Paradigm Shift in the Methodist Charismatic Praxis in Nigeria

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Abstract

Charismatising Methodism in the Diocese of Bori was meant to determine how Methodist Church Nigeria is introducing Charismatic gifts in order to be relevant in the contemporary society and to examine the process of Charismatising Methodism in the Diocese of Bori. It has been observed recently that most mainline churches are losing their members to the Pentecostals which raises a great concern among the Methodists and this study sought to explain the reasons the mainline churches are becoming empty and why the Pentecostals proved more attractive to the women and youths and to justify how Pentecostals differ from Mainliners in their demographic characteristic and their church involvement utilizing Allen Heaton Anderson Conceptual Framework. Data were collected through secondary and primary sources. Findings revealed that there were enough elements of charismatic gifts operational in Methodist church with its attendant of scriptural holiness, but there was a drift away the moment Methodist church became institutionalized which gave the Pentecostal movement charismatic leverage over the Methodist Church. The research concludes that Pentecostalism will be more progressive than mainline churches in Nigeria and it will continue to have impact on them and recommended that the Mainline churches in Nigeria, especially the Methodist should return to the Contextual Charismatic Christianity of her founding fathers should they want to be relevant in the contemporary society and therefore, contributes to knowledge that there is continuity in change.

Keywords: Paradigm Shift, Methodist, Charismatic Praxis.

Introduction

Christianity in Nigeria has witnessed some vibrancy in the last four decades with the rise and growth of Pentecostalism and consequent charismatic movement. Pentecostalism has provided a contextualized Christianity in Africa as a whole, and has the potential of shaping world Christianity. Anderson (2004:122) has particularly noted the ability of African Pentecostalism to adapt to and fulfill religious aspiration that continues to be its main strength. Nigeria could be described as the major hub of Pentecostal force in Africa. Pentecostal and charismatic waves in Nigeria have gone trans-national with influences around the world. Pentecostalism is a movement within Christianity that emphasizes the

gifts and manifestation of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. It has been described by many western scholars to be a very fast growing movement within Christian theology and practice as we know it today. They predict that Charismatism will take over other Christian denominations in the not too distant future as it seems to be growing fast. The prediction of these scholars may very well apply to Nigeria, as Gaiya (2004:261) asserts that the fastest growing churches in Nigeria are the Pentecostal and charismatic churches, which include neo-Pentecostal churches.

In Nigeria, charismatic and Pentecostal churches appear to be gaining more popularity than mainline churches. The spate of television adverts, radio jingles and handbills inviting people to Pentecostal services or events, presupposes that the adverts are a bid at reaching their members. The large turnouts reported at these events evidence that charimatism in Nigeria is worth empirical investigation. Jenkins (2002) argues that demographic changes within Christianity will have implications for the society in religious practice and even politics. If this true, and if this argument could be applicable to Nigeria, then it is imperative to identify the demographic characteristics of church goers with a bid to make relevant and significant projections about church involvement. Pentecostals and Charismatic movements now represent 12% of Africa's population and this includes classical Pentecostal denominations such as The Apostolic church and The Apostolic Faith Mission that were formed or founded in the early 20th century, as well as the Assemblies of God which came in to Nigeria in 1939 through Kafancham. Charismatic denominations also include the recently formed churches or the neo-Pentecostal churches in Nigeria, such as the Deeper Life Bible Church which began a University campus fellowship in 1973 and also The Redeemed Christian church of God and The Living Faith Church worldwide. Guduku (2006) posits that Pentecostalism in Nigeria can be traced back to the Aladura sect who relied on faith healing and the word of faith. These elements are a basic feature of the Pentecostal church today. He asserts that the growth of Pentecostalism in Nigeria can be attributed to the media, miracles of healing, egalitarianism and the socio-political reality of the country among other factors.

The socio-political reality of the Nigerian state has been viewed by many, among them Ngwodo and Obiora (1998), to be one of the major determinants of Pentecostal and charismatic growth in Nigeria. Pentecostalism is popularly referred to as the "health and wealth" grouped which may be seen as meeting the socioeconomic needs of the middle and lower class in Nigeria. Hanks (2004) asserts that the Pentecostal and charismatic move, the third force after Catholicism and Protestantism, has continued to grow with large number of converts especially in the developing world, as it has an appeal to mainly poorest people and due to its emphasis on the gifts of the spirit. It is all too easy, in the

words of Lamin (2008), for westerners to observe African Pentecostalism from a distance and be critical of their sometimes-bizarre manifestations and emphases on health and wealth in midst of a poverty-ravished continent. World Christianity underwent tremendous shifts in both geographical location and character during the twentieth century. Lamin further asserts that charismatic Christianity is largely responsible for the dramatic shift in the religion's center of gravity.

