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# Growth of Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria: Lessons for World Evangelization

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## I Introduction

The astronomical growth of Pentecostal churches across the world remains a marvel to all, apologists, cynics and critics alike. More surprising is the fact that such a major development occurred almost unnoticed by religious and secular historians. Analyzing the population distribution of Christian denominations from *World Christian Encyclopedia*, David Barrett surmises that the numerical, and perhaps also the spiritual, centre of Christianity will shift away from western forms to this new type of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> By the term

'new type of Christianity', Barrett refers to the Pentecostal, Independent and Charismatic movements.<sup>2</sup>

Barrett's postulation is applicable to Nigeria and is corroborated by C. M. Ezekwugo's observation that 'the advent of this firebrand organ of spreading the gospel acts like a surging flood which carries everything along its path'.<sup>3</sup> The main thrust of this paper is to highlight the strategies that account for this unprecedented feat in the history of the Christian missionary movement in Nigeria and also to discuss the relevance of such strategies for evangelism at the global level.

## II Roots of Pentecostalism

The term 'Pentecostalism' refers to certain elements of the Christian life,

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1 W.J. Hollenweger, 'After Twenty Years Research on Pentecostalism', *International Review of Mission* Vol. LXXV No. 297, 3.

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2 Hollenweger, 'After Twenty Years', 3.

3 C.M. Ezekwugo, *Philosophical Concept* (Enugu: Agatha Series Publishers, 1992), 163.

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usually associated with the Feast of Pentecost and Christ's gift of the Spirit.<sup>4</sup> According to the Acts of the Apostles, the apostles received the full manifestation of the Spirit through prayer. It is also evident that in the Acts, charismatic activities were commonplace and were dynamically tailored to meet the needs of the moment.<sup>5</sup> For inspiration and vindication of its practices, the fledgling Christian fold often made allusions to the prophecy of Joel that the spirit would be poured forth on all flesh (Joel 2:28).<sup>6</sup> In a sense therefore, everybody in the early church was a Pentecostal.

However, over time, there was a diminution of the emphasis on the power and gifts of the Spirit. Instead, official church teaching put the stress on receiving the sacraments, the salvific value of suffering and a way of life that was predicated on a certain moral code.<sup>7</sup> According to V. M. Walsh, modern Pentecostalism began in the 1900s among non-Catholic groups. These groups, he said, 'rather than renewing the churches, led to the formation of Pentecostal Churches and to what has been called a third force in Christianity'.<sup>8</sup> The Pentecostal movement attempts to pattern church life according to the scriptural mode of the Acts of the Apostles in order to re-enact the power evident in the early church.<sup>9</sup>

Some features of Pentecostal churches which also apply to the Nigerian variant include:

- a. Baptism of the Spirit as something separate from and subsequent to the baptism of water.<sup>10</sup>
- b. Healing by prayer.<sup>11</sup>
- c. Personal holiness and community holiness.<sup>12</sup>
- d. A premium is placed on the book of Acts.<sup>13</sup>
- e. Emphasis on communion, friendship, care and interest for the members of the churches<sup>14</sup>
- f. Faith seen as a personal encounter with Jesus and salvation as a concrete, social and pragmatic experience.<sup>15</sup>

A thorough analysis of the dynamics of Pentecostal growth in Nigeria is still a major challenge. That notwithstanding, effort will be made in this paper to explore a range of issues which hopefully will serve as guide for evangelists in Nigeria and around the globe in similar socio-economic and political circumstances.

4 V.M. Walsh, *A key to Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church* (Holland: Key of David Publications, 1974), 4.

5 Ezekwugo, *Philosophical Concept*, 3.

6 Ezekwugo, *Philosophical Concept*, 3.

7 Ezekwugo, *Philosophical Concept*, 5.

8 Ezekwugo, *Philosophical Concept*, 5.

9 Ezekwugo, *Philosophical Concept*, 3.

10 P. S. Raj, 'The Influence of Pentecostal Teaching on some folk Christian Religions', *International Review of Mission* Vol. LXXV No. 297, 4.

