

‘DRESSED IN BORROWED ROBES’: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE NEW PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENTS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract: The leaders of the new Pentecostal Churches (NPC) are known to be very critical of the ‘old ‘African Indigenous Churches’ (AICs) beliefs and practices. It is fascinating however that the two ((NPCs & AICs) have apparent prominent similarities. This article discusses eight spheres where the similarities are most noticeable. We argued that it is only natural to make a case that the influence passed on from the old (AICs) to the new denomination (NPCs). We observed that with more competitions amongst denominations for membership the spirit of mutual simulation is increasing. The article concludes that the mutual borrowing of ‘attractive robes’ by the main denominations in Nigeria has ecumenical implications. It should be more feasible now more than ever before for all denominations to work together towards new-fangled evangelism, church development and growth.

Introduction

They (the AICs) are not always followed but are watched; they are not always officially recognised but they are seen to be pedagogically helpful; they are not seen as models, yet certain dimensions of their experience are often coveted; their syntheses tend to be holistic and challenge the split-personality character of other Christian syncretisms¹

A profound phenomenological study of the emerging New Pentecostals reveals striking affinity with the African Indigenous Churches in Nigeria. As in most circumstances in the history of the church, the emergence and development of new Pentecostal churches were nourished by the fertility of the religious institutions that were already in existence. The African Indigenous Churches (AICs) grew out of both the background of African traditional heritage and the Western or Mission Initiated Churches (MICs) and absorbed some of the cherished beliefs and practices² of at least these two religious institutions. The New Pentecostal Churches (NPCs), sometimes developing out of the existing religious institutions particularly the AICs and the classical Pentecostals, have also carried over some of the practices of their precursors.³

¹ D. Shank, ‘African Independent Churches, African Theology and Western Co-workers in the *Missio-Dei*’, in D. Shank (ed.), *Ministry in Partnership with African Independent Churches* (Elkhart: Mennonite Board of Missions, 1991), p. 13.

² S.B Mala observes that even though the AICs have borrowed very largely from traditional thoughts they hardly acknowledge this fact. See Sam Babs Mala, ‘African Instituted Churches in Nigeria: the Quest For Unity, Education And Identity’, in David A. Shank, (ed) *Ministry in Partnership with African Independent Churches* (Indiana: Mennonite Board of Missions, 1991), p. 23

³ This is not intended to suggest that all the leaders of the NPCs as well as the followers came from the AICs. However, it is significant that a few prominent leaders of the NPCs who emerged from the AICs can be named. These include Dr. Olukoya of the extensive Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries. He was a member of CAC until he left to establish his ministry. Rev. Akindayomi, Pastor E.A. Adeboye’s mentor,

The present study is concerned with identifying some of the influences of the beliefs and practices of the AICs on the NPCs in Nigeria. This focal point draws its soundness from the fact that the soil more often than not influences the growth of plants. However, unlike plants, the NPCs have the opportunity to pick and choose what to accept from the 'soil'. It is worth noting that many New Pentecostal leaders look down on African Indigenous Churches; a number of them are highly critical of AICs practices while others regard AICs, as cults, syncretistic or schismatic aberrations of Christianity.⁴ Consequently, the NPCs have made efforts to avoid the so-called 'path of syncretism' which they claim are discernible in AICs by disapproving of 'rituals, symbolic styles and repertoires'⁵ from the traditional religion. In spite of this stance, a careful study of the two organisations reveals a good deal of resemblance in some areas, so much so that it is only plausible to suppose that not only did the AICs create an enabling environment for the emergent NPCs but also some of the characteristics of the former shaped the traits of the latter.

In sum, this discourse sets out to discuss in a preliminary way the relationship between the AICs and the NPCs. It embarks on this task by first giving a brief overview of the origins and characteristics of the AICs and the NPCs in Nigeria. This is intended to provide the framework for exploring the outstanding similarities in both assemblies. It picks on some areas of comparison which demonstrate the influence of the AICs on the NPCs. The paper concludes by admitting the fact that there is now mutual borrowing of ideas and practices amongst various Christian traditions in Nigeria.