Jenkins (2007) speculates that Pentecostal and independent churches will soon represent a far larger segment of global Christianity, and just conceivably a majority, resulting in Pentecostalism being perhaps the most successful social movement of the past century. The many varieties of Pentecostalism have contributed to the reshaping of the nature of global religion itself, with enormous implications. The future of global religion is affected by this seismic change in the character of the Christian faith. It is no coincidence southward shift in Christianity's center of gravity over the twentieth century has coincided with the emergence and expansion of Pentecostalism. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Nigeria (Africa).

Pentecostalism/Charismatism is not a homogeneous movement, for there are literally thousands of different Pentecostal denominations, many independent of these forms founded in Europe and America at the start of the twentieth century. The global south has seen a remarkable expansion of charismatic forms of Christianity in the last century, an expansion that has altered global religious demographics considerably. In Nigeria, as in Africa generally and Latin America and Asia, many large urban mega churches have arisen and much of the rapid growth in Christianity there has come among those who have a Pentecostal orientation. Increasingly, complex and multifarious networks of new independent churches have mushroomed in recent years, making them possibly the largest grouping within Pentecostalism/Charismatism as a whole. The recent history of Pentecostalism is littered with revival movements causing schisms that have become its defining feature.

In the light of the above, Todd (2012) contended that there are many reasons for the emergence and growth of Pentecostalism in Africa and any attempt to enumerate these runs, the risk of reductionism. Pentecostalism/Charismatism is above all a form of Christian mission with a transnational orientation based on personal enterprise, the ubiquitous voluntarism of its membership, and the constant multiplication of multi-centered, variegated organizations whose primary purpose is to evangelize and spread their influence worldwide. These constant efforts to expand and proselytize are underpinned by a firm belief in the Bible as an independent source of authority, one that

resonates with local customs and relates better to a spiritual and holistic worldview- and by theological convictions based on a common experience of the spirit who empowers believers' mission to the world. The personal conversion of individuals is the goal of these efforts. To their credit, Pentecostal missionaries, whether African or foreign, were themselves largely untrained and uneducated and practiced "indigenous church" principles. They quickly found and trained thousands of local leaders, who took the "full gospel" much further than they had. It was Douglas (2011) who aptly observed that contemporary Charismatic/Pentecostalism is the product of a long process of development with precedents going back to a much earlier time. Its history was in continuity with the revivalist movements out of which it emerged in the early twentieth century. Its mission was to liberate very ordinary people from colonial ecclesiastical hegemony and free women from male patriarchy. It encouraged free enterprise in a global religious market. The revival/charismatic movement challenged western hegemony and created a multitude of new indigenous churches- a type of Christianity in local idiom that was a cultural protest movement, but was also bound to include emphases on power to overcome an evil spirit world and manifestations of the miraculous. Charismatism/Pentecostalism addressed allegations of both the foreignness and the irrelevance of Christianity in African societies. With its emphasis on the priesthood of all true believers, it broke down barriers of race, gender, and class, and challenged the exclusive preserves of ordained male, foreign clergy; of course, this development included multiple schisms that, while increasing division, also proliferated local leadership and encourages religious competition. One of the main reasons for the growth of Pentecostalism/Charismatism has been its ability to adapt itself to different cultures and societies and give contextualized expressions to Christianity. These are described and expressed in their mode of energetic and energizing worship and liturgies, music and dance, prayer with the free use of the emotions and in communities of concerned and committed believers. Pentecostals are becoming more socially aware and active in efforts to relieve poverty and disease. Of all Christian expressions, Pentecostalism has an ability to transpose itself into local African cultures and religions effortlessly, because of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual calling of leaders who do not have to be formally educated in church dogma. This often leads to schism, but also assists multiplication. In particular, the miraculous have assisted Pentecostalism in its appeal to a world where supernatural events are taken for granted.

