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**The pentecostal revolution
in Nigeria**

by

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Introduction

Critics of mission Christianity in Africa had postulated the demise of Christianity with the decolonization of the continent, but the emergence and spread of African independent churches have proved them wrong. Although a different sort of Christianity than the one planted by Western missionaries it was by all standards an outgrowth from mission Christianity. The African independent churches were Africans' way of domesticating the Christian teachings. The fastest growing of these kinds of churches is the charismatic/Pentecostal brand. The purpose of this paper is to show the global and local character of Nigerian charismatic/Pentecostal churches. It is often assumed by scholars of these churches that they are a monolithic group. Our study of the Nigerian scene reveals a variety, thus making the study more complex than it is often portrayed. Deeper Life Bible Church, for example, is one of the oldest Pentecostal churches in Nigeria, but it has remained conservative, non-innovative and anti-modernist. This contradicts Rijk van Dijk's submission that charismatic Pentecostalism "can in a very real sense be considered a religion of modernity itself".¹ This makes one wonder whether Deeper Life Church would stand the challenges of the 21st century.

Another dimension covered by this paper is the tendencies of Nigerian charismatics/Pentecostals to revert to traditional means in their efforts to perform miracles. This is seen, for example, in O. J. Daramola's Oloruntimilehin Mission of God. Charismatic/Pentecostal churches proliferate in Nigeria due partly to their flamboyancy and their ability to solve people's problems. Hence more Nigerians probably attend these kinds of churches than mission established ones which are described as old-fashioned. The known Pentecostal churches in Nigeria may be more than one thousand. And each of these has branches spread across the nation.² Cinema halls, shops, stores, disused houses, warehouses, bars, brothels, restaurants and night clubs are being turned into churches in Nigeria. As a matter of fact, it has been observed that churches and hotels were competing for space in one city.³ This trend can be explained by the fact that the establishment of churches is one of the most lucrative businesses in Nigeria.

¹ Rijk A. van Dijk, *Christian Fundamentalism in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Case of Pentecostalism, Occasional paper, Centre of African Studies, University of Copenhagen, 2000, p. 2.*

² Newswatch, *November 19, 2001, p. 26.*

One important attribute of this kind of churches is their creativity, particularly in the use of the media, radio, television, newspaper, posters, electronic mail and the internet. In Nigeria one can be prayed for through the television by placing one's hands on the television set. Pentecostals have effectively taken over the home video industry, some of the popular Christian video industries are Christian Dior Production, Liberty Films and The Mount Zion Film Productions. Most of these churches have branches in Europe and America attended mainly by Africans in the Diaspora. A Nigerian, Matthew Ashimolowo, owns the biggest Pentecostal church in London. These churches have devised innovative ways of busting their images, recruiting new members and raising funds. One such way is through their web pages. One can sign to be prayed for on the internet. These churches also solicit for donations through their web pages. In these ways charismatics/Pentecostals contribute to the globalization of Pentecostalism. This use of the internet by these churches offers students of religion challenges. For example, the church is becoming impersonal since one can join a church in one's house through the computer. This may call for a re-definition of ecclesiology and spirituality. Before discussing the complexities of Nigeria's charismatic/Pentecostal Christianity, we shall briefly trace the history of Nigeria's Independent Churches.

A history of Independent Churches in Nigeria

The origin of independent Christianity in Nigeria dates back to the late 19th century. The impetus for their emergence was provided by the Prebendary of St. Paul's and honorary secretary of the Church Missionary Society, Rev. Henry Venn (1841-1872). Venn was a believer in the abilities of Africans to provide leadership in the church. To be able to realize this objective, Venn began to set up machinery that would ensure the emergence of African leadership in mission churches. He stated his views in letters to missionaries titled the "native pastorate policy". He had, in this document, stated that missionaries should, as quickly as possible, raise indigenous churches – churches that were self-governing, self-financing and self-extending. Missionaries should endeavour

³ My discussion with Prof. G. O. M. Tasié on his experience in Calabar.

to raise indigenous leadership to succeed them. As a high mark of this policy, Venn worked out and had an African concentrated bishop in 1864. This was the first African bishop in the Anglican Church, the Right Reverend Samuel Ajayi Crowther.

Unfortunately, the dreams of Venn did not materialize. Venn's successors at the CMS headquarters in London thought differently about Africans. They began to unwind Venn's indigenization policy. A leadership crisis ensued, giving birth to the first set of African or Ethiopian churches. They were, in a sense, secessionists. They were referred to as Ethiopian because they took their inspiration from the oldest church in Africa, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The next group of churches emerged about 1916, unconnected with the first, but arose as a result of a religious revival very similar to the evangelical revivals in Europe and America in the 18th century. It began in the Niger Delta with the activities of Garrick Sokari Braide, an Anglican lay reader, and almost at the same time similar movements broke out in Yorubaland in Ijebu-Ode and Lagos. These were the Aladura movements. Aladura means "Prayer mongers". They emphasised prayer and performance of miracles. Their leaders tended to display a charisma not seen in traditional churches. 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.⁴ The Aladura churches grew in the early 20th century, albeit along ethnic lines, particularly among the Yoruba, and soon waned since they could not attract adherents outside this ethnic group. The Igbo counterparts of the Yoruba Aladura are the Sabbatharians. They have similar characteristics, except that the Sabbatharians try to revive the Old Testament cults and worship on Saturday.

In the 1930s some of the Aladura Churches in Yorubaland began to link up with Pentecostal groups in Europe and America for the purpose of establishing legitimacy. The Precious Stone Society in Ijebu-Ode and Lagos is one of such churches with its affiliation with the Apostolic Church in 1930. Similarly an Umuahia tongue-speaking group, the Church of Jesus Christ, invited the Assemblies of God into Nigeria in 1939.⁵

⁴ See Matthews A. Ojo, "The Church in the African State: The Charismatic/Pentecostal Experience in Nigeria", *Journal of African Thought*, Vol. 1, No. 2 December 1998, p. 26.

