



**MADONNA
UNIVERSITY**

**INTERNATIONAL
JOURNAL**
OF EDUCATION AND ARTS

VOL. 1 , NO 4

2023



International Journal of Education and Arts Vol.1 , NO 4 Nov. 2023

Exerting Influence Of Pentecostalism on the Mainline Churches in Enugu State

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Abstract

Pentecostalism remains a force that pulls the doctrine of the mainline Churches in the contemporary time. Its impacts are obvious especially in the modus operandi of the orthodox Christian denominations. Demonstration of spiritual powers and wealth accumulation which were not considered as factors for measuring a prosperous Church as well as a priest in the mainline Churches have become yardstick for considering a progressive Church and a priest. These have paved way for imitation of divine powers and misappropriation of it. It has become very elusive to distinguish between a materialistic Pentecostal pastor and a priest of the Orthodox Church. Abuse of speaking in other languages, emphasis on miracles and other spiritual enterprise, charlatanism, prosperity preaching, projection of Church founders and leaders during outdoor events, church as money making factory among others have also become the order of the day in the Mainline Churches in the recent time. One of the major of causes of this scenario may concern itself with proliferation of churches and fear of depopulation of the Mainline Churches. The thrust of this paper concerns itself with the

examination of the aftermath of Pentecostalism on the Mainline Churches with the principal aim of recommending feasible solutions in order to retain moral rectitude and foster human and society development. The research methodology adopted by the researchers is phenomenological method. Qualitative method of collecting data is also used. Data were collected and analyzed through secondary sources.

Key words: Exerting, Influence, Pentecostalism, Mainline Churches.

Introduction

The modus operandi of Pentecostalism has affected the practice of mainline Churches in diverse ways. The influence of Pentecostalism in relation to common dogma of the Orthodox Churches is palpable. In the contemporary time, Pentecostalism has made salient and significant contributions to human development though its negative influence cannot be ignored. The imitation of some practices from Pentecostalism is an indication that its exerted influence on the Mainline Churches cannot be neglected.

The major interest of this paper however is Pentecostalism in Enugu State and in Nigeria in general. The mode of operation of Pentecostalism in Nigeria particularly Enugu State shall be carefully discussed. The emergence of Pentecostalism and its contribution to Nigerian society are not left untouched in this academic undertaking, hence, the advent and modus operandi of Pentecostalism in Nigeria. The research methodology used in this paper is Phenomenological method. Phenomenology is the study of experience. The word “phenomenology” is derived from the Greek word “phenomena” which is the plural form of “phenomenon.” Phenomenon is something that is real, something that one can feel, see, touch; it is the study of experience and how human beings experience it. Ituma (2015) avers that empirical phenomenology engages in a structural analysis of the participants' accounts of a phenomenon in order to determine the essential components of that experience. This method

is suitable for this study because the title under investigation is a reality as well as real experience of Christianity in the contemporary.

Defining Pentecostalism

The word “Pentecostalism” deserves definition and elucidation in this study. Pentecostalism has been attempted to be defined by scholars of various epochs. Pentecostalism according to Ohazulike (n.d) cited in Ngbea (2015) is a charismatic Protestant movement whose emphasis is on personal encounter with Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour, whose converts are referred to as Born Again Christians. This nomenclature emanated as a result of different mode of operations of these group of Christians which is apparently distinct from the mode of operation of the mainline churches. Pentecostalism stresses much on the physical manifestation of the spiritual gifts more every other element of Christian activities. Ayegboyim and Ademola (1997) in Ngbea (2015) as well as Adelakun (1997) observe that in Pentecostalism, believers maintain that, as in the early church, their meetings are characterized by outbursts of ecstatic enthusiasm featuring speaking in tongues, healing, interpretation of prophecies and all manner of miracles.

Pentecostalism according to Deji and Ademola (1997) in Ngbea (2015) is taken to be a movement that contributes to Christian renewal. Pentecostalism in the context of this study is used to designate the Christian denominations which are not partake in the experience of the European missionary and whose founders are neither white missionaries nor disciples of white missionaries. The Pentecostal Churches are known for their emphasis on spirituality in virtually everything. They attach serious importance to spiritual interpretation of the Bible without paying much attention to its physical reality. For the Pentecostals, everything is spiritual.