African Indigenous Churches

There is a harvest of terminology⁶ in the attempt to distinguish those churches which were founded in Africa beginning from the 1920s, as a reaction to the 'over-europeization' of Christianity⁷. We have a preference for African Indigenous Churches (AICs) and for the purposes of this article we shall stick to this cognomen. The churches

and founder of the RCCG fame was a minister in the C&S before he pulled out to establish his ministry. On the other hand, Pastor W.F. Kumuyi the founder of Deeper Life Bible Church was a member of a classical Pentecostal Church: Apostolic Faith before he left to inaugurate his ministry.

⁴ See Diane Stanton, 'Africa, East and West', in John Parratt (ed.) *An Introduction to Third World Theologies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.119. R. W. Wyllie recalls that in conversation with some persons who belonged to the historic churches in Winneba (Ghana), the most common descriptive term applied to the AICs is *Nyamanyama*, which means worthless or substandard. This dismissive adjective suggests that the AICs ought not to be taken seriously as proper churches. See R.W. Wyllie, 'Perceptions of the Spiritist Churches: a survey of Methodists and Roman Catholics in Winneba, Ghana', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, XV (1982), p.142. Pobee remarks that in Ghana they were sometimes called 'witchcraft eradication movements' because, for some, that appears to be their major concern and preoccupation. See J.S. Pobee, *Toward an African Theology* (Tennessee: Abingdon, 1979), p.118.

⁵ See Rijk van Dijk, 'Christian Fundamentalism in Sub-Saharan Africa: The case of Pentecostalism', in *Occasional Paper* (mim), Centre of African Studies, University of Copenhagen, Feb. 2000, p.11.

⁶ They have been called Prophet-healing, Spiritual, Independent, African Initiated Movements, African Pentecostal Church and even Apostolic movement. See for example, Allan Anderson, *African Reformation African Initiated Christianity in the Twentieth Century*, (Trenton, NJ & Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press 2001); Deji Ayegboyin & Ademola Ishola, *African Indigenous Churches: Historical Perspective* (Lagos: Greater Heights, 1999). The Internet edition, www.irr.org/african-indigenous-churches-intro.html

⁷ Ayegboyin & Ishola, *African Indigenous Churches*.

which are so identified are: Christ Apostolic Church, Cherubim and Seraphim, Church of the Lord (*Aladura*), and Celestial Church of Christ. The chronicle of events leading to their emergence have been dealt with elsewhere.⁸

The AICs are products of the various charismatic movements in Yorubaland, which started from the second decade of the twentieth century. These churches became known gradually through the activities of some fascinating charismatic African leaders. They rose up to meet some specific demands of the time and served as vehicles for the realisation of the practical needs of religion. Paul Pormeville, in view of their self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating characteristics, described them as the 'hidden Pentecostals'.⁹ Allan Anderson refers to them as 'Pentecostal-type' movements.¹⁰ Mala and Osun, devoted and practising members of the AICs, assert that they are Pentecostal.¹¹

The New Pentecostal Churches

For the purposes of this paper we will restrict the use of New Pentecostal Churches (NPC) to what we described elsewhere as the third phase of Pentecostalism in Nigeria.¹² Most of the churches that we have 'typologised' as New Pentecostals¹³ started in the 1980s but their phenomenal growth occurred from the late 1980s and early 1990s. Gifford may be right in supposing that the collapse of African economies especially in the 1980s created the need for these churches in record numbers.¹⁴ Gifford's view is in line with social scientific secular explanations for religious phenomena.¹⁵ However, his deductions, first, that the situation was made possible through dependence on American aid and support and, secondly, that 'Americanisation' rather than any "African quality" is responsible for the growth of these churches, should be and have been vehemently contested.¹⁶ Petersen, for example, challenged the deprivation theories as a causative factor in the emergence of African Pentecostal churches. He maintains that the 'scarcity' theory reflects an inadequate perception of the ethos of Pentecostal experience and practice by the proponents of these theories.¹⁷ Anderson maintains and (rightly so) that many of these vigorous new churches were much more strongly influenced by established Pentecostal mission churches in other

⁸ Ayegboyin & Ishola, *African Indigenous Churches*.

⁹ Paul Pormeville, *The Third Force in Mission* (N.Y: Henrickson Publishers, 1985), pp. 26-35.

¹⁰ Allan Anderson, 'Diversity in the definition of 'Pentecostal Charismatic' and its Ecumenical Implications', *Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies*, XIX-2,38 (2002), p. 46.

