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PORTRAIT OF A NIGERIAN PENTECOSTAL MISSIONARY

Ayuk A. Ayuk

1. Introduction

The Spirit of Pentecost among Pentecostals awakened the dying church, much to everyone's surprise. As a matter of fact, without the emergence of Pentecostals in the twentieth century, Christian missions would have died a natural death. This demise of world missions was clearly indicated by Pius Wakatama:

> No subject is as controversial and emotion-packed in the modern missionary movement as the suggestion that missionaries stop their activities. This is dividing missionaries as well as Third World Christians both among evangelical conservatives and liberal churchmen.[1]

Pentecostals brought the church back to life with its insistence on missions and evangelism. Among the mainline Protestant churches there was controversy over whether there was a need for missions. This was brought about by a misunderstanding between Third World Christians and First World Christians. Some mainline denominations did not feel the strong need for evangelism and missions because they felt it was destroying culture.

This conspiracy to destroy missions work was brought about

> …by the anthropologists who met on Barbados in 1971 under the sponsorship of the World Council of Churches. They concluded that missionary work was detrimental to the survival of the Indian culture in Latin America.[2]

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[1] Pius Wakatama, *Independence for the Third World Church: An African's Perspective on Missionary Work* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1976), p. 1.

[2] Wakatama, *Independence for the Third World Church*, p. 1.

The plan did not push through as expected, because Pentecostalism had become very strong in Latin America, a continent that was largely Roman Catholic, and many people were led to Christ. The Pentecostal church in Latin America is today sending missionaries to other countries.

The Pentecostals had a different perspective as seen among their early records:

> …a close and abiding association between the baptism in the Holy Spirit as evidenced by speaking in tongues for an inducement of power in Christian witness, a fervent belief in the premillennial return of Christ and his command to evangelize to the uttermost parts of the world. This Baptism, viewed as the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy for "the last days," seemed to heighten the imperative for world evangelism.[3]

This kind of spirit spurred revival and set the desire for missions ablaze and gradually rocked the world, until the early 1980s when everybody began to succumb to it with less resistance.

The Nigerian case was no different. Many churches were plagued by culture and traditions and the church, as a whole, was gradually losing her impact on the lives of people, until the coming of Pentecostalism. Though, at first, the Pentecostals were ridiculed by many, they stood their ground and did not compromise with those aspects of culture and tradition that are contradictory to the gospel, and eventually led one church after another to another dimension of spirituality that is biblically sound and theologically balanced. This kind of spirituality touched every facet of the society for the glory of God, and today one can say that almost every Nigerian has heard the gospel, even though most of them have not yet responded.

The impact is especially seen in the conflict between the Moslems and Christians. Moslems are afraid they are losing out in the race of religiosity/spirituality and are doing everything they can to control the rate at which Moslems are defecting to Christianity. This has led to a stricter discipline on the Moslems who are not living according to the standards of Islam. Things have never been this way before: like the threat to stone a Moslem woman who had a child out of wedlock. But, that is only a camouflage of the political statement that Moslems are still

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[3] L. Grant McClung, Jr., "From Bridges to Waves: Pentecostals and the Church Growth Movement," in *Azusa Street and Beyond*, ed. L. Grant McClung, Jr. (South Plainfield, NJ: Bridge, 1986), pp. 109-118 (118).

in power and can do anything they want, even if the government does not approve of it. Part of that is the fact that the country now has a President who confesses, without fear of losing the Moslem vote, that he is a Christian.

The Pentecostals have not only made the gospel alive in Nigeria, but they are also sending missionaries all over the world to preach the gospel, despite financial upheaval in the country. The Pentecostal churches in Nigeria have sent out more missionaries in the late 20th century than any other denomination in Nigeria. Its influence and impact on all other denominations in Nigeria is beyond comparison. The Pentecostals not only won converts, but they also won other churches over to their side. The acceptance of the power of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues in mainline fundamental and evangelical churches is what makes Pentecostalism a powerful influence. Not only did they grow, but they empowered other churches with the power of the Holy Spirit.

According to *DAWN Fridayfax*:

> What has been described as a "book of Acts-like" move of God is sweeping through Nigeria and spreading overseas. Large meetings and confirmed healings are order of the day in the Western African Nation.[4]

This paper will attempt to reflect on what the Pentecostal churches have done in the area of missions in Nigeria and other parts of the world. This is not an exhaustive study because my contribution is limited to a certain number of words.

2. Historical Background of Pentecostal Missions In Nigeria

What happened at the Azusa Street revival between 1906 and 1909 among a circle of Christians became national phenomena, and thereafter, continental phenomena and eventually an international panorama. That experience led to what we now call Pentecostalism. This experience has spread like "wild fire" and is touching the lives of people all over the world. This "wild fire," however, does not consume, but rather restores relationships with God and other people. It is an amazing experience, that is still going on up to this very time. And, no one would have thought

[4] Matthew Ashimolowo, "What Is God Doing in and through Nigeria," *DAWN Fridayfax* 18 (www.jesus.org.uk/dawn/2002/dawn02.html, 2002), p. 1 (checked: Sept 4, 2002).

that there would be greater missionaries than those of the past. And it may not be right for us to compare or speculate about this; but it is fitting to talk of our experiences in relation to what took place before this present-day time.