Conceptualizing of Mainline Churches

Mainline Churches is a term used to designate those Churches which Christian denominations often referred to as the

Orthodox. They are the Churches which emerged from European missionaries. Mainline churches according to Omotoye (2014 p.1) “are European Christian churches that were introduced to Nigeria in the 19th century namely: Methodist Church, Church Missionary Society (CMS) later known as Anglican church,

Baptist church and Catholic Church”. In the words of Otonko (2005), mainline churches is referred to as the Catholic Church and those Churches that directly broke away from her, beginning from the 16th century protestant reformation. They are so called mainline churches because they stem from ones our ceand share certain religious traditions in common. They include the Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, the Lutheran church, the Methodist and Presbyterian Church among few others.

These Churches share common doctrine. Their liturgy and style of theological training are related. In some instances, they share common theological institution. The episcopacy of these churches is not apparently different. They have common titles for their ordained ministers. The ordained class of these Churches deliberately avoids female priesthood except the Methodist Mission. These Churches in one way or the other adopted European influence of Western missionaries in their practice of Christian beliefs and practices. The mainline protestant churches (also called mainstream American protestant and old line protestant) are a group of protestant churches in the United States that contrast in history and practice with evangelical, fundamentalist and/or charismatic protestant's denominations, though some mainline churches include evangelical and charismatics. Mainline churches include the United Methodist church (UMC), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) the Presbyterian Church (USA) (PCUSA), the Episcopal Church, the American Baptist Churches, the united church of Christ among others. The mainline churches share a common approach to social issues that often leads to collaboration in organizations such as the National council of Churches. Because of their outside the United States) given the alternative label of ecumenical Protestantism (Hutcheson, 1981).

Advent of Pentecostal Church in Enugu

Pentecostal means the fiftieth day (Lindhart, 2014). It is the Hebrew festival, celebrated on the fiftieth day from the day of the Passover or on the day of the giving of Law at Sinai (Ndagogo and McGann, 2006). In the Christian Church, Pentecost is celebrated seven weeks after Easter to commemorate the day of the descent of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:1-14 after the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Fatokun, n.d in Jegede n.d). Therefore, Pentecostal in contemporary parlance applies to a “charismatic phenomenon which puts its emphasis on the visible gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially the gifts of tongues and faith healing (Isiramen, 2010).

The beginning of Pentecostal Church in Nigeria started with the emergence of African Independent Churches. African Indigenous based Churches is the root of Pentecostalism in Nigeria. Pentecostalism began out of the passion to have African oriented Church which is obviously in the midst of the Church founded by Western Missionaries in Nigeria. Similarly, Jegede (n.d) reports that the history of the formative period of Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria dated back to 1914 and 1930 (Spurgeon, 73). This started with the emergence of the African Independent Churches otherwise known as Aladura Churches in Yorubaland of Western Nigeria. Among such churches are Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), Church of the Lord, Cherubim and Seraphim Church (C&S), Celestial Church of Christ (Adewale, 170-172). These churches exhibited elements found among Pentecostal Churches such as healing, miracles, visions and dreams, speaking in tongues and prophecy. The above-mentioned churches exemplified Pentecostal phenomenal such as clapping and singing, drumming and dancing to African music. However, the beginning of 1970s witnessed the birth of new Pentecostal movements.

The emergence of Pentecostal Church in Nigeria in general and Enugu State became a reality as a result of proliferation of Pentecostal Churches within few decades. Buttressing further on this, Diara and Onah (2016) aver that thousands of Pentecostal

churches have sprung up in Nigeria since 1970. The Newswatch Magazine (December 3, 2001: 26 – 30) identifies 1018 Pentecostal churches among others in Nigeria. Kalu (1978) made a typology of such Pentecostal groups, thus (1) Interdenominational Fellowships (2) Evangelistic Ministries, e.g. Deeper Life Bible Church, (3) Deliverance Ministries, specializing in exorcism (4) Prosperity or Faith Ministries e.g. Zoë Ministry, Idahosa's Church of God Mission (5) Intercessors for Africa; (6) Missionary and Rural Evangelism, e.g. The Christian Evangelical Social Movement, Christian Movement Foundation (Rural Evangelism Outreach (REO) Ministry belongs to this group); (7) Bible Distribution Ministries, e.g. Gideon Bible International whose members must be born again and must be active in their churches; (8) Classical Pentecostals such as Assemblies of God Mission, Four Square Gospel, to mention but a few. (9) Children Evangelism Ministries whose branches have mushroomed nationwide from late 1980s. The demarcating lines between the Pentecostal groups are between fellowships and churches and between holiness and prosperity groups.