¹¹ Mala, 'African Instituted Churches in Nigeria' & C.O.Osun, 'Encountering Aladura Spirituality in Britain.' Paper presented at the African Religious Diaspora Conference, Tetley Hall, University of Leeds, 8-11 Sept. 1997, 24.

¹² The first two are: The Classical and the Indigenous / Charismatic Pentecostalism.

¹³ See Deji Ayegboyin and Ukah, Asonzeh, 'Taxonomy of Churches in Nigeria', *Orita, Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan*.

¹⁴ Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (Indiana: IUP, 1998), p. 182.

¹⁵ See for example, A Miller, 'Pentecostalism as a Social Movement: Beyond the Theory of Deprivation' *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 9 (1996), pp. 97-114.

¹⁶ Olabiyi Ajala, 'An Evaluation of the Significance and Relevance of African (Pentecostal) Churches to the Renewal of Christian Spirituality in Britain'. A dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Theology in Applied Theology, Regents Theological College, 2004.

¹⁷ D. Petersen, "Pentecostals: Who are they?" In *Transformation*, (April 1998), p. 17.

parts of Africa itself.¹⁸ Kalu draws attention to the complexities in a multi-causal explanation.¹⁹ We observed that the NPCs that developed during this period realized this growth by undercutting the MICs and, to a large extent, by displacing the AICs. Quite a number of them started as Bible Study groups or Prayer Fellowships before they metamorphosed into all-inclusive ministries. Magnetic leaders who left Charismatic movements within the Mainline churches²⁰ or broke away from some established Pentecostal founded most of the ministries. A great number continue to pull the crowds and have them in their grip. What is more, they proliferate like mushrooms even though a few of them disappear as quickly. There are quite a few types²¹ but our focus is on the thriving faith²² and deliverance²³ ministries.

Preliminary annotations on the apparent influence

Some clarifications need to be made before we identify the apparent weight of the impact of the AICs on the NPCs. First, we may need to ask the same question that Parsons raised: When is a 'new' Religious Movement not really new?²⁴ And the question may not be as absurd as it may at first seem. Almost three decades ago, Harold Turner identified some Religious Movements in Primal (or traditional) Societies. The first attribute of these movements according to Turner is that they are 'new'.²⁵ The paradigm for distinguishing

¹⁸ A. Anderson, "Newer Pentecostal Churches", 170. Anderson is convinced that these influences had little or nothing to do with economic dislocation or deprivation theories as argued for by advocates of this school of thought.

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See some reasons given by Ogbu U.Kalu. *Power, Poverty and Prayer: The Challenges of Poverty and Pluralism in African Christianity, 1960-1996* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000), p. 115.

²⁰ For a concise text on the characteristics of charismatics within Mainline churches, See Cephas Omenyo, *Pentecost outside Pentecostalism: A Study of the Development of Charismatic Renewal in the Mainline Churches in Ghana* (Uitgeverij, Zoetermeer: Bekencentrum, 2000). See also Cephas Omenyo, 'The Charismatic Renewal Movement in Ghana', *Pneuma* 16 (1994), pp. 169-185.

²¹ Some other New Pentecostal Ministries include the Holiness Pentecostal groups. In this category are: The Deeper Life Bible Church, The Holiness Bible Church to name just a few. They embrace "a holiness" or righteousness doctrine. The millennial groups stress apocalypticism and millennialism. They preach and claim that they are preparing for Christ's second coming. These include: Jesus is Coming Ministries, The Rapture Assembly, His Coming Evangelical Ministry. Latter Rain Assembly Pentecostal Movement. For other groups see Deji Ayegeboyin & Asonzeh Ukah, "Taxonomy of Churches in Nigeria, *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, pp. 78-85.

²² There are hundreds of such ministries which include: Bishop Oyedepo's Living Faith Church, Worldwide (Winners' Chapel); Bishop Wale Oke's Sword of the Spirit Ministries(Christ Life Chapel); Revd. George Adegboye's Ever Increasing Word Ministries (Rhema Chapel); Sam Amaga's, Foundation Faith Chapel Inc.;Ayo Oritsejafar's, Word of Life Bible Church, Warri; Gabriel Oduyemi's Bethel Ministries (now, Bethel Worship Inc.); Pastor Patrick Anwuzia's, Zoe Ministries; Yomi Isijola's, Logos Ministries, Port Harcourt; Dr.Uma Ukpai's Uma Evangelistic Association; Bishop Mike Okonkwo's The Redeemed Evangelistic Mission and Chris Oyakhilomi's Christ Embassy etc.

