Africa to backwardness, mediocrity, and non-achievement. In *Beyond the Rivers of Ethiopia*, for example, Mensa Otabil argues forcefully that God did not curse black people; rather they are very much a part of his agenda. This is a message that Otabil has carried to many African countries. Through such motivational messages, African Pentecostalism has initiated a move from Afro-pessimism to Afro-optimism and hope. In the areas of education, health, and general infrastructure, Africa has become a laughing stock among the nations. Pentecostalism has blossomed in this context of precipitous decline and the leadership is challenging the continent to rise up and be counted. As part of the journey towards the restoration of black pride, Pentecostalism rejects not only socio-cultural practices that are considered inimical to African well being, but also encourages believers to work their way into public offices and influence the agenda of the state. In the recent past, Pentecostals showing interest in political office have been encouraged to go for it, because it is when Joseph became governor that the lot of the children of God began to change from being in bondage to inheriting the Promised Land. The New Testament paradigm is the “prodigal son”. Once the prodigal returns home as “born again”, God refurbishes his image, and despite a shameful past, he is now able to take his rightful place in the Father’s house. Blacks may have a shameful past located in slavery and colonialism, but Christ now empowers the black man to sit at table with the powerful of the world. The media ministries of the various Pentecostal leaders provide the platform for these messages of black pride and empowerment to be shared across denominational, ethnic, gender, and socio-political divides. These are messages for the whole continent. The thought here is that African Pentecostal theology is not merely this-worldly; Jesus has bequeathed enough power to his church with which to change the circumstances of whole generations.

The involvement of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity in Africa has been felt at all levels of African civil life, including economics, education, and politics. Though by no means popular throughout African Pentecostal thought, Christian Zionism is being touted in some quarters. Pentecostal leaders now proudly preach about pilgrimages to Israel and this, together with hostility towards Islam, appears as covert affirmations of divine favors for those who wish Israel well. In the political arena, the independent Pentecostal/Charismatic churches in particular, have played both functional and dysfunctional roles. Pastors of Pentecostal churches, in innumerable

instances, have served as providers of supernatural protection for politicians seeking to consolidate power by entrenching themselves in office. Many of such politicians were perceived as corrupt individuals who relied on medicines from shrines to keep themselves in office, so by providing “Christian alternatives” of such shrine services, the reputation of such Christian “prophets” has suffered tremendously. In African countries like Ghana and Zambia, politicians have courted the friendship of popular Charismatic leaders in order to take advantage of a movement with massive youthful following to achieve political ends. In Ghana, Bishop Duncan-Williams virtually served as the chaplain to the Rawlings government. The former president of Zambia, Frederick Chiluba, not only declared Zambia a Christian nation when he took office in 1991, but he also constantly put in appearances at Pentecostal crusades and conventions. In the 1980s, when leading churchmen from the historic mission churches joined the opposition in challenging Moi’s dictatorial regime, leaders of some Pentecostal churches, notably the Gospel Redeemed Church, publicly upheld Moi as a God appointed leader who had brought freedom of worship to Kenya.

In recent years, Pentecostal/Charismatic churches have started playing key roles in nation building by following the lead of the mission churches to establish Christian educational institutions of higher learning. A good example here is the Central University College of Otabil’s International Central Gospel Church that graduated its first batch of students in Theology and Business Studies in May 2003. That the guest speaker at the Congregation was the president of Ghana, John A. Kufour, was testimony to the credibility that the newer independent Pentecostals have gained since their beginnings almost three decades ago. The efforts of Otabil’s Central Gospel are being replicated among several such movements in various African countries and these endeavors have gradually moved the movement from the periphery to the center of African church life. A number of African Pentecostals—agents and pastors alike—are now pursuing higher degrees in theology, subjecting their own movements to critical academic study as insiders. Such an approach, if it is maintained in the future will help bridge the gap between the academy and experiential faith that exposed the deficiencies in the training of historic mission pastors in the face of African religio-cultural realities.