The missionaries of yesterday were brave soldiers of and for Christ. They took themselves into the jungles of Africa and Asia to share the Word of God in very hard and harsh conditions. This is what is written about Mary Slessor (1848-1915):

> She wore a shapeless, sleeveless garment, not the formal long sleeved dress which was normal for white women in the tropics in 1882; and her head was uncovered except for her shock of close cropped red hair, for she refused to wear the sun helmet which the doctors insisted was vital for Europeans. And since she always ate African food, and slept on the floor among the wives, all the village of Ibaka loved their guest, for her laughter and jokes, and her medicine chest and because she taught about God.[5]

This description of this admirable lady gives us a good model of a missionary woman in the nineteenth century. Missionaries like this laid the foundation for what is taking place in Nigeria today. She may not have been a Pentecostal, but she sowed the first seeds of the gospel that have now blossomed.

> Pentecostal missionaries are said to have arrived Nigeria in 1920 from Oregon. And a "revival was stirred in 1930 when Nigerians traveled hundreds of miles to hear the preaching of an indigenous evangelist, Joseph Babalola, who was based in the city of Ilesha."[6]

While it is true that Pentecostalism has been in Nigeria for quite some time, its greatest impact was felt in the 1980s, as indicated by "Enoch Adeboye, general overseer of the RCCG which is starting three churches a day in Nigeria."[7] He sees a divine strategy behind Nigeria's boom, and he went on to say, "Since one in five Africans is a Nigerian, perhaps God is raising up an army to evangelize all of Africa from

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[5] John Pollock, *On Fire for God* (London: Star Books, 1995), p. 1.

[6] J. Lee Grady, "Nigeria's Miracle," *Charisma and Christian Life*, May 2002, pp. 38-49, 83 (42).

[7] Grady, "Nigeria's Miracle," p. 41.

here."[8] Nigerian missionaries are presently going beyond Africa to plant and grow big churches that no one ever imagined was possible.

The theory of Adeboye is well-founded because the Nigerian church has remained one of the strongest missionary forces in Africa. They are not only evangelizing African nations, but they are also evangelizing people in Europe, Asia and America. It is quite surprising, but not out of place, that Nigerians are presently reaching out to Europeans and Americans who actually brought the Word of God to them.

The upsurge of conversions in Nigeria is a result of miracles as indicated by Charisma: "Reports that a dead baby had been resurrected during one of his meetings triggered widespread conversions and launched several new ministries"[9]

Signs and wonders are very characteristic of Pentecostals and that is what has led the church so far. Some Pentecostals may now be down-playing the importance of the role of the Holy Spirit, even though it is what makes them Pentecostal. But, we must realize that the Holy Spirit and the working of signs and wonders is very central to Pentecostalism. It is not just what one ought to believe in order to be Pentecostal; but it is true and real in many ways. We must claim our inheritance and continue to allow it to manifest itself in our midst like before. That is Pentecostal Identity.

3. Nigerian Pentecostal Churches in Missions Today

Many Pentecostal churches in Nigeria have grown in numbers, but only a few are actually taking the initiative to send missionaries to other nations due to financial constraints. Nigeria is going through crises, such as political, social, economic, religious and health-wise. All these problems stem from two major problems: politics and religion.

First, the political situation in Nigeria has been unstable for quite sometime. The country has been ruled by corrupt military officials who have always seized power under the guise of national security. But they normally end up being more corrupt than the civilians. This kind of power tussle has been there for a long time, and it has always affected the economic growth of the country. And, there is wide-spread corruption among government officials, who are sometimes richer than the country itself. Politicians, and leaders in general, are not concerned about the

[8] Grady, "Nigeria's Miracle," p. 42.

[9] Grady, "Nigeria's Miracle," p. 42.

well-being of the country. Another problem is tribalism and nepotism, as people want to have the opportunity to help their own tribe.

Secondly, Nigeria has always had a Moslem leader in power during and after the civil war. Recently, however, there has been a turn around, as an avowed Christian is now the President of Nigeria. The Moslems are very uneasy with the situation, and are doing everything they can to frustrate the government in order to come back to power. Moslems are attacking Christians when given the slightest opportunity. These unnecessary attacks are coupled with the fact that the church in Nigeria has grown tremendously and the Moslems are threatened by the fact that many Moslems are being converted to Christianity. This situation is adversely affecting the peace and order in Nigeria, as well as the economy of the country.

All of these problems, compounded by the high criminality rate, are causing people to begin to ask about the relevance of church growth in Nigeria. But God is still shaking Nigeria to purify it of all forms of squalor that are putting the country down. And definitely, the devil will not just sit down and watch the transformation of Nigeria without causing havoc to prevent a spiritual awakening in the country today.

3.1 The Redeemed Christian Church of God

The Redeemed Christian Church of God is one of the strongest churches in the area of missions in Nigeria and abroad. This church is said to be the largest Pentecostal church in Africa. It counts eighty-two parishes in the United States, including two in Chicago: Jesus House on the North Side and All Nations Assembly in Lincolnwood.[10] The Church has about 5,000 parishes in eighty countries. Most of these churches are, however, found in Nigeria.

The leader of this church dreams of a day when one in four people worldwide will be a member of the church.[11] That may be a good dream, but missionaries and church leaders should not be thinking of building their own kingdoms here on earth in the name of churches, which seems to be a common trend today among Pentecostals, but rather should be looking forward to bringing people to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

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[10] J. Lieblich and Tom McCann, *Africans Now Missionaries to US* (www.ezboard.com, 2002), p. 1 (checked: Sept 5, 2002). They were missionaries in Africa, but now reside in the U.S.A.