11 P. S. Raj, 'The Influence of Pentecostal Teaching', 4.

12 P. S. Raj, 'The Influence of Pentecostal Teaching', 44.

13 P. S. Raj, 'The Influence of Pentecostal Teaching', 42.

14 A.G. Nnamani, *The New Religious Movements in Nigeria: Pentecostalism in Perspective* (Benin City: Ava Publishers, 2007), 332.

15 Nnamani, *The New Religious Movements*, 332.

### III Features of Pentecostalism

#### 1 The application of the Gospel

G. A. Akinola attributes the growth of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria in the 1980s to two forces, namely: a rapid decline in the country's socio-economic circumstances and a world view which encourages a literal application of biblical injunctions and doctrines as solutions to local problems.<sup>16</sup> Unlike the mainline churches that highlight the seeming contradiction between the stark realities of earthly life and the chances of a heavenly abode (as illustrated by the parable of the camel passing through the needle's eye), the Pentecostal fold has little problem reconciling both. Consequently, the Pentecostal churches have a mass appeal as people could easily identify with such practical Christianity. Indeed, suffering humanity can hardly be impressed by the promise of a blissful hereafter in the face of an excruciating earthly situation. A practical demonstration of love and care for their present plight will undoubtedly make them amenable to the gospel message. This is an area where the Pentecostal movement surpasses the more traditional denominations.

It is true that in its nascent stages, the early Christian missionaries realized the importance of social welfare activities as a positive tool for evangelism. Nevertheless, there was a progressive decline in the employment of these tools as the various churches entrenched themselves; there also developed a certain aloofness of the clergy

from the laity. This gap is what the Pentecostals try to bridge, and in doing so have won over a great number of converts from the other churches.

It is therefore wise that missionaries/evangelists pay attention to the peculiar needs of the people among whom they hope to make converts. For instance, missionary organizations working in South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria and other countries which are ravaged by HIV/AIDS will do well if they arm themselves with anti-retroviral drugs for distribution to those who are afflicted with the ailment and pay attention to their peculiar needs. In the same vein, renewed interest by the World Council of Churches (WCC) to broker a peace settlement between the Sudanese government and Southern Sudan, peopled mostly by Christians and animists, will no doubt elicit sympathy for Christianity among the animists.<sup>17</sup>

While it is needful to adapt the presentation of the gospel to the hearers' prevailing situation, caution is necessary. Attempts by some Pentecostal pastors to keep and satisfy their members have led them to the extreme of adding extra-biblical modes of worship and ministry. In an obvious expression of concern, Amuluche Nnamani bemoaned the fact that, despite the popularity of Pentecostalism, it suffers from inclusive, hasty and ambivalent appropriation of the African culture. If not addressed, this would lead to a retrogressive restoration of some negative elements of the African culture.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> G.A. Akinola, 'Religion and the Intellectual Climate in a Nigerian University', *The Scholar*, Vol. 2, 17.

<sup>17</sup> K. Prah 'Afro – Arab War in the Sudan; African Longest War and its Roots', *The Scholar*, Vol. 42-43.

<sup>18</sup> J. S. Mbiti, *Introduction of African Religion*

In fact, there are testimonies or information from disaffected members of Pentecostal groups to the effect that leaders of some of these churches have alliances with witches and wizards. They engage in spiritism and occultism in order to achieve their desired goals of numerical increase, which, of course, translates to more money, power and prestige. In 2004, for instance, Chris Okotie, a prominent Pentecostal church founder, was quoted as having denounced Chris Oyakhilomen, another church founder, for meddling with the occult because of the latter's association with T. B. Joshua whose miracles had become the subject of controversy. The scandal and animosity generated by the mudslinging in 2004 prompted the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC), the country's broadcast regulatory body, to ban the display of miracles in the electronic media.<sup>19</sup> The incident provided mainline churches with what appeared to be a much needed opportunity to discredit the Pentecostal movement in Nigeria.