In his book, fire from Heaven: The rise of Pentecostal spirituality and the Reshaping of religion in the twenty-first century; Harvey (1995) noticed that Pentecostalism developed its own characteristics and identities in Nigeria without losing its transnational connections. The widespread use of mass media, the setting up of new networks that often incorporate the word "international' in their titles, frequent conferences with international

speakers that reinforce trans-nationalism and the growth of churches that provide total environments for members-these are all features of this multidimensional Pentecostalism which promotes this global meta-culture constantly. Although socio-political and historical factors undoubtedly had a role in the spread of Pentecostal Christianity, religious and ideological factors were probably more significant. The ability of Pentecostalism to adapt to and fulfill people's religious aspirations continues to be its strength. A belief in a divine encounter and the involvement or breaking through of the sacred into the mundane, including healing from sickness, deliverance from hostile evil forces, and perhaps above all, a heady and spontaneous spirituality that refuse to separate "spiritual" from "Physical" or "sacred" from "secular" are all important factors in charismatic/Pentecostalism's growth. It has been able to tap into ancient religious traditions with one eye on the changing world of modernity. This combination of the old with new has enabled it to attract people who relate to both these worlds. Many Pentecostal groups, including some churches in Europe and Latin America and most of the Charismatics, do not have a doctrine of the "initial evidence" of tongues. In Africa and Asia even greater divergences are to be found. Some churches, like the Pentecostal-type, "spirit" or so-called "prophet-healing" ACIs, use more ritual symbolism in their liturgy than other Pentecostals do, including the use of holy water, oil and other symbols in healing services. Anderson (1979) summed up by saying that the term Pentecostalism is appropriate for describing all churches and movement globally that emphasizes the working of the gifts of the spirit, both on phenomenological and theological grounds-although not without qualification. A broader definition should emphasize Pentecostalism ability to incarnate the gospel in different cultural forms. This broad use of Pentecostal will often include the terms "charismatic" and "Neo-charismatic", but there will be times when "charismatic" will refer more narrowly to Pentecostal experience in mainline churches. In this regard, Anderson (2013) who observes that whereas western classical Pentecostals usually see themselves in terms of the doctrine of "initial evidence", Pentecostalism is more correctly seen in a much broader context as a movement concerned primarily with the experience, of the working of the Holy Spirit and the practice of spiritual gifts. Lately some Methodist churches have become again very charismatic after long period of drifting away and while some still remain stuck in their normal liturgy and doctrine.

It is against this backdrop that the researcher dived into finding out the extent Charismatism has taken root in the Methodist church in Bori.

It is of note that the contemporary Pentecostalism and Charismatic movements beginning in 1970s was born reminiscent of those of the early nineteenth century Second Great Awakenings in North America, in which new religious innovators democratized access to

God by encouraging religious spontaneity and by refusing to deter to the interpretation of scripture of learned theologians. Charismatism had been called by God to wage the war for which the historic mission churches had, presumably, not been able to take responsibility. Many members of these mission churches believed that the world is full of battles (not physical), hence an aggressive means of relationship (worship) inspired by the spirit is greatly needed; what can be done to meet up with this seeming worrisome and disturbing air Constance or situation? Dependent, they say, on the usual mainline churches known doctrine/liturgy is glaringly no longer enough shield against the forces of this wicked world. There are "war" activities in the spiritual realm which needed supernatural weapon. The "war" is not just economic or moral. Supernatural agents were believed to have instigated that "war" and the new charismatics in Methodist church felt that what was needed to fight it was a new army of persons-God's end time militia, who are to assume their spiritual positions and responsibilities.

In overt reference to the role of the contemporary charismatism as far as church life is concerned, Anaba (2005) writes that some mainline churches exist for continuity but the charismatics were born for change. In a spirit of disdain for church tradition similar to that of Methodist, the emerging leadership of charismatic churches castigated the traditional mission churches as cold, dead, bookish, and near moribund institutions that had no sense of the supernatural. The doctrine of these mainline churches is dismissed as having lost sight of God's purposes for the contemporary Christians. An important argument put forward is the just as the spirit of God moved over chaos and restored order; the church also needed new direction, instruction, training and motivation. Again, the legitimacy of unbelieving ministers with bookish theological training pasturing God's flock is called into question. The born-again within this Methodist were continually challenged to come out of them and be charismatic to witness the move of the spirit. The new charismatics thus challenged the traditions of the Methodist and what they termed dry denominationalism that characterized the older ecclesiology. The established churches (Methodist) with their good social standing had become too ceremonial and had thereby lost their power and spirituality. The implications of these observations for Methodist in Bori are profound for, as Hodges (2015) asserts that the faith which charismatic people have is the ability of the Holy Spirit to give spiritual gifts to the common people has risen up a host of charismatic preachers and church leaders of unusual spiritual ability. Such democratization of spiritual gifts, as Hodges further notes, played a major role in the spectacular spread of Pentecostalism and charismatic practices. Regrettably, the historic mission church has been living mostly on past glory. The high level of clericalism and the routine processes of incorporation into the church through confirmation and first communion has worsened the situation and created a large body of nominal Christians for whom religious