⁵ Ogbu U. Kalu, "The Third Response: Pentecostalism and the Reconstruction of Christian Experience in Africa, 1970-1995", *Journal of African Thought*, Vol. 1, No. 2 December 1998, p. 7.

This development formed the beginning of modern Pentecostalism in Nigeria, which occurred in the 1970s among students in the few tertiary institutions and in secondary schools. At the tertiary level, the Universities of Ibadan and Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) became the hotbeds of Pentecostalism.⁶ Many of these students had embraced Pentecostalism before they came to the university. Later, in the 1980s, these youths became avid readers of charismatic literature from Europe and America as the works of Kenneth Hagin, Oral Roberts, Robert Tilton, Kenneth Copeland and others became easily available. This new religious ferment graduated into the establishment of evangelistic ministry, the most well-known being William Kumuyi's Deeper Life Christian Ministry which began in 1973. This was helpful to the growth of Christianity because these youths, being young, strong, agile and zealous, could be found everywhere in the country preaching the Pentecostal gospel. Ojo has noted that

In no period since the nursing enterprise of the 19th century in Nigeria had the youths been so active or so prominent in evangelism as in the 1970s. By 1980s, the Charismatic movements had assumed a high social profile owing partly to the attention given to them by the media, and partly to the multitudes of new churches and 'ministries' that were emerging and erecting signboards all over the major cities in the country.⁷

Thus, graduates of these tertiary institutions established charismatic/Pentecostal churches in Nigeria in the early 1980s. A few of such were William F. Kumuyi, Christian Oyakhilome and E. A. Adeboye. Perhaps a rough typology of these independent churches may be helpful to show the complexity of the subject matter.

A typology of Independence Churches in Nigeria

SUNDAY WORSHIPPERS

SOLA	SCRIPTURA	SCRIPTURA ET	TRADITIONES
ORTHODOX/ ETHIOPIAN or AFRICANIST	CHARISMATIC/ PENTECOSTAL Bible + African	ALADURA/ZIONIST/ SPIRITUAL Christianity + African	VITALISTIC/ SYNCRETIC Christianity + African

⁶ Ojo, "The Church in the African State", p. 28.

⁷ *Ibid.*

Western Theology + African Nationalism	Spirituality + Western materialism	Charismatic and African cult	Spirituality and African power + occult material (African and Foreign)
Secessionists: United Native African Church Christ African Church (Bethel) United African Methodist Church Kingdom of God Church New Life Church	Classical Pentecostal: The Apostolic The Apostolic Faith Assemblies of God Faith Tabernacles (Congregation, United Gospel) Neo-Pentecostal: Deeper Life Bible Church Church of God Mission Living Faith Redeemed Church of God Latter Rain Assembly etc.	Evangelical: Christ Apostolic Church and its splinters Zionist/Spiritual: Cherubim and Seraphim Church of the Lord Christ Army Celestial Church of Christ Christ Holy Church, etc.	Neo-pagan: El-Messiah Spiritual Temple Brotherhood of the Cross and Star Reformed Ogboni Fraternity Arousa Cult Kingdom of God (in Delta State) Godianism various healing homes

SABBATH WORSHIPPERS

NONE			
	Riches of Christ (Mba) God's Sabbath Mission (Onuaguluchi Musa's disciple)	Holy Sabbath of Christi (Musa) Universal Church of Christ Ministry (Luke)	God's Holy Sabbath Pentecostal Mission Sabbath Light of God, Living Faith Sabbath

		<p>Light of God Holy Sabbath (Okechukwu)</p> <p>Christ Holy Sabbath (Okpala)</p> <p>Holy Sabbath Church (Nnaji)</p> <p>Universal Praying Church (Okafor)</p> <p>Holy Sabbath Christ Mission</p> <p>etc.</p>	<p>Christ Healing Sabbath Mission (Onuabuchi)</p> <p>God's Holy Sabbath Synagogue (Okoye)</p> <p>Holy Sabbath Church of God (Enoch)</p> <p>Colour-designated Sabbath healing Home</p> <p>etc.</p>
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A typology of Nigerian Pentecostalism

MIRACLES	PROSPERITY	FAITH	HOLINESS
Aladura	American materialism	Faith Tabernacle/ Aladura	Wesleyan/Appostolic Faith
The Synagogue of all Nations (T. B. Joshua)	The Church of God Mission (Bishop Benson Idahosa)	Redeemed Church of God (Pastor E. A. Adeboye)	Deeper Life Bible Church (William F. Kumuyi)
	The Living Faith, a.k.a Living Faith (Pastor David Oyedepo)	Latter Days Assembly (Pastor Tunde Bakare)	

	etc.	etc.	
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The nature of Nigerian Pentecostalism

The literature on charismatic/Pentecostal churches in Africa (also described in certain parlance as fundamentalism) is large.⁸ Significant contributions have been made by Paul Gifford and Ruth Marshall in studying charismatic/Pentecostal influence in the socio-political and economic development of Africa,⁹ while Ruth Marshall-Fratani and Rosalind Hackett have looked at the innovations in Pentecostalism in Africa, particularly the use of the media.¹⁰ Rijk A. van Dijk and André Droogers have studied the globalisation of Pentecostalism, while Gerrie ter Haar has studied the impact of non-Western Pentecostalism in Europe and America.¹¹ However, there is a tendency seen in some of the literature on the subject to generalise the charismatic/Pentecostal features. Gifford regards the terms “charismatic/Pentecostals” “evangelicals” or “fundamentalists” as interchangeable in Africa.¹² Although the term fundamentalism is not used in African churches, evangelicals in Africa, that is churches that subscribe to the final authority of the Bible like Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA) founded by the Sudan Interior Mission (now Society for International Ministry), would not accept

⁸ See for example Steve Brouwer et al., *Exporting the American Gospel: Global Christian Fundamentalism*, New York: Routledge, 1996 and Rijk A. van Dijk, *Christian Fundamentalism in Sub-Saharan Africa*.