[11] Leiblich & McCann, *Africans Now Missionaries to US*, p. 1.

Rev. Josiah Olufemi Akindayomi founded The Redeemed Christian Church of God in 1952, but the growth of the church culminated in the 1980s when the leadership was changed to Rev. Adeboye, a former mathematics professor. It had only a few churches in 1981, but as of today it has about 5,000 congregations.

The church teachings/doctrine is succinctly stated thus: "The church emphasizes biblical inerrancy, the power of the Holy Spirit, divine healing and prophecy. It warns against disobeying church authority and a worldliness leaders see as rampant in the United States."[12]

It is not only doctrine that makes the church meaningful in the lives of people, but also the dynamism that is seen in the worship services.

> The African Pentecostals are characterized by their use of music and dance in the liturgy, their belief that prayer will solve problems, and their attempts to adapt Christian values to African beliefs and ways of life.[13]

This dynamism is helping young people to be involved in church activities today in Nigeria. The use of drums and other musical instruments is very attractive to young people who like to move and dance instead of sitting down in one place. This is noticeable because young people are the ones most often involved in the playing of musical instruments and singing songs of praise, instead of an old woman playing the piano and old men and women singing hymnal songs that are not so attractive to young people. I don't mean to down play the older folks and hymnal songs; I am only saying that the young people have been given a place in the church that was not there before now.

As indicated in the international directory of The Redeemed Christian Church of God,

> The Directorate of Missions came into existence in 1992 through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost and the guidance of the General Overseer, Pastor E. A. Adeboye. The broad vision of The Redeemed Christian Church of God to have a parish planted in every hamlet, town, country and continent of the world led to the establishment of the Directorate of Missions.[14]

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[12] Leiblich & McCann, *Africans Now Missionaries to US*, p. 1.

[13] Leiblich & McCann, *Africans Now Missionaries to US*, p. 1.

[14] Directorate of Missions, *The Redeemed Christian Church of God*, 3rd ed. (Lagos: RCCG Press, 2000-01), p. 8.

Despite the fact that the church started missions only in 1992, it is remarkable that they have been able to plant churches in about 15 countries as of 2001. In the United States alone, they have been able to plant 21 churches in different states and about 31 churches in India.

3.1.1 Qualifications of an RCCG Missionary

Prospective missionaries are selected and trained by the Recruitment and Training Department. This Department trains and equips prospective missionaries for cross-cultural ministry and other people interested in missions work. The Redeemed Christian School of Missions is one of her agencies for achieving this purpose.[15]

This is a one-year program, as indicated by one of their missionaries during an interview. The missionary also said one of his greatest benefits was the exposure to the need for contextualization in the training. This is one area many missionaries are very weak in, that should be given primary importance. The success of any missionary endeavor depends solely on the power of the Holy Spirit and how one is able to contextualize the gospel in the specific area he or she is doing missions.

The training generally emphasizes strong disciplinary action in order to help the missionaries be strong in the mission fields. This kind of approach in missions is very important, because some missionaries today are taking missions for granted.

3.1.2 Missions Sending and Support

The missionaries from the RCCG are normally sent to other countries without necessarily having a receiving body, since there are no RCCG churches in those countries yet. They practically start their work independently without having anybody to oversee them. That means they are directly supervised by their overseers in Nigeria. Their support is meager since they are coming from a poor country. They are generally encouraged to involve themselves in tent making, in order to support their ministry. They receive about $300-$500 every month to support their mission activities.

3.1.3 Why Some of the RCCG Missionaries Are Successful

The missionaries from RCCG are able to succeed in the United States of America and other parts of the world because of two strong factors: Spiritual discipline and assertiveness.

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[15] Directorate of Missions, *The Redeemed Christian Church of God*, p. 8.

a) Strong Spiritual Discipline: The Nigerian missionaries from the RCCG are devoted to the Word of God and prayers. They do not take these two spiritual disciplines lightly. They pray daily and fast often to maintain their spiritual fervor.

b) Assertiveness: They are also assertive in the sense that they do not allow circumstances to deaden their spirits. They move on despite the situation; and he or she is not easily discouraged, but pursues his or her goal with passion. They are not intimidated by anything when it comes to the sharing of the gospel.

3.2 Embassy of the Kingdom of God

This is another remarkable story of a Nigerian Pentecostal missionary in Europe. It is not only remarkable, it is extraordinary, because it seems to have been thought that it was impossible for a black man to go and start a church in Europe. Being black was just one obstacle; the other obstacle was the fact that this part of Europe had never believed in God. But these two obstacles were overcome and the largest church in the whole of Europe was planted in a most unlikely place.

Godwin Ifijeh states:

> Like it was in all of the former Soviet Union, the mention of religion or even God was a taboo in the Ukraine. To the people, God never existed. Of course, this was not surprising. The communist barrier erected around the people completely cut them off from not only the rest of the world but from every other thing alien to communism. But from as early as 1994, a young Nigerian Cleric, Sunday Adelaja, braved the odds.[16]

The amazing thing about Adelaja is the fact that he had neither a strong sending body behind him nor a receiving body. He went to study with the hope of doing missions as directed by God through dreams and visions, and arrived in the Ukraine with only a $20 bill. And so it took him a long time to actually involve himself in full-time ministry. But in eight years, he was able to establish a church of 20,000 members.