experiences of the born-again type were alien. In the process, the churches had alienated a whole generation of young people, whose denominational loyalties had been eroded through years of association with charismatism, causing drift of young people from Methodist church to Pentecostals for the move of the spirit in their lives.

Different people are likely to respond differently when faced with the same situation; and in terms of relationships with others, all human beings could be compared to builders, while some are building bridges, others are building walls of separation; furthermore, others are blind builders who build haphazardly and come up with something that is hard or even impossible to describe. In any case, all are builders. This is also true for the various responses to influence or incursion of charismatism into Methodist churches. While some out rightly reject anything Pentecostal for reasons which may include seeing the movement as heretical or threatening their own church tradition, others carefully accept and adopt biblically based charismatic practices to enrich their existing church tradition and yet, others neither out rightly reject nor consciously accept charismatic practices. On the contrary they are just careless about it.

Pentecostalism/Charismatism currently is the most burning issue in Christendom, especially in Methodist church. The Chrismatising of the Methodist is a burning issue; thus a study on the different responses to Methodist church to the influence of Pentecostalism or Chrismatism becomes very necessary. This contestations and observations materialized into the following statement of problems to determine what are the factors responsible for the origin and spread of Pentecostalism and the influence of Prophet Garrick in the spread of charismata in the Niger Delta? Could it be that the mainline churches are losing their members to the Pentecostals? If not, what are the charismatic beliefs and practices of Methodist Church Diocese of Bori? If yes what extent is the influence of charismatic movement on the Methodist doctrines in Bori? And what is the impact of the charismatic gifts on the life of the Methodist people in the Diocese of Bori? Or better still, what is the reason for charismatizing Methodist Church Nigeria Diocese of Bori? And what are the roles of Methodist Evangelical Movement (MEM) in charismatizing Methodist Church diocese of Bori?

Conceptual Framework: This work is aligned with Anderson Conceptual Framework who said that the Minline churches are Charismatising because they are losing their members to the Pentecostal groups. Anderson main thesis states that there is no longer a thin line between the mainline churches and the Pentecostal and charismatic churches in Africa because, Africa has become Pentecostalized, especially in Nigeria that has been described as "Pentecostal republic". The reason is that Africa is an enchanted world and therefore,

as an enchanted world, Pentecostalism resonates with them. At this view point, it resonates with what Ogbu kalu argued that the idiom and the metaphors of churches today are drawn from the interior of the African worldview.

Pentecostal Worldview: The 1970s onwards saw the emergence and remarkable development of independent charismatic churches worldwide. This has been referred to by Wagner (1998) as the third wave of Pentecostalism, after the earliest wave of classical Pentecostalism and the second wave of the charismatic renewal. This, however, is a misnomer. Many of the first Pentecostals, like Ellen and James Hebden in Canada, the Baker sisters and A.G. Garr in the US and Many others, were opposed to institutionalization and denominations. They created independent churches that were often not more than a single congregation or a handful of linked congregations.

Anderson (2013) in his work, "visions of the disinherited," noted that a major controversy split the Pentecostal movement arose in which several leading ministers in Pentecostal denominations resigned to be part of a movement purporting to 'restore" a fallen and "cold" Pentecostalism to its former glory. This movement emphasized the restoration of the ministry gifts of apostles and prophets to the church, spoken prophecies and the independence of the local church; rending to shun denominationalism.