⁹ Paul Gifford, *African Christianity. Its Public Role*. London: Hurst & Co., 1998; Ruth Marshall, “Power in the Name of Jesus’: Social Transformation and Pentecostalism in Western Nigeria ‘Revisited’”, in *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth-Century Africa. Essays in Honour of A. H. M. Kirk-Greene*, (eds.) Terence Ranger and Olufemi Vaughan, London: Macmillan, 1993, pp. 213-46.

¹⁰ Ruth Marshall-Fratani, “Mediating the Global and the Local in Nigerian Pentecostalism”, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 28, 1998, pp. 278-315; R. I. J. Hackett, “Charismatic/Pentecostal Appropriation of Media Technologies in Nigeria and Ghana”, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 28, 1998, pp. 258-77.

¹¹ Rijk van Dijk, *Christian Fundamentalism in Sub-Saharan Africa and “Time and Transcultural Technologies of the Self in the Ghanaian Pentecostal Diaspora”*, in *Between Babel and Pentecost. Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America*, (eds.) André Corten and Ruth Marshall-Fratani, London: Hurst & Co., 2001, pp. 216-34; André Droogers, “Globalisation and Pentecostal Success”, in *Between Babel and Pentecost*, (eds.) Corten and Marshall-Fratani, pp. 41-61; Gerrie ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise. African Christians in Europe*, Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998.

¹² Brouwer, *Exporting the American Gospel*, p. 155.

being described as Pentecostal or even fundamentalist. He also sees everything about African Pente-costalism as imported from America or Britain. Influences from these places cannot be denied; they are seen in teachings on faith, prosperity, miracles, speaking in tongues and the notion of being born again, but there are certain peculiarities with the African phenomenon, such as in the belief in demons and witchcraft. Here I have tried to show that Nigerian charismatic/Pentecostal churches are not homogenous. Some of them are conservative; some are innovative, while some are syncretic.

Paul Gifford, Rijk A. van Dijk, Rosalind Hackett and Ruth Marshall-Fratani have studied modernisations that have happened in African charismatic groups. Much of this modern trend shows American influence — for example prosperity, media consciousness, quest for American diplomas and degrees, and the desire to connect with an American church for funds and exchange of visits. All these and many other influences are factors in the global influence of American charismatic Pentecostalism. An epitome of such American influence is the Church of God Mission founded by the late Archbishop Benson A. Idahosa. Idahosa's American mentors included Jim Bakker, Gordon and Freda Lindsay, Oral Roberts and T. L. Osborn. He was the first to begin TV evangelism with "Redemption Hour". His All Nations For Christ Bible School, pattern after Christ For The Nation Institute, is the most successful school opened by any Pentecostal group in

Nigeria. Idahosa was a crusader and the founding father of prosperity gospel in Nigeria. At one of his crusades in Douala, Cameroon, Gifford reports that the flamboyant preacher boasted that “faith had brought him so many clothes he did not know he had them; a car even Nigeria’s President Babangida could not match”.¹³ Others followed his example.¹⁴ However, there are a few charismatic/Pentecostal groups in Nigeria that do not toe this line. This modernism and this American influence seem to be thin. An example of a conservative Pentecostal church in Nigeria is the Deeper Life Bible Church, founded by Pastor W. F. Kumuyi who is referred to as the General Superintendent or simply “GS”.

Deeper Life Bible Church

Deeper Life Bible Church is the oldest and perhaps the biggest independent Pentecostal church in Nigeria. Evangelism, particularly in the rural areas of Nigeria is one of its major priorities. Deeper Life preachers can be found in Nigeria’s “luxurious” buses, taxis and even domestic planes urging passengers to repent from sin and live holy lives. In each state in Nigeria the local Deeper Life Bible Church supports missionaries in one of the African countries. The Church began as the result of the activities of its founder and superintendent, Pastor William Folorunso Kumuyi. Kumuyi was born on 6 June 1941 at Orunwa in the Ijebu area of Ogun State, Nigeria. His parents were Anglicans and to them he owes his early Christian training, as he told Alan Isaacson: “It was a very strict Christian home. We would get up in the morning, read the Bible, sing hymns, and go to Church regularly.”¹⁵

After Primary School, Kumuyi entered the famous Mayflower School, Ikenne Ogun State. The founder of the School, Dr. Solarin was a self-proclaimed atheist. On Solarin’s impact on him, Kumuyi says, “When I went to Secondary School I lost interest in the Church because our principal taught us atheism”.¹⁶ However, later Kumuyi was

¹³ *In Brouwer, Exporting the American Gospel, p. 171.*

¹⁴ *Prosperity preachers include David Oyedepo, Enoch Adeboye, Ayo Oritsejafor, Chris. Oyakhilome.*

¹⁵ *Alan Isaacson, Deeper Life: The Extraordinary Growth of the Deeper Life Bible Church, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1990, p. 60.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

attracted to the Apostolic Faith Church, Ikenne, in 1963. It was in the Apostolic Faith Church that Kumuyi became a born again Christian. That was on 4 April 1964.¹⁷ This event Kumuyi demonstrated practically by making restitution. The Apostolic Faith influenced Kumuyi's Christian life and beliefs greatly.

After his Higher School Certificate, Kumuyi entered the University of Ibadan and graduated in Mathematics in 1967 with a first class honours degree. Kumuyi returned to Mayflower to teach in that same year and in 1971 studied for a post-graduate diploma in Education at the University of Lagos where he was also employed as a lecturer in Mathematics until his voluntary retirement in 1983.