## 2 Vestiges of traditional rituals

Africans like to celebrate life, and therefore they make much of events in the everyday life of the individual and community. Traditionally, these celebrations involve sacrifices and offerings such as animals, food, tools and money.<sup>20</sup> African converts who hitherto had not embraced any Christian de-

nomination find a home in Pentecostal doctrines.

Voluntary offerings and sacrifices earlier made to ancestors, divinities and spiritual forces are now offered to God who is believed to be omnipotent. Annual In-gathering, or Harvest Thanksgiving, replaces the New Yam festival while baptism and Holy Communion take the place of traditional initiation and communal meals with which the people are familiar. Prayer patterns are not any different. Speaking in tongues, visions, dreams, prophecies are no strangers to African cosmology; people merely substitute the God of the Bible for the ancestors and deities.

## 3 Worship a channel for emotional release

In his book, *Introduction to African Religion*, J. S. Mbiti observes that a lot of traditional African music and songs deal with spiritual ideas and practices. The religious rituals, ceremonies and festivals are always accompanied by music, singing and sometimes dancing.<sup>21</sup> Music, he says, gives an outlet to the religious passions of the people and it is a powerful means of communication in African traditional life.<sup>22</sup>

One attraction of the Pentecostal churches is the perfect synthesis of African music with the Christian genre. The rhythm of drum, flute, rattle, whistle and other instruments pervades

(London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1975), 19.

19 J.S. Mbiti, *NewsWatch*, 9 April, 2004, 12-17.

20 J.S. Mbiti, *Introduction of African Religion*, 24.

21 A. G. Nnamani, 'The Ambivalent Impact of Pentecostalism in Inculturation' in A. G. Nnamani (ed) *New Religious Movements: Pentecostalism in Perspective* (Benin City: Ava Publishers, 2007), 245.

22 *NewsWatch*, 19 April 2004, 2-17.

church premises and crusade venues. C. M. Ezekwugo made an apt observation when he said, '[I]f you do not like what they are doing, do not attend their crusades; if you do, you will be carried along with them, clapping hands and praising God.'<sup>23</sup> American Southern Gospel music, which is in vogue in Nigeria and which has become a potent tool for evangelism, was popularized by the Pentecostal movement. It will for a long time remain a source of attraction to Pentecostal congregations.

This is especially so in Nigeria where night clubs manage only to break even owing to frequent internal security challenges and where the majority live on less than a dollar per day. Africa and the Caribbean lands are places where this form of evangelism could be effective, given their historical and cultural affinity.

#### 4 Individual ownership and commitment

In most cases, Pentecostal churches are founded by individuals, the level of their charisma determining the growth rate of the church. They take care of the day-to-day administration of the church and may delegate jobs to junior officers who are themselves potential church founders. Decision making is easy and fast as the leader may not need to consult anybody else. The commitment of the Pastor, General Overseer, President, Founder, Spiritual Head or General Superintendent (as he may be addressed) is total, as his fortune, and that of his family, is intricately tied to the church. Unlike the mainline churches where the priest is

contracted and subject to retirement, Pentecostal church founders remain in charge of the church until death. It is not uncommon these days that at the death of a church founder, the wife, son, or a very close relative steps into his shoes as successor.

Individual church ownership is not without abuses. There is the danger of over-centralization of authority which exposes the church to the same pitfalls perceived in the mainline churches. Added to this there are the challenges of accountability. For instance, in Jude Ukaga's opinion, the crisis between Archbishop Benson Idahosa, founder of the Church of God Mission, and his foremost pastors had economic undertones. The senior pastors, Ukaga said, struggled in vain to have an input into the manner in which the huge wealth which accrued to the church was used. For Ukaga, the controversial court cases and threats to life and church properties were consequences of the frustration which became the lot of these people.<sup>24</sup> Notwithstanding, Idahosa's assistance, in the form of financial grants and equipment to selected individuals who have shown genuine interest in evangelical work, will expand the frontiers of evangelism in the 21st century.