Unlike many missionaries who go back to their home countries to raise support for ministry, he did it locally in a poverty-stricken country. This, however, does not mean that all missionaries should raise their support locally; but, somehow, this is a biblical mandate as Christ

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[16] Godwin Ifijeh, *In Ukraine, a Nigerian Cleric Makes Waves* (www.thisdayonline.com, 2002), checked: Sept 2002.

commanded his disciples: Take nothing for the journey-no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, and no extra tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town" (Luke 9:3-4).

What was Adelaja's mission strategy?

3.2.1 Training

Adelaja's success in missions was not instant, as it took him eight years to prepare. He first of all went through college and graduate school before launching into full-time ministry. Within these eight years, he studied the language and culture and understood them very well before starting the ministry entrusted to him by God.

3.2.2 Action with the Least in Society

He started his ministry with the society rejects who needed the Word of God the most. This proved the validity of the Word of God, as stated below:

> There was the fear that religion could enthrone them in another form of detention. So, to get around that, we went to the prostitutes, the outcasts, drug addicts, the alcoholics and social outcasts. It worked out. We preached the ministry to them and tried to restore them. With those people delivered and cleansed up to once again become normal people, their parents started coming to the church to find out what happened. It dawned on them that there must be something about what we were trying to do. The church became socially relevant to the community with government realizing that we are doing what they couldn't do.[17]

Getting involved in the real life situations of people can actually pay off in missions. People want to see the reality of God in their lives, not just by word of mouth. The words uttered by God must be authenticated with action. This may seem ambivalent to having faith that is not supposed to be based on reason, but it works in missions. We have to be very strategic.

3.2.3 Social Action

The next thing he did was to make sure the restored dejects in the society would be well taken care of, and so he decided to start a feeding program. He did this by raising funds within the country.

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[17] Ifijeh, *In Ukraine, a Nigerian Cleric Makes Waves*, p. 2.

3.2.4 Signs and Wonders

Some may think this is social action, but it is coupled with signs and wonders: "Besides, some of the miracles God had performed through us had also helped the church."[18] The ministry of God is never complete without signs and wonders. That is exactly why the Pentecostals have an edge over others in missions.

3.2.5 Involving Members in Ministry

The last factor in the success of his missionary effort is the fact that every person is involved in the ministry, not just himself. "God has been using men to spread the word of knowledge and in our own case in the Ukraine, every member of the over 20,000-member Church is involved in the spread of the word of God"[19]

The ministry of Sunday Adelaja deserves our commendation and emulation if we want to succeed in our missionary endeavors.

3.3 Kingsway International Christian Centres in East London

Most of the early missionaries in Nigeria were from England, as mentioned earlier in this paper, and it might be surprising to know that the largest church in England today is led by a Nigerian missionary who was a Moslem.

According to Matthew Ashimolowo, the pastor of the church: "God gave us a prophetic word that his servants will go out from our nation and shake the world."[20] There is no denying the fact, God has raised up his children from Nigeria to do his ministry.

According to Stephen Hunts:

> The popular media of the contemporary Pentecostal movement has made much of the apparent fresh 'revival' in Britain, in terms of mass converts and rapid congregational growth, among West Africans, mostly Nigerian, churches.[21]

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[18] Ifijeh, *In Ukraine, a Nigerian Cleric Makes Waves*, p. 2.

[19] Ifijeh, *In Ukraine, a Nigerian Cleric Makes Waves*, p. 2.

[20] Matthew Ashimolowo, *What God Is Doing in and through Nigeria?* (www.jesus.org.uk/dawn/2002/dawn18.html, 2002), p. 1, checked: Sept 4, 2002.

[21] Stephen Hunts, "The 'New' Black Pentecostal Churches in Britain" (A paper presented at the 14th Cesnur International Conference, Riga, Latvia, August 2000), p. 1.

He went on to say that the first church was 'planted' in 1985 in Britain with only four people in attendance. They now have about fifty churches of varying sizes and a membership somewhere in the range of two hundred thousand, especially in London and the midlands, but also with sizeable representation in a number of Britain's larger urban areas.[22]

The influence of the Nigerian Pentecostals in Great Britain is a clear authentication of what is happening in Nigeria. The Holy Spirit is not only manifested in Nigeria, but also in other parts of the world.

3.4 Elsewhere in the World

The remarkable thing about most Nigerian missionaries is the fact that, they shine wherever they go. It is said that: "the largest churches in Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana, Zimbabwe and Jamaica are also led by Nigerians."[23] This somehow makes the Pentecostal Nigerian missionaries phenomenal, in the sense that most of them start missions without strong connections at their home churches and yet do better than most missionaries who are well funded and prayed for.

4. The Nigerian Missionaries' Observed Stragegies in Missions

The Church in Nigeria did not grow in a vacuum. There are conditions that led to its rapid growth. These conditions, if taken into consideration and allowed to manifest themselves in any ministry anywhere in the world, will help a church to grow. As a matter of fact, the Nigerian situation is not an isolated case. It is seen in Korea and Latin American countries. God works with people in a particular way and in certain circumstances, and so it becomes imperative for us to take a careful look at how He was able to do it with the Nigerian missionaries.

The following are some of the observed characteristics of Nigerian missionaries:

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[22] Hunts, "The 'New' Black Pentecostal Churches in Britain," p. 1.

[23] Wolfgang Simson, "What Is God Doing in and through Nigeria?" *Dawn Fridayfax* 18 (2002).