To meet the need for an in-depth Bible study amongst the University students, Kumuyi began a Bible study group in 1973 in his official residence at the University of Lagos, popularly known as "Flat 2". Students and non-students in and outside the campus met for the Bible study in Kumuyi's sitting room. Eventually the Bible study became popular because of Kumuyi's unique way of interpreting the Bible, which made the Bible more practical and relevant to everyday life than the interpretation given to it in the mainline churches. As a result Kumuyi began to receive invitations to preach at students' rallies and conferences and other Christian gatherings. To meet the growing desire of his disciples, most of them youths, for a deeper and practical understanding of the Bible, Kumuyi formed a non-denominational revivalist/evangelistic ministry: Deeper Life Christian Ministry. This ministry was characterised by retreats. The first retreat was in December 1975, at Christmas, in Akoka about three kilometres from Lagos University. Since then Christmas and Easter holiday periods have become occasions for Deeper Life retreats. Commitment is judged by one's willingness to forgo the pleasures of the festivities these occasions bring to attend the retreats. Special characteristics of these retreats are free accommodation and free feeding and at times free transport. These retreats have since been decentralised. They are now organised at state, regional and district level in an effort to bring them to the reach of the ordinary member in the rural

¹⁷ Matthews A. Ojo, "Deeper Christian Life Ministry: A Case Study of the Charismatic Movement in Western Nigeria", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 18 no. 2, 1988, p. 145.

area.¹⁸ After the 1975 retreat, many more retreats were held outside Lagos, which were usually followed by the establishment of Deeper Life Bible study groups within the different denominations whose members attended the retreats. This created friction later within these denominations between those who were loyal to Kumuyi and those who remained loyal to their denominations.

Meanwhile, in 1977, Kumuyi was excommunicated from the Apostolic Faith Church. Kumuyi explained the circumstances:

My overseer called me and told me that he didn't enjoy what I was doing. He said I was not practicing what the Church taught me and that might have some consequences. I explained my perception and admitted that if what I was doing would hinder the growth of the Church and the Kingdom of God, I would patiently bear whatever they would do. And yet I couldn't give up my convictions on evangelism. Finally, the Church took a decision to excommunicate me. In fairness to them, they bore with me for a number of years but because I was "incorrigible" from their viewpoint, they had to take that stand.¹⁹

Kumuyi never joined any other Church because he "felt that since this church (which stands on the Bible) could drive me out, then any other church not standing on the totality of the Bible could do worse".²⁰ So Kumuyi's break with the Apostolic Church was without any acrimony.

The increasing influence of Kumuyi's disciples in their different churches became a matter of concern to the leadership of these churches because of their peculiar teachings, which appeared strange. Furthermore, they tended to create two parallel congregations: saints and sinners. Those who did not belong to the Deeper Life group

¹⁸ *Interview with Pastor Igwe Ukoha, DLBC Ungwan Rimi, Jos.*

¹⁹ *Isaacson, Deeper Life, p. 125.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

were looked at with disdain because they were not born again and therefore sinners. Church leaders who did not want their congregations to be divided began to persecute those of their members who were Kumuyi's disciples. As it happened to Kumuyi himself, many of these admirers were sent out of their churches. Without a church for Sunday Worship, they began to mount pressure on him to start one. This he did. On Sunday 7 November 1982 Kumuyi established Deeper Life Bible Church.²¹ Having the "Bible" in the name is an indication of its centrality in the life and teachings of the Church. Thus, the initial members of Deeper Life Bible Church were converted from other churches, courting the charge of "sheep stealing". The first Deeper Life Church was at Gbagada in Lagos (the only church in Lagos until recently). In the 1990s it had an attendance of 70,000 during its five Sunday services. Kumuyi used to preach in all these services.

Despite criticisms, particularly of the church's teaching on strict personal ethics and withdrawal from the "world" (i. e. worldly possession and practices), the church has grown by leaps and bounds. By 1993, the Deeper Life Bible Church had rapidly grown to 350,000 members with mission work in 42 countries of the world. The Church demonstrated its leadership in this area when in 1992 it organized a conference in Nigeria for 12,000 African pastors to launch "the A. D. 2000 and beyond vision" to complete the Great Commission requirement for world evangelism.

However, most of the initial membership of the Deeper Life Bible Church consisted of young undergraduates and graduates of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The population of this group in the church increased even more with the establishment of the Deeper Life Campus Ministry in 1979 with a sophisticated leadership structure. This further boosted the activities of the Deeper Life on the Campuses of tertiary institutions in Nigeria, but its founding disconnected the Deeper Life students from the existing students' Christian fellowships on campus namely the Scripture Union, the Fellowship of Christian Students, the Christian Union, the Christian Students Movement and the Nigerian Fellowship of Evangelical Students. Thus these youths formed the bulk of what was known as "volunteer workers" in the Church. Ruth Marshall has pointed out the role

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

of laity in the running of these kinds of churches.²² But Kumuyi was not pleased with having only young people in the church. He needed adults as well. To attract more adults, Kumuyi had to change his strategy for evangelism by directing his teaching and preaching to the needs of this group. As he explained to Isaacson:

I want to know why we were not reaching the adults. I saw that the felt and known needs of adults were more on getting healed, having a happy family, having job satisfaction, and a lot of other things. I felt that in the New Testament these needs were addressed. So I thought, “we will still evangelize, but we’ll couch our message in the language that will meet the felt needs of the people”. We therefore changed our Thursday Evangelism Training to “Miracle Revival Hour”. The people, especially adults, started coming and they were being healed and saved. We saw more people pressing forward to want to know the Lord than we saw before.²³

Kumuyi is the sole theologian of the Deeper Life Bible Church. Members depend on him solely to interpret the Bible. Kumuyi’s published works (books and pamphlets apart from tracts) run into fifties almost all of them being sermons. These materials provide easy and accessible Bible commentaries, theological treatises, and propaganda material. The church publishes assorted magazines to meet various interest groups. Each of these materials is published in the church’s publishing company, Zoe Publishing and Printing Company, Limited. Kumuyi’s messages are also in cassettes, which are played back during church services. Members buy these cassettes for use at home. As such, all faithful members of the church have a fair grasp of Kumuyi’s teachings.