#### 5 Testimonies reinforce faith

Personal experience and testimonies play an integral role in the Pentecostal worship service. Popular testimonies include:

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<sup>24</sup> J. C. Ukaga, cited in W.E Ehianu, 'Benson Idahosa and the Church of God Mission: An Appraisal' in *EPHA*, Ekpoma Journal of Religious Studies Vol. 4, Nos 1 and 2 2002, 216.

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<sup>23</sup> Ezekwugo, *Philosophical Concept*, 163.

- 'I was sick, the doctor was helpless, I came to the church, today I'm well';
- 'I was barren, pastor prayed for me, now I have children';
- 'I was jobless, pastor prayed for me, now I have a job';
- 'I am the only survivor in an accident that claimed many lives.'

Miracles are attributed to the pastor's prayers to God. Sermons are interspersed with testimonies of the pastor's exploits and buttressed with praise songs. In discussing the growth of Pentecostalism in Africa, for instance, Elizabeth Ezenweke cites Dempster, Klans and Peterson as saying:

Pentecostals all over the world, but especially in the third world, see the role of healing as good news for the poor and afflicted. Early twentieth century Pentecostal newsletters and periodicals abounded with thousands of testimonies to physical healing, exorcism and deliverances.<sup>25</sup>

The new-comer or visitor to the church is obliged to cast doubts aside and join the bandwagon; clapping away sorrows, replacing defeat with victory and despair with hope and faith.<sup>26</sup> The presentation of testimonies in Pentecostal church gatherings align with the African mindset which celebrates practical and visible demonstration of metaphysical powers. However, the fact

that some persons frequent churches and crusade grounds seeking miracles for problems purportedly already solved and for which testimonies were made, casts doubt on the genuineness of Pentecostal miracles. Miracles, as in the early church, could constitute a source of strength and growth in a church. However, when abused, they could become a source of discord, embarrassment and delusion as was the case with Montanism in the early church.

The vehement claims in Pentecostal churches to miracles and the teaching that 'God is not a poor God' and that all his followers must, therefore, be prosperous materially, physically and spiritually seem to run contrary to the actual socio-economic conditions of most adherents of Pentecostal churches. The attention of most preachers is on the believer, who must pray, fast and 'sow seed'. They do not seem to be interested in addressing the reasons for the socio-economic and political problems of Nigeria.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, reliance on miracles would begin to pale with improvements in the economy. This is because an improved economy implies more and better jobs, health care and security for which people currently seek miracles.

## 6 The Pentecostal sermon

The aim of every public speaker is to influence the hearer. The public speaker, therefore, chooses his words and organizes his presentation in such a way that in the end, the feelings,

25 E. Ezewenke, J. E. Madu, 'Skin- Deep Christianity: The Outcome of Evangelization Cultural Neglect and Upsurge of Pentecostalism' in A. G. Nnamani (ed), *New Religious movements*, 278.

26 Ezekwugo, *Philosophical Concept*, 163.

27 C. O. Isiramen, 'Pentecostalism in the society: A Therapy or Delusion', A. G. Nnamani (ed) *The New Religious Movements*, 287.

perceptions and convictions of the audience are altered. Ezejideaku has observed that the success of Pentecostalism in Nigeria may be traced to the edge Pentecostal pastors seem to have over their mainline counterparts in exploiting the potentials of language in their sermon. Such potentials, he said, include repetitions, focusing, phono-aesthetic devices, psycho-stylistic strategy, and rhetorical questions among others.<sup>28</sup> These serve to inspire, persuade, inform and enhance memorability and audience participation.

Though the performance of miracles is a significant factor in Pentecostal success, these miracles are dependent on language since they usually come at the end of penetrating sermons whose aim is to put the congregation into the spiritual state in which miracles can take place.