The fast-proliferating independent churches, which are mostly of the new wave or firebrand Pentecostal type, began to gain ground across the country in 1986 with the founding of Benson Idahosa's Church of God Mission. Their catchments areas appear to be the cities and urban areas where there is more concentration of the rich and upwardly mobile youths. In such cities as Lagos, Abuja, Enugu, Port Harcourt, Aba, Onitsha, Owerri, Ibadan, Warri, Benin, etc., the churches are rising up in shops, stores, disused buildings and warehouses, on daily basis. For ministers of such churches, Christians are not meant to suffer, and they should not be poor, hence “poverty is a curse”. No wonder their type of Christianity rarely exists in rural areas (Diara and Onah, 2016). In Enugu State, Pentecostal Church emerged from 1980s and still gains ground till date. In Enugu metropolis, there is no street without one Pentecostal Church or the other. Most flats in the Enugu urban have one Pentecostal Christians or their equivalent as fellowship group.

In recent time, Pentecostal Churches have found their way

inside academic institutions in Enugu State. Most higher institutions in Enugu State contain greater number of Christian fellowships more than that of the mainline churches. In institutions such as Institute of Management of Technology (IMT), Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu, University of Nigeria, Nsukka and Enugu Campuses, Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), Enugu State College of Education, Technical (ESCET) etc, uncountable number of Pentecostal fellowships are in operation in these places. In fact, even in some academic higher institutions owned by mainline Churches, Pentecostal Christians in some of these don't find it common to participate in the religious gathering of such institution. They would desire permission for a separate gathering of the Pentecostal. Madonna University, Nigeria is a good example of this. In the rural areas of Enugu State, Pentecostal Churches have also found their way through outreaches and open air evangelism. The existence of Pentecostal Churches in Enugu State is no longer a nascent movement

Modus of operandi of Pentecostal Church in Enugu

The mode of operation of Pentecostal Church in Enugu is not entirely different from their operation in other places in Nigeria. The modus of operandi of Pentecostal Churches is virtually universally common. Their operation is almost the same despite the geographical different. Change in location does not make any change in their modus of operandi.

The modus operandi of Pentecostal is discussed thus:

Open air evangelism:

An Open-Air method of evangelism in the Pentecostal Churches is usually done outside rather than in a building. Open-Air evangelism often holds place as far as soul-winning is concerned (Donald, 2007). In Nigeria, Open-Air evangelism has become a common feature in church growth and for church planting, more especially among the Pentecostal Churches like the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Deeper Life Bible Church, Christ Embassy, Mountain of Fire and Miracle (MFM), and Winner's Chapel just to

mention a few (Jegade, n.d). Through this method, the population of members of these churches keeps increasing and this has continued to aid church proliferation in Nigeria. Spurgeon (1989) observes that open-Air evangelism was instrumental in getting people to hear the gospel who might otherwise never hear it.

Mode of worship: Practices such as speaking in tongues, signs and wonders, healing and deliverance, vibrant use of praise and worship, praying in loud voice are all original and common among the Pentecostals.

Ordination of female: In Pentecostal Churches, women including married women are ordained pastors and placed in equality with men among them. In fact, in some Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria in general and Enugu State in particular, there are women who are General Overseers and such related positions.

Indigenous based: Most practices of the Pentecostals are based on the indigenous practice of the people especially the founder. For instance, in Eternal Sacred Order of the Cherubim and Seraphim (ESOCS), the highest rank of the apex leader, the Prelate is often referred to as *Baba Aladura* (Yoruba language for elder) because the founder is Yoruba. Sometimes, the national headquarters of some of these Pentecostal churches are often in the place of origin or based place of the founder.

Sowing of Seed and prosperity preaching: Almost all the Pentecostal Churches emphasize on seed sowing as the fastest and easiest of way of becoming wealthy. The height of one's financial contribution to the Church and so-called men of God determine how rich one becomes. Prosperity preaching is one the sole *kerygmatic* means (preaching format) of siphoning the pocket of their members.

Major Areas of Influences of Pentecostalism on the Mainline Churches in Enugu State

It is no longer a recent incident that Pentecostal movement has exerted influence on the mainline Churches in various ways in Nigeria in general and in Enugu State in particular. Some of the major areas of these influences are discussed as follows:

Area of Spirituality

The incessant call for prayers, and experience of continuous fasting and prayer, deliverance ministry and other related spiritual exercise and events shows great influence of Pentecostalism. Buttressing further on this salient point, Hocken (n.d) posits that the common experience of renewal praying and fasting, signs and wonders, and healing and deliverance speak volume of Pentecostal influence of the Mainline Churches in Nigeria. In the same vein, almost all the Mainline Churches are affected in this regard in Enugu State. It is now common to find the Mainline Churches with incessant and renewal prayer and deliverance programmes.