Kumuyi is not a theologian in the technical sense of the word. Most founders of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria are not. His only known theological training was in Kenya where he attended a school of ministry in 1978. Kumuyi had argued that formal theological training was not necessary for Christian service.²⁴ Thus, in his teachings and preaching Kumuyi avoids “complicated theology”. That is why many of Deeper Life Bible Church pastors have no formal theological or Bible training. This is changing,

²² Ruth Marshall, *“Power in the Name of Jesus”*, p. 220.

²³ Isaacson, *Deeper Life*, p. 111-2.

however. In the Department of Religious Studies of the University of Jos, we have trained a number of Deeper Life church members in both the diploma and degree programmes. This will no doubt influence the development of theology in the church. Kumuyi had established a training school for his ministers at Ayobo in Lagos in 1980, the International Bible Training Centre, but it was closed down in 1983 because of financial difficulties. Perhaps other matters had taken priority. Now six pastors training institutions have been opened in various parts of Nigeria. One of such schools is in Jos.

Kumuyi is a student of the Bible and a voracious reader of Pentecostal and holiness literature of the Apostolic Faith. But he is also influenced by John Wesley's teachings, especially Wesley's teaching on Christian holiness. The Bible serves as Kumuyi's proof text for his teaching and preaching. But his interpretation of the Bible is literal. The only accepted Bible is the King James version. This perhaps provides for unity in teaching. Another reason is Kumuyi's belief that other versions have been tampered with by modern scholars influenced by scientific criticism. Kumuyi's theology is essentially Western with an African tilt (his teaching on spirits). A review of Kumuyi's theology would show the church's conservatism, for which it was greatly criticized.

Born-Againism

A born-again Christian, according to Kumuyi, "must have decided against sin, confessed fully to God, asked for pardon and renewal and believed God for his mercy".²⁵ A return to sin, or past life, is a sign of a lack of change in the believer's life. A Christian who is not born again is not a Christian at all. Kumuyi writes: "Men whose behaviour borders [sic] on effeminacy are not Christians at all".²⁶ This explains the attitude of Deeper Life members to those they perceive as nominal Christians. These are not "brothers and sisters".

As indicated above, a born-again experience may require certain action to prove its genuineness, one of which is restitution by which Kumuyi means "the act of restoring

²⁴ At a lecture he gave to a group of seminarians in the United Missionary Theological Seminary in 1976.

²⁵ Ojo, "Deeper Christian Life Ministry", p. 153-4. (See John 1:12-13; 3:5, 6; 1 Peter 1:23.)

²⁶ W. F. Kumuyi, *The Believer in the Last Days*, Yaba: Zoe Publishing Co., 1995, p. 35.

anything to its rightful owner; [an] act of giving an equivalent for loss or damage".²⁷ Thus repentance and restitution go together. Kumuyi himself demonstrated this in 1964 when he was born again. He believes a Christian must be consistent; otherwise he is not a Christian. This is why Deeper Life Bible Church members see the orthodox churches as a mission field.

Holiness

In Deeper Life, holiness is the absence of sin. Influenced by John Wesley, Charles Finney and Apostolic Faith, Kumuyi teaches that after conversion, a born again believer must live a life of holiness.²⁸ It is its emphasis on holiness that sets Deeper Life Bible Church apart from other Pentecostal churches in Nigeria. In Deeper Life Bible Church, the lifestyle of a Christian is crucial. On this Kumuyi writes:

The life of a Christian should be pure, holy and Christ like. True believers are totally free from sin... if you are truly born again you must live a life that is totally pure. Sin should not be once named among Christian believers. Instances of misbehaviour, misconduct and back-sliding [sic] would be minimized when people begin to live as Christians. Those who have been washed do not parade dirty lives. They are pure and holy. If you are living in sin you either [are] not washed at all or you have gone back to your vomit.²⁹

Taking 1 John 3:4-6 at its face value, Kumuyi teaches that sanctification, the second act of grace after being born again, is an act of washing away sins once and for all. But one enjoys this sanctification only when one fights against sin. Sanctification does not only mean living a sinless life, it also means living a life of separation from the world. Kumuyi had taught his followers not to own television sets.

If you happen to go to the home of anybody who goes to the same fellowship or church with you and you see a television set, well, that does not justify it. No matter

²⁷ Ojo, "Deeper Christian Life Ministry", p.154.

²⁸ W. F. Kumuyi, *Holiness Made Easy*, Yaba: Zoe Pub., 1983, p. 7.

²⁹ W. F. Kumuyi, *The Believer in the Last Days*, p. 33-40.

the nature of the work in the Ministry, that does not mean that the thing is right... We teach that if people will keep their sanctification experience, their holiness of spirit, the programme on the television will not help them at all. So in any home where you see it, you will only know that [that] person is acting contrary to the word of God, which he received in the fellowship... We maintain that the TV is one of the things of the world, so you will not be misled into comparing yourself with others, saying that all the thing is not bad.³⁰

This kind of teaching has made members of Deeper Life Bible Church live ascetic lives. Kumuyi is the only known Pentecostal leader that does not have a television ministry. Perhaps acquisition of satellite facilities such as e-mail and the internet could be considered as worldliness. Deeper Life Bible Church does not allow the use of modern musical instruments such as the guitar, drums. Only the organs and trumpets are allowed. Members have a special dress code. The women, for example, dress in a particular manner. They are not allowed to wear cosmetics or put on rings in their fingers or in their ears or wear trousers. A Deeper Life lady in Nigeria refused to wear long trousers during the compulsory national service because her church belief. She insisted until a skirt was made for her. All the members of the church I interviewed on why they have stuck to the church in spite of the restrictions which make them appear out of fashion, all responded that they enjoyed Kumuyi's ways of interpreting the Bible. One of them, Rebecca Ibrahim, the Jos University campus sisters' welfare co-ordinator, says Deeper Life Bible Church has helped her to live a holy life.³¹

Baptism/ Infilling of the Holy Spirit

Baptism of the Holy Spirit is considered, in Deeper Life Bible Church circles, as the third work of grace. Conversion is the first, sanctification the second. Kumuyi's teaching on this is not different from what other Pentecostal groups teach. Ann Mather gives us the usual physical manifestation of this experience. She says the person feels

³⁰ In Ojo, "Deeper Christian Life Ministry", p. 156.