4.1 Spirit Filled

The churches that have grown tremendously among Nigerian missionaries are churches that are spirit filled. People go to churches where they see the power of God moving. A spiritually dead church does not allow the spirit of God to manifest itself. It believes in God but does not believe in His power to move mountains if there is a need to do so.

It is mandated of every Pentecostal missionary to be spirit filled. The spirit's power is what moves people to do God's work and this is what has been seen in Pentecostal missionaries everywhere. The Holy Spirit can only be present in a church where there is fervent prayer and belief in that prayer. Pentecostals pray because they believe strongly in the Word of God, and they spend time reading it day and night, to see what God has done before in the lives of his children. Their faith is strengthened by their reading of the Word, and most of the time when they pray, their prayers are not only answered, but sometimes instantly to the amazement of people, who then begin to put their trust in God.

It is not surprising that Nigerians are easily "carried away" by the Spirit movement. By nature they are spiritual; and I don't quite know how to make this more explicit. It is not that other humans are not spiritual, but it is just that Nigerians are more attuned to the spiritual than to the physical. A Nigerian, by nature, looks at life from a spiritual dimension, rather than from a rational point of view. The concept of a supreme being is so ingrained in the mind set of a Nigerian that it is impossible for him/her not to associate every aspect of his /her life with God.[24]

4.2 Signs and Wonders

Every spirit filled person is accompanied with signs and wonders and there is nothing as convincing as the manifestation of God's power in the lives of people. When people are healed or set free from demon possession, others are made to see the reality of God in their lives.

C. Peter Wagner looks at church growth as the result of miraculous healing, as indicated in the case of Nigeria. In the book, he narrated the story of two leprous people who became Christians as a result of being

[24] Ayuk Ausaji Ayuk, "The Pentecostals Transformation of Nigeria Church Life" *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 5:2 (2002), pp. 189-204.

healed.[25] This is one thing the Pentecostals brought back to life in the Nigerian Churches. Many persons used to flock to faith healers or witch doctors to get healing, but today they go to churches because the power of the Holy Spirit has been restored in full force.

This causes me to think that the saying "to see is to believe" is very much engrained in all human beings. The Israelites were also looking for signs and wonders. Jesus, however, was not very happy about this, because it makes faith irrelevant. The evidence of trust without any physical manifestation is what Christianity is all about, and that is what Jesus tried to impress in the minds of his disciples. However, the fact still remains that human beings are more convinced and persuaded, when something miraculous and dramatic happens. But miracles do not necessarily make Christians. It is the revealing power of the Holy Spirit that makes Christians (1Cor 2:10). Miracles may be performed, but it is the convincing and revealing power of the Holy Spirit that makes persons respond to the Christian faith. Not every person who sees miracles turns to God (1Cor.2: 14). Only those persons, whom God has chosen to reveal himself to, respond appropriately (1Cor.1: 26-30). If miracles were the determinants of a person's faith, then the whole world would either be for Christ or the Devil. The Devil usurps the power of God sometimes and people are generally amazed by such powers (Acts 8:9-11), but not every person will take these experiences seriously. In the same manner, not all persons who see miracles from God are touched by the Holy Spirit to take them as revelations from God, and respond to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Miracles should, therefore, not be seen as the driving force behind a person's acceptance of Jesus as their personal savior. Rather, it is the power of the Holy Spirit that intervenes and makes them begin to see things differently.[26]

4.3 Contextualization

Theology should be contextualized in order for it to have meaning in the lives of its consumers. Kofi Appiah-Kubi succinctly put it this way:

> That the Gospel has come to remain in Africa cannot be denied, but now our theological reflections must be addressed to the real contextual African situations. Our question must not be what Karl Barth, Karl

[25] C. Peter Wagner, *How to Have a Healing Ministry without Making Your Church Sick* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1988), pp. 72-73.

[26] Ayuk, "The Pentecostals Transformation of Nigeria Church life," p. 204.

> Rahner, or any other Karl has to say, but rather what God would have us do in our living concrete condition.[27]

Western theologians have written a lot of theological books; but, perhaps only a handful of professional theologians are interested in what has been said by these very articulate theologians. It becomes imperative for us to think about the relevance of these great books to church life. Theology is relevant when it answers the questions of the context in which it is done. There is nothing that makes the Word of God more relevant than a proper understanding of the language and culture of a people.

4.4 Social Action

Pentecostals are vigorously involved in the political life of Nigeria. They pray for the country and are involved in some government activities. Their preaching is not devoid of political innuendoes and a call for appropriate actions to be taken. They depend on God to help them in influencing certain actions in the country. Nigerians generally believe that it is God who has intervened in the changes that have taken place in the country politically. They think that God has answered their prayers. God has, therefore, acted in a political situation. However, there is still much to be done in this area. The church cannot deny the fact that she is the embodiment of life in totality. It is supposed to touch all [28]

4.5 Dynamic Worship

Nigerians are very active people. They do not like anything solemn. Moreover, they like to sing and swing and move. Such is the nature of a Nigerian, which invariably is the nature of Pentecostalism. This makes me see very clearly the importance of contextualization. This is in agreement with Jules-Rosette's observation that, "Third World countries are creating ideologies which bring a synthesis of indigenous and Western religious beliefs as part of the growth of New Religious Movements. Often such movements, typified by developments in Africa, represent the interests and life experiences of distinct and sometimes emerging social groups. These theological constructs may then be subject

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[27] Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres, *African Theology Enroute* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), p. viii.