The effectiveness of the Pentecostal sermon has become so outstanding that the mainstream denominations have had to adopt the same strategies to minimize their loss of members to these groups.<sup>29</sup>

In assessing the overall quality of Pentecostal preaching, and noting that a good sermon is known by the impact it makes on the audience, some questions need to be asked: how deeply has Christianity penetrated the minds of Pentecostal Christians as shown by their beliefs and attitudes in relation to the commandments of God? Has Pentecostalism produced better Christians at home, the work place and in society?

A sermon should not only produce a large following but produce Christians who are indeed 'born again' in their private and public lives.

### 7 Leadership skills by observation and participation

In his book, *History of Education in Nigeria*, Fafunwa posits that

Children learnt by doing, that is to say, children and adolescents were engaged in participatory education through ceremonies, rituals, recitation and demonstration.<sup>30</sup>

This assertion is largely true with respect to accession to leadership positions in Pentecostal churches. In line with informal traditional education in Africa, pastoral skills come through informal apprenticeship to a senior pastor. Until recently, most Pentecostal pastors had scanty education. In fact, formal Bible training was rarely required for ordination. The gate was thus opened for all to enter the ministry, quite unlike what obtains in the non-Pentecostal churches where entry requirements limit the number of entrants. In short, some Pentecostal pastors obtain a basic school certificate and attend Bible college when already on the field.

Since the training period of the Pentecostal clergy is short, their availability is correspondingly rapid, resulting in a good number of labourers in the ministry. This is in contrast with mainline churches where stringent admission requirements into Bible colleges

28 E.U.C. Ezejideaku, 'The Rhetoric of Pentecostal Homiletics in Nigeria', *Nigerian Journal of the Humanities* No 13, (2006), 22.

29 Ezejideaku, 'The Rhetoric of Pentecostal Homiletics', 22.

30 A.B. Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1974), 15–16.

limit entrance which then translates to a dearth of manpower in the vineyard. On the debit side is the danger of letting loose half-baked preachers into a religiously pluralistic and volatile environment. Some episodes of religious violence in the country have been linked to unguarded utterances of zealous but indiscreet preachers.

Missionary organizations that are faced with the problem of inadequate personnel should relax their admission requirements into the seminaries and then make provision for in-service training to compensate.

### 8 Crusades

Crusades are a common sight in Nigeria. They are either organized to announce the opening of a new branch, or to inaugurate a new church, or to inform the public of an up-coming programme, or for general spiritual revival. For instance, on the 6 December 2002, Christ Embassy had a crusade which was tagged 'Night of Bliss'. The venue was the National Stadium, Surulere, Lagos. Over 500,000 people were in attendance, a record for recent times. For the Pentecostals, Christian faith is the only faith for all mankind. Speakers and preachers speak with such a conviction and faith that they give the impression of a close communion with God. Under such circumstances, it is difficult to resist an altar call to be born again and submit one's life to Christ.

### 9 Empowerment of women

One of the distinctive features of Pentecostal churches is the attention that is given to women. Even though mainline churches in Nigeria preach

equality of sexes, men usually hold the principal positions of authority. Pentecostal churches, like the African indigenous church organizations, have been exceptional in encouraging women to participate in the ministry of the church. Some women have founded, or hold leadership positions in, churches in Nigeria.<sup>31</sup> In the list are Evangelist Eunice Osagiede (Spirit and Life Bible Church), Archbishop Magaret Benson Idahosa (Church of God Mission), Evangelist Helen Ukpabio (Liberty Gospel Church) and several others.

Pentecostals accept the 'common priesthood of believers'. Men and women may be called to preach and may do so with equal authority with the Bible in their hands. This gives a public role and great empowerment to women. They are as entitled to proclaim the faith as their male counterparts. Furthermore, Pentecostal women attain leadership status as prophetesses, evangelists, deaconesses and preachers. In some cultures, only women can theoretically bring the gospel to pagan women who must remain in *Purdah*, for men are not allowed to approach them. The woman evangelist, as homemaker and example of God's liberating grace, has the singular opportunity of manifesting to the heathen world what God can do for women.