³¹ Interview, 11 April 2002.

... great heat, the sensation of a current of power passing through the body, a feeling of intense joy, sometimes the healing of a physical ailment, and frequently speaking in tongues. Invariably, there is a vivid awareness of the immediate presence of God...³²

Kumuyi acknowledges that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is evidenced by “well articulated language that you have not spoken before”,³³ and this spiritual state leads to an effective prayer and a better understanding of the scripture and witness. Scripture and witnessing are cardinal points in the Deeper Life Church. Thus, in Deeper Life, this third work of grace is helpful in understanding scripture and witnessing. This is why most Pentecostals believe that the Holy Spirit is their teacher. Theological education is not necessary.

Organisation of Deeper Life Bible Church

Kumuyi is the sole founder and president of the Deeper Life Bible Church. Next to him are the State Overseers or Coordinators. These lead the churches in each state in Nigeria. Leaders of the churches outside Nigeria are also called Coordinators. Each state in Nigeria is divided into regions and headed by regional coordinators who are answerable to the state coordinators. Within regions there are districts headed by pastors. Apart from the GS, state overseers and pastors, the rest of the ministers in the church work on part-time basis. A member who has a problem requiring the GS' attention must pass his/her request through this chain of command.

Kumuyi inadvertently clones his subordinates. Kumuyi subordinates behave as he does and even talk as he does. Any contrary behaviour is frowned at. There was a time when he reprimanded a state coordinator who drove into the headquarters of the church in Lagos in an expensive car. Kumuyi rides in a Peugeot 405. Another non-flamboyant Pentecostal church leader is Hezekiah Onukaogu of Living Christ Mission. Unlike other

³² Anne Mather, “Talking Points: The Charismatic Movement”, *Themelios*, vol. 9, 1984, p. 17.

³³ Isaacson, *Deeper Life*, p. 146.

Pentecostal leaders Kumuyi does not make prosperity a central issue in his teaching. Deeper Life Bible Church does not announce weakly financial collections. But no member asks how the money is being used because it is obvious. Deeper Life Bible Church assets and infrastructures are testimonies to how the money is being used. Kumuyi has no apparent successor. This is not unique. Most Pentecostal leaders in Nigeria either prepare their wives to succeed them or are dead silent about that. But in the case of Deeper Life Bible Church Biodun Kumuyi cannot lead the church, since Kumuyi has not encouraged women leadership in church.³⁴ One hopes that a vacuum created at the demise of the “GS” will not create a power tussle which will disintegrate the church.

Some practices in the Deeper Life Bible Church

Deeper Life has maintained certain practices that have made the church egalitarian and attractive:

Miracle Revival Hour

This is a period committed to prayers for healing and miracles. It is one of the most significant aspects of Deeper Life worship. In Gbagada in Lagos, this event is held every Thursday. In Jos it is on Fridays. A member of the church in Jos, Habila Jackden, attributed his conversion to Deeper Life to the healing of his wife over what he calls “demon-inflicted disease” during one of the miracle revival hours.³⁵ Deeper Life teaches the existence of spirits. Some of these spirits are treacherous because they are demonic. These spirits inflict all kinds of sickness on people. As such to be able to heal a sick person, the demon that has cause the sickness must be identified and cast out. Kumuyi believes that no scientific mediation can heal a person with a demon-inflicted sickness. He writes, “if sickness comes upon your body, don’t go complaining to doctors and nurses that you are sick. Just get to a corner and let the spirit of God talk to you”.³⁶

³⁴ *Interview with Pastor Igwe Ukoha of the Deeper Life Bible Church Ungwan Rimi, Jos, 14 April 2002.*

³⁵ *Interview, 31 December 1996.*

³⁶ *In Ojo, “Deeper Christian Life Ministry”, p. 156.*

A medical practitioner and a member of the Deeper Life, Dr. Toyin Taiwo, explains why she believes in this spiritual healing:

Internal heat is a common complaint in Nigeria, but if you check temperature, blood pressure, and so on, everything is often normal. They feel hot inside, sometimes in bursts, sometimes permanently. I've tried anti-malaria, tranquilizers, and many other things. Now I think it's one of the ways in which spiritual oppression is manifested. They feel as if they are on fire, but their skin is quite cool and normal at the touch... I would never attempt to explain the supernatural by natural means. Even unbelieving doctors will advise spiritual help if they can't understand what's going on.³⁷

Kumuyi, like other Pentecostal leaders in Nigeria, plays the role of the traditional medicine man, whom the Yoruba call *Babalawo*. He discerns the ailment in a person even before the person tells him. Kumuyi makes such revelations in the course of his preaching, for example, he would say: "There is a man here, thirty years old, who is still wetting the bed. Raise your hand and I'll pray for you".³⁸ At times members who could not come to Kumuyi in person would send him their handkerchiefs to be prayed for, similar to the New Testament event in Acts 19:11, 12. Kumuyi, however, does not emphasise miracles of healing in his ministry which makes Deeper Life Bible Church less popular than the newer churches.