In his seminal work, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, Sundkler wrote of African initiated churches that in these movements, one has an idea of what Africans, when left to themselves, considered important in Christian

faith and in the Christian church.<sup>556</sup> What people consider important in theology are the things that address their religious needs. Encounters with the spiritual world, either as malevolent powers seeking to destroy people, marine spirits negating efforts at public morality, or as the performance of ritual in order to solicit help from the powers of beneficence, are important elements in African religiosity. In continuity with the African religious paradigm, Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity has proven successful in Africa because of its openness to the supernatural, through its interventionist and oral theological forms that resonate with traditional African piety. The intention of the practitioners, though, has always been to be biblical, and this theology as we have seen, is expressed in several ways.

First, we find that there is in African Pentecostal theology a keen emphasis on transformation. The constitutive act of the Pentecostal movement is the offer of a direct and particularly intense encounter with God that introduces profound changes in the life and circumstances of the person who experiences it. The Holy Spirit, God's empowering presence, is the one who facilitates the direct character of the encounter. A sense of transformation takes place at the personal and communal levels including a new dynamism in worship inspired by the Holy Spirit. The foremost theological emphasis of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity is therefore the transformative encounter with God who is "holy" and who is "spirit". In the African context, participants in Pentecostalism keenly testify not only about their new life, but also the transition often made from resorts to traditional religious resources in order to be sincere Christians believing in God alone. In this vein, Kalu takes issue with those who explain the explosion of African Pentecostalism in terms of modernization theories by refocusing attention on the core factor of religious experience:<sup>557</sup>

"The ordinary Pentecostal in Africa is less concerned with modernization and globalization and more about a renewed relationship with God, intimacy with the transcendental, empowerment by the Holy Spirit, and protection by the power in the blood of Jesus as the person struggles to eke out a viable life in a hostile environment."

For those African founders and members encountered in the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches and movements, their being there

<sup>556</sup> Bengt SUNDKLER, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (London: SCM, 1961 [1948]).

<sup>557</sup> Ogbu KALU, "Pentecostal and Charismatic Reshaping of the African Religious Landscape in the 1990s", in *Mission Studies*, 20, 1-39 (2003), 88.

constitute a popular reaction against former churches, which in their process of institutionalization had become overly cerebral and theologically distant from the people.

Second, African Pentecostal theology is a theology of empowerment. In other words, there is an emphasis on the empowering effect of the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is a relationship between transformation and empowerment. The African Pentecostal insistence that it is possible to be a Christian and be dominated by desires of the flesh and demonic influences has led to the provision of ritual contexts in which people could renounce such stumbling blocks through healing and deliverance in order that they may be empowered to victory in life.<sup>558</sup>

“The core of the new experience is that it re-defines personality and reinvents identity as the born again person develops a new vision, life goals and ethics which constitute a rupture from a sinful past.”

Such empowerment may be conceived of in terms of anointing, often symbolically applied in the form of oil. Empowerment is needed not just for ministry, but also for survival in a precarious African environment. Empowerment occurs first through the infilling and manifestations of the Holy Spirit, second, the ministries of healing and deliverance, and third, general prosperity and well-being.

African religion is expected to deal with the effects of evil caused by demonic spirits and witchcraft. Evil powers represented by those with evil eyes, demons, witchcraft, and curses, in the African context, result in all sorts of misfortunes—sickness, failure, childlessness, and other setbacks in life. The worldview underpinning the practice of healing and deliverance in African Pentecostalism is based primarily on Jesus’ encounters with the powers of affliction and Pauline notions of the wrestle with principalities and powers (Ephesians 6). The basic theological orientation of the healing and deliverance phenomenon is the belief that demons may either possess a person and take over his or her executive faculties or simply oppress people through various influences. Whether the human crisis has resulted from possession or oppression, African Pentecostal churches and movements including the classical Pentecostal churches provide the ritual contexts for prayer and exorcism to deliver the afflicted. The African worldview of mystical causation looms large in the practice of healing and deliverance. It

<sup>558</sup> KALU, “Pentecostal and Charismatic Reshaping”, p. 92.

has become popular because mainline denominations with their over cerebral theologies proved inadequate in the face of the fears and insecurities of African Christians attributed to the work of devils. As it often requires the gifting of the specially anointed of God to deal with the demonic, African Pentecostal pastors are in the popular imagination upheld as more powerful and more spiritually alert than their mainline counterparts. The belief of having been called to proclaim the power of Jesus to liberate individuals from the power of the devil is what has given rise to healing and deliverance ministries and centers within all sectors of African Pentecostalism.