Pentecostalism's scriptural notion of equality before Christ more directly contradicts female subordination and encourages more egalitarian relations within marriage. In this way, Pentecostals harness the evangelical energy of women, who in most cases constitute

31 D. Ayegboyin, S. A. Ishola, *African Indigenous Churches: An Historical Perspective* (Lagos: Greater Heights Publications, 1997), 156.

the majority in the church, to their advantage. Such offices place on them an obligation of commitment to the work of evangelism.<sup>32</sup>

### 10 Electronic and print media

P. N. Van Der Laan cites Boerwinkel as saying, 'one must not count Pentecostals but weigh them; every one of them is an evangelist in his own right'.<sup>33</sup> Every means of communication is employed to communicate the gospel message. Church programmes feature regularly on television and radio as well as in newspapers and magazines. Posters of different churches with different messages of hope, or announcing church services or crusades, adorn the walls in every street of the towns and villages. Evangelical groups visit market places, hospitals, prisons, motor parks, hotels, where they distribute tracts and leaflets and stress the urgency of Christ's coming and the imperative of repentance.<sup>34</sup>

Asonzeh Ukah has observed that the Pentecostal churches have been most active in exploring the medium of video films to dramatize and exhibit their practices, major figures and the organization's head. Almost all Pentecostal churches are involved in the

commercial production of videos. The first church to be so involved was the Mount Zion Faith Ministries (MZFM), established in 1985 which produced its first video in 1990.<sup>35</sup>

Recognizing the evangelistic potential inherent in the use of video films in soul-winning, other churches quickly adopted the same practice. Thus, by the mid-1990s there was the flowering of such groups as Kay Technical, based in Ibadan, Maranatha Powerhouse, established by The Redeem Evangelical Mission (TREM) and based in Lagos, and Liberty Films and Music Plaza (LFMP) established in 1998 by Liberty Foundation Gospel Ministries (LFGM).<sup>36</sup>

In addition, church members are encouraged to buy, sell or give out copies of such films to friends as part of their contribution to evangelism – for which they may expect rewards from God. The use of video films by Pentecostal organizations enhances their visibility and provides them with a competitive edge over other actors on the mission field.

### 11 Reception and follow-up of new members

In African culture, premium is placed on hospitality. The arrival of an important guest to a family is announced in the neighbourhood, and neighbours come out to accord the visitor a warm reception. In the liturgy of Pentecostal

32 P.N. Van Dar Laan, 'Dynamics in Pentecostal Mission: A Dutch Perspective', *International Review of Mission*. Vol. LXXV No. 297, 49.

33 Van Dar Laan, 'Dynamics in Pentecostal Mission', 49.

34 AFK UKAH, 'Pentecostal, Religious Expression and the City: Lessons from the Nigerian Bible Belt' in P. Probst et al (eds), *Between Resistance and Expansion, Explorations of Local Vitality in Africa* (Munchen: Let Verlag, 2004), 432.

35 AFK UKAH, 'Pentecostal, Religious Expression and the City', 432.

36 S.U. Erivwo, 'The Hound of Heaven and the Children of Men', Text of an Inaugural lecture delivered at the Bendel State University, Ekpoma 1987, 50.

churches, the same holds true. Time is set aside to welcome new comers. In an atmosphere soaked with excitement, members are requested to introduce themselves, give their names and occupations; home and workplace addresses are recorded and information given to the evangelism committee of the church for follow-up. With on-going visits by the committee and at times the church pastor, and the display of love exemplified in the commitment to ameliorate the new comers' problems, what may have begun as a trial visit could translate into a genuine desire for membership.