Marriage Committee

Kumuyi's interest in the home and the family developed after his own marriage to Biodun in September 1980. This marriage has been blessed with two sons, Jerry and John. From then on Kumuyi began to teach on marriage and Christian home. He advised his members not to read any other books on marriage because they only contain men's ideas. He set up code of conduct in pre-marital relationships. For example, only those who are confirmed born again could marry in the church. Marriage Committees are set up in each church to help match and counsel unmarried members.

³⁷ Isaacson, *Deeper Life*, p. 195.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

Deeper Life members are encouraged to marry fellow Deeper Life to avoid marrying non- born again Christians. The church also has a women's committee headed by the Kumuyi's wife to look into women welfare. This women's committee publishes a magazine, *Christian Women Mirror*, which discusses home and women's affairs. Women have no special leadership role in the church, except in home caring fellowships.

Home-Caring Fellowship

Deeper Life concern and care for the home is best shown in what they call "home-caring fellowships". These fellowships are meant to provide companionship for members in the neighbourhood who may otherwise be lonely. This is in consonance with African communal life. Assistance is given to members in the zones who might have financial problems. Through this fellowship new members are wooed through constant visits. Alice Musa Ahmadu, a wife of a pastor of the Reformed Church of Nigeria and a University lecturer, says she started attending Deeper Life Bible Church when members in her neighbourhood began to visit her. They showed her love and concern especially when her husband was out of work. She says she would have loved to continue in Deeper Life if her husband did not put pressure on her to quit. This is an aspect in Deeper Life that has discredited it in the eyes of non-members, the practice whereby women join the church without their husbands. The children, of course, would follow them but only a few succeed in persuading their husbands to do so. Many Deeper Life women are in the church without their husbands. Such a caring fellowship exists in Universities, also campuses. This fellowship tries to provide accommodation to stranded students and food for members and needy non-members. During the 2000/2001 school year Rebecca Ibrahim shared her room with six girls who had lost their accommodation in the town as a result of the religious riot of September 2001.³⁹

Pentecostal troubled waters

³⁹ Interview, 11 April 2002.

Thus, Deeper Life Bible Church represents one spectrum of Nigerian Pentecostalism; the other is the syncretic type. In September 1996 riots broke out in Owerri, a growing city in the southeast of Nigeria. Youths rampaged through the streets burning private homes and churches. Owerri is an Igbo city. Most Igbo are Christians. The reason for the disturbance was a ritual murder allegedly committed by some rich people in the city. These suspected rich men worship in one of the Pentecostal churches, the Overcommers' Christian Mission founded and led by one Rev. Alexander Ezeugo Ekwuba. What is more, two human skulls were found when the premises of the church were invaded by the youths.⁴⁰ This incident revealed another dimension of Nigeria's Pentecostalism. It has been thought that African Pentecostalism tries to shed its traditional religious background in an attempt to be modern. One of those who hold such a stance is van Dijk. In one of his contributions he writes:

However, the Pentecostal churches engaged in a second dialectic with respect to these [syncretic] churches, as they could not accept practices that would signal the continuation of a cultural past that would make the church vulnerable to attacks from the Devil and his many demons. Ancestral spirits, witches and ritual practices that related to veneration and protection were consequently classified as demonic and were diabolised. Healing and deliverance from such powers can only take place through the "blood of Christ", the laying-on of hands and ecstatic prayer sessions in which the presence of the Holy Spirit is manifest through speaking in tongues... Objects and substances that relate to a cultural past are not allowed within its ritual practice and discourse... For most Born Agains, it is not enough to follow the Pentecostal doctrine of stopping various forms of ancestral veneration such as the pouring of libations at name-giving ceremonies, at initiation ceremonies and at funerals. Even confirmed Born Again believers may still feel haunted by ancestral curses and may therefore encounter the problems, afflictions and misfortunes that result from their past and from the web of social relations and commitments that tie a person to the family. As emphasised by deliverance rituals, the answer is a complete break with the past; that often means breaking with the

⁴⁰ The Punch, 4 March 1997, p. 4.

blood tie that binds a person to an ancestral curse which is still operating from the past through the living relatives in the present.⁴¹

As a result of this influence, the founder and president of the Children Evangelism Ministry (CEM) Tony Ofodile recently changed his surname from Ofodile which means “Ofo (an Igbo ritual stick) is powerful” to Chukwudile meaning “Chukwu (God) is powerful” as way of making a break with the past. This trend represents mainline Pentecostalism.

However, recent development in Nigerian Pentecostalism reveals certain departures from the norm. The Synagogue Church of All Nations founded by Prophet Temitope Balogun Joshua has come under attack from the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria for its involvements in occult practices. Joshua is about 40 years old and was born in Arigidin-Akoko in Ondo State in the southwest of Nigeria. He is known to have attended an Aladura church, New Temple Church founded by Primate Oladunni.⁴² Not much is known about his early life, but his activities in the Synagogue soon attracted attention due to the power he seemed to display. The Synagogue quickly became a beehive of people looking for miraculous healing or success in business or politics. Those who attend or have visited the church include the low and the highly placed in society. The very important personalities who have paid visits to the Synagogue include the Ooni (King) of Ife,⁴³ Kofoworola Akerele-Bucknor, the Deputy Governor, Lagos State, and even people from outside Nigeria. Frederick Chiluba, the former president of Zambia, had visited the Synagogue and spent two days.⁴⁴ Joshua has boasted of the great number of visitors from Europe and America; at one time he had up to 400 foreigners from 10 different countries.⁴⁵ The visit that sparked off controversy in Pentecostal circles was by one of the flamboyant Pentecostal preachers, Chris. Oyakhilome for what was alleged to be a bid to acquire more spiritual power. The Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria had noticed this infiltration and “had alerted the unsuspecting “Christians” and the general public on the dangers of the infiltrators who have modernised cultism by

⁴¹ Van Dijk, *Time and Transcultural Technologies of the Self*, 2001, pp. 221, 226.