Wave of New Pentecostalism: In many parts of African the Pentecostal and of Charismatic churches are the fastest growing section of Christianity, appealing especially to younger, educated urban people. Some of the newer churches have been criticized for propagating a "prosperity gospel" which seems to reproduce the worst forms of capitalism in Christian guise. It is true that horrific stories of exploitation by power and wealth-hungry preachers can be told. But there is a danger of generalizing in making this assessment, especially when such generalizations fail to appreciate the selective reconstructions and creative innovations made by some of these new Pentecostals in adapting to radically different contexts from those of the prosperity preacher's of the USA.

West Africa and in particular Nigeria and Ghana, has been the scene of an explosion of new Pentecostalism since the mid 1970s, as African Christianity as a whole turns increasingly Charismatics. This new Pentecostalism has spread rapidly throughout Africa's cities from Monrovia to Mombasa and from Addis Ababa to Cape Town. These new charismatic churches are fast becoming a major expression of Christianity in Africa, especially in the cities. They have a tendency for a younger and more educated membership than that of classical Pentecostalism. Their services are usually emotional, enthusiastic and loud, especially as most make use of electronic musical instruments. The

new Pentecostals are increasing in popularity with educated and young professional people who continue to give financial support and feel that their needs are met there. Methods employed by these churches, like those of other Pentecostals, include door – to – door evangelism, Street and market evangelism, morning cry with horn speakers and mega phones, preaching in, buses, on street corners and at places of public gatherings, and in big tent campaigns, large and small places. Though, the methods employed by these churches in Nigerian and Bori, like those of other Pentecostals, include morning cry, use of mega phones or speakers for evening and street Conner evangelism, sharing of tracts and singing around the village squares, and holding night vigils. Many of these new churches arose in the context of interdenominational and evangelical campus and school Christian organizations like scripture union. Their growth has been most dramatic in Nigeria and Ghana where Christianity has permeated every facet of society and is evident to any visitor. Small businesses in West African cities proclaim its influence. Christian slogans are written all over cars, vans and public vehicles.

This gives researchers cause to consider the reasons, and searching questions about the relevance of the faith and life of older churches in Africa are posed. If people perceive their teachings and practices as powerless to meet their everyday felt needs, then these churches cannot continue with "business as usual" in the face of obvious shortcomings. Asamoah farther contended that;

> Older Churches in Africa are now rethinking their entire strategy and are being changed by the "Pentecostalization" process taking place. One of the reasons for the growth of Charismatic churches may be that they have succeeded where western – founded churches have often failed, to provide a contextualized Christianity in Africa which reaches into the religious past while attempting to keep pace with the modernizing present.

New Churches of African origin are Fulfilling African aspiration with roots in a marginalized and underprivileged society struggling to find dignity and identity in the face of brutal colonialism and oppression. Despite important social and historical factors, it is the propensity of Pentecostalism in Africa to adapt to and fulfill religious aspirations and offer practical solutions to felt needs that continue to be its main strength. This alone can save the mainline churches especially the Methodist and this work advocates the return to the contextual Charismatic Christianity of the finding fathers for relevance in the nearest future.

Conclusion

As can be noticed, Pentecostal spirituality seems to be very practical. Anderson (2010:2001) sees 'it as "Pragmatic, practical and this worldly". Commenting on this, Adewuyi (cited in Anderson 2008: 204) in exploring the relationship between the spirit and ethics based on Romans 8:1-17 remarks that the spirit is "the moral stimulus and power for daily living". It is said that a major guide in the determination of one's lifestyle remains the received practices and teachings of one's denomination or church. This is why Pentecostal theology plays a pivotal role in the formation of Pentecostal spirituality. More often than not, Pentecostal spirituality is best expressed in the actions of Pentecostals at worship, ceremony and prayer. Using the moral noun, Anderson (2010:510-511) opines that;

> Pentecostal spiritualities are centered on the experience of the spirit that pervades the whole person, makes Jesus Christ more real and relevant to daily life and inspired testimony, praise, unknown tongues, prophecies, healing, dancing, clapping, joyful singing and many other expressions that characterize Pentecostals and Charismatics the world over. Pentecostals and Charismatic's spiritualities are expressed in liturgies that often take on the characteristics of the host culture and are not unaffected by older religious traditions that have permeated that culture.

Expressing these liturgies that often take on the characteristics of the host culture and are not unaffected by older religious traditions that have permeated that culture is the desire of African people, especially Bori people and to that effect the continuity in change advocates this from Methodist Church.

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