## 12 Social benefits

Pentecostal organization reflects the age-old extended family system in Africa. Commenting on the reality of love among Pentecostals, Ezekwugo observes that they 'can easily surrender their beds to fellow church members while they and their wives sleep on the bare floor'.<sup>37</sup> In prosperity and adversity, there is a strong display of solidarity. A popular song among them translated, in English, says:

Where is benefit?  
Benefit is in heaven  
He who has no mother  
Let him start attending church  
He gets father  
He gets mother  
He gets relatives

As a result of brotherliness, indigent men could have their marriage financed by the church or wealthy church members. Sisters could equally have husbands arranged for them. The

bereaved are given financial and moral support; the jobless are given financial assistance to undertake small scale business. The sick are visited with gifts, and a special offering is instituted for widows and orphans. Showing such love and concern knits members of the church together in a tight bond of fellowship.

While we admit that charity and concern for one another's welfare constitute an integral part of the Christian life, its limitations must not be overlooked. It reminds one of Jesus' rebuke to his followers whom he accused of following him, 'not because ye saw the miracles but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled' (John 6:26 KJV); of course, when the bread was no longer forthcoming many of them deserted him. When converts are won and sustained through acts of charity, they tend to see the church as a social insurance institution and are therefore amenable to the highest bidder. It is little wonder denominational boundaries are very fluid for most Pentecostal adherents.

With the present move by government to introduce social welfare programmes, Pentecostal groups in Nigeria might well begin to lose what appears to be a potent instrument of evangelism.

## 13 Psychological refuge

Emmanuel Ezejideaku attributes the flowering of Pentecostal churches in Igbo land, which he said were rarely known before the Nigerian Civil War (1967 -1970), to the search for psychological relief. During the war, people who were rich became poor; and many were devastated, having lost their dear

37 Ezekwugo, *Philosophical Concept*, 163.

ones. There was a serious decay of the social supports and infrastructure; the future was bleak as Igbo land was consigned to the status of a conquered territory. In this situation, there was the frenzied search for happiness, socio-psychological expression and spiritual security.

With claims to have answers to these needs, many Igbo identified with the Pentecostal movement. Moreover, as Ezejideaku has observed, the environment of Pentecostal worship was preferred by many because they created more happiness than the mainline patterns which were solemn and systematized.

Igbos who could not leave the mainline churches took solace in social clubs, which were experiencing an upsurge. Some of these clubs include: People's Club of Nigeria, Star Club of Nigeria and *Nwanne Di Namba* (meaning a brother could be found in a strange or foreign land).<sup>38</sup>

The growth and significance of any religious movement depend largely on the prevailing issues of the day. Thus, an evangelist must be visionary, proactive, and be able to identify and to employ the right strategy for every situation.

#### IV Lessons to be Learned

The Pentecostals are the most combative, aggressive and apparently fanatical members of the family of Christendom. Equally true is the fact that the growth of Pentecostal churches is gen-

erally recognized as the most remarkable development in contemporary mission history. However, it must be recognized that religious vitality and visibility do not necessarily translate into religious growth. In other words, numerical growth and increased contextualization of religion might have been achieved at a price—lack of depth.

Notwithstanding, Pentecostalism has come to stay in Nigeria. There are positive and negative elements of the phenomenon. But as the Latins say, *abusus non tollit usus* (abuse does not forbid use). Mainline churches in Nigeria and indeed evangelicals elsewhere should be able to evaluate the features of the movement: take away the bath water and retain the baby.<sup>39</sup> Echema's admonition is apposite as caution, counsel and conclusion:

The time has come when we must take into account all that is positive in the Pentecostal Movement if we hope to make progress in the areas of liturgical renewal, inter-faith dialogue, enculturation of Christianity, the ministry of healing, especially towards psychotics and addicts, and new approaches to church union and ecumenism. The age of antagonism, indifference and neglect or even arrogance is over.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> I. K. E. Oraegbulam, 'Meeting the Challenges of Pentecostalism in the Seminary Formation in Nigeria Today' in A. G. N. Nnamani (ed), *The New Religious Movements*, 105.

<sup>40</sup> E.U Dim, 'New Religious Movements: Notes For Seminary Formation' in A.G. Nnamani (ed), *The New Religious Movements*, 116.

<sup>38</sup> Ezejideaku, Personal Interview.