⁴² New Treasure, 1 October 2001, pp. 10, 15.

⁴³ *Ife is the cradle of the Yoruba people.*

⁴⁴ Newswatch, 19 November 2001, p. 30.

⁴⁵ The News, 10 December 2001, p. 44.

injecting the name of Jesus Christ into their largely unbiblical practices”.⁴⁶ One of such infiltrators was a Pentecostal church in Benin, in the midwest of Nigeria, whose pastor sells “miracle” underwear to Nigerian girls travelling abroad, in most cases, to Italy for prostitution. The Nigeria Police got to know about his activities through some of his clients when some of the “miracle” pants failed to work. The girls also alleged that he had murdered his nine-month pregnant wife for ritual purposes.⁴⁷ In another incident the Nigeria Police arrested another leader of one of the Pentecostal churches in Orlu, Imo State, in southeastern Nigeria, who said he acted on a directive of the Holy Spirit to sacrifice one of his children.⁴⁸ As such, and in a bid to wash its hands from these embarrassing developments, the Pentecostal Fellowship president, Bishop Mike Okonkwo explained that: “Because of PFN’s uncompromising stand on this belief [against cultism], many organisations whose semblance fall within these confusion have not been accorded membership registration”. He added “it is very necessary that we reiterate this position that Synagogue falls within this category and that though T. B. Joshua had desperately tried to enrol through the national office, it has always been without success”.⁴⁹ A number two leader of the Synagogue who has left the church Pastor Solomon Ozi-David described what happened to Oyakhilome when he visited the Synagogue in 1991:

I initiated him. I took his elemental parts. When you say elemental parts in occultism, we are talking of your tongue, it would be scrapped, I scrapped it. I wash his face, and when [sic] I mean I wash his face in occult world, it means when you wake up in the morning, you must not greet anybody. And you must not wash your face, for it would be washed for occult initiation. Then, I took his palm, I collected his blood from his chest, and part of his skin was taken.⁵⁰

The controversy still rages on. The fact is that this is the African dimension of Pentecostalism. It has the universal contour, but also retains the African cultic elements, to make it authentically global and authentically local as well. Recently a Pentecostal church in Jos organised a revival. Its main speaker was Rev. Joshua

⁴⁶ *The Week*, 8 April 2002, p. 15.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

Balogun whose spiritual credentials are “former Secretary General of witches worldwide, former Ogboni (a Yoruba cult) Grand Master, a cronic [sic] haberlist for 40 years[, a] Kabala magician, former leader of the white lodges, one who once feasted on human flesh & blood, [and] now turn a preacher[.] [C]ome and hear for yourself.”

Conclusion

Charismatic/Pentecostal churches, like erstwhile spiritual churches such as the Aladura churches, are as F. B. Welbourn and B. A. Ogot put it “a place to feel at home”.⁵¹ They are also making an impact on the political scene as well. General Yakubu Gowon’s Nigeria Prays and the Interdenominational National Prayer Network, to which many politicians including President Olusegun Obasanjo attend,⁵² are results of such an impact. So are President Obasanjo’s anti-corruption campaign and his Nigerian Declaration of Human Responsibilities. These are results of the religious experience he had while in prison, an experience largely contributed by the regular visits by charismatic/Pentecostals. Not long ago many of Nigeria’s leaders became born again. Some these included, Akin Omoboriowo, Professor Ishaya Audu who was also ordained a pastor, and Chief Solomon Daushep Lar. There was an anti-climax in Pentecostal political involvement, however. Tunde Bakare, a Yoruba man and the founder and leader of the Latter Rain Assembly stung Nigeria’s Christendom with a prophecy against the swearing in of Obasanjo as the second civilian president of Nigeria. Immediately Obasanjo was declared the winner, in a landslide victor, of 1990 presidential election, Bakare gave the following prophecy:

Son, speak to your nation. Rejoice not, O ye land for your joy will be temporal. I will bring your governors, your rulers, your judges, your princes and your prophets to my threshing floor and after I thresh them, I will restore to you a permanent joy. Obasanjo is not your messiah. He’s King Agag and the prophetic axe is coming upon his head before May 29.⁵³

⁵¹ F. B. Welbourn and B. A. Ogot, *A Place to Feel at Home*, London: Oxford University Press, 1966.

⁵² See *Prayer News (A quarterly Bulletin of National Prayer Network; Nigeria)*.

⁵³ *The Week*, 18 March 2002, p. 15.

Obasanjo was not only sworn in. He has ruled successfully more than three years since then. Last November, not deterred by an unfulfilled prophecy, Bakare made another prophecy, this time even more threatening:

... If by act of omission or commission, this man is sworn in into power. Number one, there will be the outbreak of one occult that will claim many lives. Number two, corruption will be at its peak; [t]hree, family values will break down. There will be catalogue of divorces in Nigeria like never before... You pray that God should kill IBB [the military dictator, Gen. Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida]? He's not going to. He needs him. God is going to use him mightily and by the time they finish, here comes the Tender Plant, from the side of the north, aforeprepared before the foundation of the earth to stir Nigeria into a prophetic destiny. His two feet are deep in the blood of tyrants, on his right hand and on his left hand are sword of judgment and sword of justice...In his lifetime, the economy of Nigeria will recover faster than that of Japan.⁵⁴

The mention of the "Tender Plant" from the north, who had his feet with tyrants, created speculations that Obasanjo's successor, and the Messiah of Nigeria, would be another ex-military officer from the north. Some thought of Brigadier-general Muhammadu Buba Marwa, a military governor during the reign of Gen. Sani Abacha and a Muslim from the northeast of Nigeria. But how would a Christian prophet call for the enthronement of a Muslim as a Messiah?

Nigerian Pentecostalism is not a monolithic institution. It has many sides making its study more complex than it is often assumed.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

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