[28] Ayuk, "The Pentecostals Transformation of Nigeria Church life," p. 204.

to the process of globalization and, in doing so, appeal to localized communities"[29]

4.6 Dynamic Preaching

Nigerian missionaries speak the Word of God with authority and power, so that it penetrates the mind with full force. The business of a missionary is to communicate the Word of God in such a way that it can be clearly understood by the listeners. This, coupled with personal conviction and authenticity, makes the message acceptable. Peter demonstrated this in Acts. The forcefulness of his preaching and the strong conviction in what he was saying led to the winning of three thousand (3000) souls in one day.

This is one area that must be strengthened if souls are to be won for Christ. Many preachers today are using preaching as a form of entertainment. But, if our audience is serious, they are not there to be entertained, but rather to be edified and inspired through the Word of God. Taking good note of this will help us to be more focused, instead of getting side-tracked by the desire to impress.

4.7 Message of Hope

The Pentecostals offer a futuristic kingdom of God. [30] This theological perspective tends to conceptualize both a present and future hope of deliverance from the conditions of this world.[31] Scholars like Cope tend to look at this perspective as escapism from reality.[32] The central message of Jesus Christ was about the coming kingdom. He said, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of it" (John 17: 16). The world is a place to be purified, in order for its inhabitants to qualify for the kingdom of God. Christians generally do not have any message other than this, but the fact is, only the Pentecostals emphasize the coming of the kingdom of God. Churches also emphasize the need to be 'born-again,' the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the importance of the charismata

[29] Hunt, "The 'New' Black Pentecostal Churches in Britain," p. 2.

[30] Hunt, "The 'New' Black Pentecostal Churches in Britain," p. 2.

[31] J. Aldred, "Paradigms for a Black Theology in Britain," *Black Theology in Britain* 2 (1999), pp. 9-32.

[32] J. H. Cope Cope, *For My People* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1984), p.13.

and a great deal of emphasis is placed on miracles and faith healing.[33] The Word of God is held as infallible and the basis of all teachings.

Apart from this theological orientation, Pentecostals also emphasize personal purity. I feel this should be every Christian's theology. Theology should be based on the Bible -- no more, no less. Anything outside the Bible is not Christian and should not be taken seriously. And however profound your theology may be, if it is not giving life to people, then it is worthless

People need hope and that is what is given to them through God's Word. We are living in a hopeless world, where people are not sure of what will happen next and how they can deal with such situations. The Pentecostals offer the security and hope that every person needs in order to keep going on with life.

4.8 Good Training

The kind of discipline and training received by Nigerians makes them strong enough to bear up under any kind of condition. Their training and up-bringing offers them an advantage no other missionary has. Many Bible schools and seminaries have been opened to help in training church leaders for the next generation.

The question, however, is whether these institutions are being whole-heartedly supported by the churches, both morally and financially? There is a kind of ambiguity seen among Pentecostal churches regarding Bible and theological training. They are both excited and, at the same time, suspicious of educational institutions. There are many big Pentecostal churches I know of, that would rather train their pastors than send them to Bible schools or seminaries. They would rather invite a seminary professor to come and train their church workers than send them to the Bible school, and there are many training programs within the church to cater to the needs of the churches.

But, the question is: Are the training programs in the churches adequate? I believe the answer to that question is "No." Then why do they still opt to train the workers within the church setting? The answer to that question is very troubling. Many churches are suspicious that the seminary will destroy, rather than build, good leaders for the church. Many churches today are afraid of seminary graduates who may come back to divide the church, rather than consolidate it.

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[33] Hunt, "The 'New' Black Pentecostal Churches in Britain," p. 2.

These are hard-core issues that should be talked about, rather than just avoiding them and thinking of them as being unfounded. What, in theological education, has failed? Is it just that "knowledge puffs up" (1 Cor. 8:1)? The problem is not just that "knowledge puffs up," but the problem lies with both the formal and hidden curriculum of seminaries and Bible schools.

Seminaries and Bible schools do not take Christian education, as a discipline, seriously; and, therefore, do not employ the principles of educational planning in their development of curriculums. When curriculums are not well-planned and implemented, the students will not be well-trained, and so the expected outcome of theological training is lost in the process of training. Most of the time, curriculums are designed without due consultation with the churches. How then can the churches want to support what is being done in the seminaries?

Education, without clear-cut goals, will definitely fail. That is exactly what is happening. Yes, most theological schools have goals, but the goals are not very clear. Most of the time, the curriculums are not implemented because the teachers are not well informed of what is expected of them in a particular course. They teach what they like, not what the curriculum expects of them; and so, then the curriculum is not implemented.

The problem is not so much that churches are training their own workers; the problem is why the seminaries are being undermined? Unless the philosophy of education is changed, and principles of educational practice are taken seriously, seminaries will continue to lose their place as the formation center of future church leaders.

The hidden curriculum plays the most important part in theological education. Seminary teachers are supposed to be models of what the school upholds. If students do not see the sincerity of the faculty's actions, they will also become likewise. I agree with what McKinney said in his paper:

> Every administrator and faculty member of a Pentecostal educational institution should have an articulated personal philosophy of ministry and education. This will determine to a great extent how he functions in and out of the classroom and what kind of model he will be for the students. This will also affect his objectives for the courses he teaches

> and the balance between academic and spiritual dimensions that he allows and encourages.[34]

I still believe that only well-planned educational programs can make theological education worthwhile in the 21st century. And the planning must involve churches who will be having their church workers and pastors trained in seminaries. Without formal training in the seminaries, it will be hard to find pastors who can handle the kind of churches that will be emerging in the 21st century. Christian education is indispensable.