Thirdly, a successful implementation of a healing and deliverance ministry, paves the way for good health, success and prosperity in life, and makes possible the realization of God-given abilities. Thus it is possible to view the deliverance theology as a response to or the mutation in the face of the shortfall of faith preaching. When things are not going well, the appeal to the work of demons and witches come in handy as explanations. African Pentecostal prosperity theology may have some ground to recover in respect of its weak theology of suffering. Be that as it may, the Cross of Christ is not just a symbol of weakness, but also one of victory over sin, the world, and death. Pentecostals draw attention to the fact that the gospel is about restoration, so it is expected that the transformation of the personality would be manifest in personal health, well-being, and care, in short salvation is holistic and includes spiritual as well as physical abundance. The process of restoration is not individualistic as people are encouraged to disengage from generational curses and through fasting, prayer, and personal ministration also release family members from any such bondage. In African Pentecostalism generally, prayer for well-being and success has become one of the critical concerns. Some may view this as an obsession with this-worldly concerns but this could hardly be otherwise in a precarious context in which, besides the divine, people may virtually have no other means of survival. Undoubtedly, there are excesses both in the operations of healing and deliverance ministries, and the materialistic orientation taken to the gospel by some Pentecostals. However, by taking the African worldview seriously, Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity has proved a more credible alternative to existing mission churches whose theology has proved a bit too distant from the aspirations of people.

As one who is in high demand as an international speaker on Pentecostal conferences in Africa and beyond, I asked Pastor Mensa Otabil of Ghana to sum up what he considers accounts for the huge success and impact that Pentecostalism is making in Africa. He aptly articulated his answer in one word: "relevance".

African Pentecostalism has proven relevant in responding to the challenging religious quest in the African heart. The Pentecostal emphasis on direct access to God through the Holy Spirit means for many of its African adherents, the ability to live the Christian life without recourse to the traditional ritual symbols that the older AICs incorporated into Christianity, and to which people continued to resort to in the face of the staid, silent and cerebral Christianity of the mission churches. Pentecostal spirituality is one in which Jesus Christ saves people from sin, heals sicknesses, and delivers them from the power of Satan. Salvation is here given a holistic meaning that includes “a sense of well-being evidenced in freedom from sickness, poverty and misfortune as well as in deliverance from sin and evil”.<sup>559</sup> That the presence of Pentecostalism has forced former mission churches into emulative action in order to survive is enough evidence of how seriously the phenomenon of Pentecostal growth should be taken in modern African Christianity. Pentecostal/Charismatic movements and churches, as we have seen, are not in any way unified in their doctrines, practices and outlook, the popularity of its different streams against the backdrop of the previous hegemony of mainline churches only signals that “theology is more than an intellectual exercise but is as well a commitment and life-style, in short praxis”.<sup>560</sup> Reliable statistics are lacking to enable us put exact numbers to the following of these churches, but the fact that they have changed the face of African Christianity and are likely to continue to do so in their ever-changing forms, underscores the viability of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity in a context where religion and life constitute inseparable entities.

<sup>559</sup> Allan ANDERSON, “Global Pentecostalism in the New Millennium”, in Allan ANDERSON & Walter HOLLENWEGER (eds), *Pentecostals after a Century: Global Perspectives on a Movement in Transition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 215.

<sup>560</sup> John S. POBEE, “Moving Towards a Pentecost Experience in Ministerial Formation”, in *Ministerial Formation* 68 (January 1995), 17.