Towards the end and beginning of each year, Enugu State till the contemporary time has experienced influx spiritual oriented programmes in both Mainline and Pentecostal Churches. Since this style of Christian practice was introduced by the Pentecostals, virtually all Churches (Mainline and Pentecostal) have adopted it as a tradition. Most Churches usually engage their members on many days of praying and fasting at the beginning of the year. Sometimes, these number of days ranges from 20 to 40, 40 to 60 and 100 days. These days of praying and fasting usually go with captions as the leadership of each of the Churches' desire. Such common captions are: "Beginning the year with the Lord", "Open doors for the year", "there shall be no loss", "I shall not die", "Good morning, Jesus", "My year of Supernatural upliftment" and other related captions.

However, Pentecostalism exerted positive influence on the mainline Churches in the area of spirituality. On this note, Schubert (1991) asserts that Mainline churches in Nigeria are now giving serious attention to their prayer life. There is a noticeable quest for a spirituality based on a personal relationship with the Lord, in the Catholic Church it is manifested in Love for private Eucharistic adoration.

Areas of Tithing and Enforcing Levy

Tithing has remained strong source of financial income in the Pentecostal Churches and most of the Mainline Churches. Tithing

according to Adelakun (1997) the Pentecostal churches are often indigenous congregations and as such there are no “mother churches” or “funding agencies” for their financing and sustenance. The support of the church rest solely on the local members. The commonly adopted means of supporting the church is tithing. The biblical practice of tithing is generally accepted by members, even when it is very demanding on the individuals. This approach has proven to be useful and effective means for the survival of Pentecostal churches in the country, many Christians in the mainline churches are also realizing the spiritual usefulness of tithing and are therefore paying their tithes to support their churches. In addition to tithing, Pentecostal churches have influenced the Mainline Churches on the aspect of levying their members on many occasions for many reasons. The Mainline churches such as Methodist and Anglican Churches and others have adopted imposition of levy on members for church building projects, welfare of bishops and other ministers, support of schools and Universities owned by these Churches and so on. It has also become a tradition to fine members of Church organs such as women fellowship in Methodist church and women guild in Anglican, who came late to meetings.

Area of Material Prosperity

It seems that whenever and wherever there is spiritual reawakening the clergies always take advantage economically. The material success of some Pentecostal ministers is negatively affecting other mainline churches ministers in Nigeria. Most clergies in the mainline churches like their Pentecostal counterparts are living above members of their congregations materially. The flamboyant lifestyle is not affecting only the clergy, but it is becoming a terrible virus among the lay people too. Material prosperity is a yardstick of divine favor, whoever is poor is a sinner and not a born-again. Prosperity gospel is impacting on the mainline churches in Nigeria (Ngbea, 2015).

Emphasis is often made on prosperity during church sermon in the Pentecostal Churches. There is usually no inauguration,

enthronement, crusade, anniversary and so on without utilizing those events as a major means of sucking the financial pockets of members of the laity. The Mainline Churches has stood to be a stooge to Pentecostalism in this regard. Most Mainline Churches are equally known for prosperity preaching these days. Some of the ordained priests of the Mainline Churches sabotage members of their congregation especially in the monetary aspect. Divine blessings and elevation are unleashed on the members of the congregation in proportion to their financial contribution to the church project, ordained priest and a particular programme.

Conclusion

Pentecostalism in Nigeria in general and Enugu State in particular is an interesting academic exercise. Pentecostalism as seen in the body of this paper started around 1970, started gaining ground from 1980s and has been strongly established in the contemporary time to the point of even influencing the mainline churches especially in modus operandi. The exerted influences of Pentecostalism on the Mainline Churches strongly indicate that some of the practices of the Mainline Churches are borrowed from the Pentecostal Churches.

Recommendations

1.The leaders of the Mainline Churches should adopt the practice of the Pentecostal Churches will would be helpful in the development of the ordained and laity of the Church.

2.Mainline Churches are expected to become role models to the Pentecostal Churches in areas such as sound theological training and sanctity of the Christian Scripture.

3.Emphasis on material prosperity should be frowned at so as to produce in mass members of Mainline churches who are attested for moral rectitude.

4.Divine gifts should not be made the concern of all, it should be left to be exercised and properly utilized by those who are divinely endowed.

5.Imitation of incessant and long days of spiritual oriented

events from Pentecostal churches should be put to check in order to avoid abuse.

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