The world is changing very fast and as the world changes, different aspects of life will also change. There is nothing that can substitute for change but change itself. We are in a period of knowledge explosion, and all we need to do is manage the knowledge that is there, for grasp by any person who wants it. The library is no more very far from home, because the Internet is full of resources to tap from. The alternative for a classroom will be the home, church buildings and most probably offices, in both urban and rural areas.

Some Pentecostal denominations already have distance education. The Assemblies of God has ICI (Global University)[35] and the Church of God, a certificate in ministerial studies, which is presently selling like hot cakes among the Church of God churches. Most of the big Church of God churches prefer to use the CIMS program, instead of enrolling students in the traditional seminary training. This does not mean that the traditional system of education will be out of the market. The traditional institutions will still operate as the main source for the materials of distance education.

The distance education program should be strengthened, because people don't have time anymore to spend three years in school for a degree before going to start a ministry. I believe it is even better to be in the church setting while studying, instead of staying away from real church life situations. Seminary teachers should be encouraged to develop materials that can easily be understood by those taking the distance education program.

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[34] Everett L. McKinney, "Some Spiritual Aspects of Pentecostal Education: A Personal Journey," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 3:2 (2000), pp. 253-79 (263).

[35] Benjamin Sun, "Assemblies of God Theological Education in Asia Pacific: A Reflection," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 3:2 (2000), pp. 227-51 (236).

Distance education programs should not stop with certificate programs only. Graduate study materials should also be prepared for the distance education program. The classroom is not the only place that education can take place. Admittedly, that is the very traditional way of thinking about education; but learning can take place anywhere as long as knowledge is gained, whether through reading or from a teacher's input. Theological schools should begin to get ready, as theological education is going to change its face in the very near future.

5. Challenges Faced by Missionaries

Missionary work in itself is a big challenge; only people set apart by God will be able to undertake it. This challenge in missions is manifested in certain areas that make missions possible, such as:

5.1 Finance

Money is one of the biggest challenges in missions and ministry in general. Without money it is almost impossible to do missions, because mission is carried out through the use of money. Money is not only a challenge in terms of its lack, but also a challenge in terms of its proper usage by missionaries. While the missionaries from the Third World like Nigeria are complaining of the lack of money, missionaries from rich countries are accused of using the name of God to make money or are living fabulous lifestyles in countries with poor economic situations. In this regard, Western missionaries and missionaries from other rich countries are under suspect. They are looked upon as having the best time of their lives, especially when compared to the early missionaries who suffered and died while preaching the word of God.

The Nigerian missionary from the RCCG has this to say with regard to money:

> Owing to the cost of living in this Region, setting up new churches has been quite challenging, financially. Costs include those of venues of meetings, purchase of musical and office equipment, as well as of required furniture items. In addition is the added cost of transporting members to church until they become grounded enough to make the effort of coming to church on their own.[36]

[36] RCCG Southern Africa 11 Region, *Church Planting* (www.rccgsa.org, 2002), checked: Dce 13, 2002.

5.2 Nationalism

Another big challenge to missions is nationalism. Indigenes always feel apprehensive at first when dealing with foreigners; so it takes some time for them to be fully accepted. The indigenous or national Christians, on the other hand, feel they do not need missionaries because of the way they perceive the missionaries.

The first issue is national pride: "We can take charge of ourselves; we don't need anybody to tell us what we should be doing." Even though we can understand this, such is not supposed to be, because we are all Christians. We should be working with one another instead of fighting with each another. We are supposed to look at one another as brothers and sisters working together in the vineyard of the Lord, not "our country." This complex feeling is not Biblical; because it is God who mandates us to go.

The second reason is that missionaries from the West, and other rich countries, have more money than the nationals and they live better. The nationals feel they are not treated well by the missionaries who work with them, even when they do the same work or work harder than the missionaries.

The third reason is that the nationals feel powerless, even when they are given positions, because they feel they are being dictated to. They feel their positions are not being recognized by the missionaries, who don't take them seriously, even though they are supposed to be under them. It is a matter of having a superiority and inferiority complex, both on the part of the missionary and the local.

5.3 Culture and Language

One of the most important elements in effective ministry is recognition of culture and language. The most successful missionaries are the ones who take the culture and language of the people they ministering to seriously. It is not easy to study a language, especially at an older age, but that is exactly what we must do if we want to be successful in our missions work.

The aforementioned challenges are beginning to cause mission organizations and churches to feel that foreign missionaries are no longer important, and they desire to have locals do the work instead of missionaries. It is right to encourage indigenes to be involved in local missions, but it is not Biblically or theologically right to stop sending

missionaries to other countries. We must not use our heads over and above the Biblical mandate and God's direction. Sometimes a foreign missionary can do ministry better than the national, so we must continue to send foreign missionaries to aid the locals, if needed.

6. Recommendation

The following are some recommendations that can help in making missions more effective and efficient. Some of the Nigerian missionaries have employed them in their ministry, as discussed earlier in this paper. Missionaries who want to be successful in their ministry in any part of the world should not hesitate to implement them.

Firstly, prospective missionaries should be given adequate training in the area of contextualization and indigenization of the Gospel. This is not about compromising, but it is about making the gospel relevant to the culture just like Paul (1 Cor. 9:19-22). Contextualization means you employ the local's way of doing things in your ministry. This will make your ministry to not be something foreign to the locals, who are always looking out to retain their identity as a people. This does not mean that you should employ any aspect of a culture that is directly opposed to the Christian faith; but that which is not, in any way contrary to the faith, should be utilized in the propagation of the message. The locals will feel more at home in that kind of situation. This means that the missionaries should first immerse themselves in the culture before attempting to share the Gospel (Acts 17:22-23). In short, one can easily understand the worldview of the people through their language and culture.

Secondly, missionaries should share with the locals whatever blessings they have, be it financial or otherwise, especially when they work together. The locals normally complain of the fact that they are doing ministry together, but the missionaries are living better lives than them. This is quite difficult to discuss, but missionaries must be aware of the fact that the locals are beginning to look at them as just using nationals for financial gain from their home countries.

Thirdly, missionaries should treat the locals with respect. Not because they must, but because they deserve it as equals in the eyes of God. Being a missionary should not make you look at the locals as inferior. Jesus never treated the Samaritans as inferior. He always tried to make the Israelites recognize the fact that if the Samaritans were living according to the will of God, they were better in the eyes of God than them.

Fourthly, missionaries who belong to a particular denomination that has international affiliation, and who are under the locals, must respect and support their programs. There is a tendency for some missionaries not to respect the local authority or subject themselves to it. Part of the reason for this is the fact, that the missionary feels he has more money and should run the local programs. This does not mean that missionaries cannot be leaders and have the locals obey them too; but, whoever is the leader should be treated as such.

Fifthly, locals should not look at missionaries as foreigners, but rather as co-workers in the vineyard of God. The Christian missionary can work anywhere he/she chooses. The world is our parish, if I may borrow from John Wesley. However, I don't really know how to say this so I will not be misunderstood. Therefore, whatever may be the case, I will say it: the local Christians should not treat the foreign missionary as an outsider, especially when he/she can perform responsibilities as well, and in some cases even better, than the locals.

Churches/mission organizations should continue to support sending foreign missionaries to other countries, instead of thinking only of supporting the locals. There are a lot of advantages in the use of local missionaries, but foreign missionaries can also be helpful in certain areas.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to say we are actually coming to the end of the age, because what was prophesied is coming to fruition. The Lord said: "This is what I will do in the last days…I will pour out my spirit on everyone" (Acts 2:17-21). This prophecy is coming to pass because all people are being used today to do the ministry of God.

Many are questioning the validity of Nigeria's church growth and involvement in missions because of the poor economic situation, social problems and lack of peace between Moslems and Christians. The fact is, nothing can stop God from doing what he wants to do and where he wants to do it. The lack of prosperity in any place does not necessarily suggest a lack of spirituality.

The equation of God with regard to material things is one issue that we need to deal with among Pentecostals. We often forget the sufferings of Christ, and Paul, and concentrate more on what we can get. Paul gave up a good life for a difficult life, yet he never regretted becoming a Christian.

Another disturbing trend among Pentecostals is the fact that many of them want to be independent from others and seeks to build his own ministry instead of working with others. This is not giving Pentecostals a good name. Though some people may see schism as necessary for church growth, undue quarrels and jealousy of one another is not a manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

In order for the Pentecostals to continue in the momentum they are now in, there has to be a good educational foundation to help sustain the tremendous ministry that has been entrusted to them. But, the question now is, what kind of education should the Pentecostals be getting? This is a very relevant question because there is the tendency to end up as liberals, with an undue quest for scholarship. Scholarship, if put in its right perspective is good, but when it begins to go against the basic tenets of Pentecostalism, there is reason to worry.

I fear that Pentecostals are beginning to forget that, what they are learning today in the name of scholarship was there before Pentecostalism, and it hampered growth of the church. They want to be recognized by others as scholars, so they seem to be enjoying every bit of knowledge they come across, just so they can be accepted into the circle of scholars. But I look at this as unstable or theological immaturity. Some are gradually drifting away from the truth and sinking into the ocean of worldly wisdom to their own detriment, all in the name of scholarship. A Scholar is not necessarily determined by how much he knows about facts, but how he thinks about things. Critical thinking is what most Pentecostal schools should be seeking to develop in their students, and that is what makes a scholar.

I would like to reiterate what Howard G. Hendricks has said: “Many things done in the name of scholarship are meaningless” (p. 88). Whatever we do in school should have a meaningful objective. The number of books you have read or the numbers of papers you have written do not necessarily make you a good Christian. Nobody is suggesting that we should stop reading books or writing papers, as I am doing now; but what we are saying is, seminary education should focus on what is relevant to ministry and missionary work.

The Pentecostal Church in Nigeria has grown and most of the missionaries are successful because they can defend what they believe and they had rigorous training that is faithful to the Pentecostal belief system. When we begin to be insecure with what we have and start looking for people to authenticate us, or looking for ways to substantiate what we believe by reason at the expense of faith, we are doomed for instability. Reason can never be substituted for anything. It is what

makes us human, and objective most of the time; but the use of reason cannot explain every mystery, because then there would be no mystery anymore. In the same manner, faith can never be substituted for anything else, because then there would be no such thing as Christian faith.

Missions has been made possible by faith and it is only faith that can sustain it. Let's keep our faith strong.