²³ Notable examples include Pastor D.K. Olukoya's Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries; Rev Oyor's God-will -Do -It Ministries; Revd. Victor (Daddy Hezekiah) Onukogu's Living Christ Mission, Onitsa; Pastor Alexander Ekewuba's Overcomers Christian Mission, Owerri, Prophet Samson Ayorinde's (barrenness bull-dozer) World Evangelism Bible Church; Revd. Fr. Emmanuel Ede, Catholic Prayer Ministry of the Holy Spirit, Elele and the 'controversial' Pastor Temitope Joshua's 'Synagogue for All Nations, Lagos etc.

²⁴ Gerald Parson, 'Expanding the Religious Spectrum: New Religious Movements in Modern Britain, in Gerald Parson(ed), *Britain from 1945*, Vol.1 (London: Routledge,1990).

²⁵ H.W.Turner, *New Vistas: Missionary and Ecumenical, Religious Movements in Primal (or Tribal*

new religious movements is an ongoing discussion.²⁶ Secondly, Parson's apprehension about the problem of categorization applies here.²⁷ There is a rich variety of churches within this genre. There are a few which are outside the mainstream of the evangelical tradition, which they claim to represent, and there are many which depart from mainstream evangelical doctrines. Thirdly, whereas one may be wary to jump to the conclusion that in all cases the latter borrowed from the former, yet given the existing affinity it is only natural to make a case that the influence passed from the older to younger. Fourthly, it may be argued that Western Pentecostalism influences the NPCs. While that may not be ruled out, the weight of the influences discussed sway more to the side of the IACs. In other words, we are aware that some areas in the NPCs' style, theology and structure are strongly influenced by recent developments in international Pentecostalism. But that is not the concern in this paper. Fifth, it may be argued that both of them are dependent on a common underpinning which is the African Traditional Religion. It is easier to contend that the NPCs encountered the requisite features already primed in the AICs. In that case, the AICs furnished the dynamic setting for the nurture and opening up of the NPCs' beliefs and practices.

Influence of Indigenous Churches on the New Pentecostal Churches (NPCs)

It may not be very easy to identify all the apparent influences of the AICs on the NPCs but evidently some overt and covert impacts are discernible. To these we will now turn.

Dynamism in Pneumatic Emphasis

The foremost distinctive trait of the NPCs is their tenacity in giving the Holy Spirit the most prominent position in their worship and wide-ranging life of the church. A number of these NPCs claim that they are 'Churches of the Spirit'. By this they mean that the Holy Spirit controls their activities. There is much emphasis on matters such as 'the baptism of the Spirit', 'being filled with the Spirit', and 'walking in the Spirit.' Captivating headlines illustrating the place of the Holy Spirit are seen on hand bills, bill boards, in front of the church buildings or inside the auditorium. Some of the headlines include:

Holy Spirit : Our Senior Partner
 Holy Spirit: Our comforter
 Holy Spirit Zone: Demons clear off!
 The Spirit of the Lord is here²⁸

Evidently, the AICs with their emphasis on the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit are the precursors of the NPCs in pneumatological emphasis. Long before the NPCs started at all, the AICs had appropriated the term 'Spiritual Churches' in describing themselves. As we have stated elsewhere,²⁹ the AICs prefer designations like *Ijo Emi* or rather *Ijo Elemi*. (Yoruba), *Ishoshi erhi*(Urhobo), *Uka Monso Nsuko*(Igbo).³⁰ Virtually everything about their cosmos and being are suffused in the Holy Spirit. They assert that

²⁶ Some tend to distinguish three main general classifications: Pentecostal holiness movements, Pentecostal prosperity movements and Pentecostal deliverance ministries. See Deji Ayegboyin and Ukah, Asonzeh, 'Taxonomy of Churches in Nigeria', *Orita, Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan*

²⁷ Parson, 'Expanding the Religious Spectrum. 283.

²⁸ Personal Observation on a number of visits to New Pentecostal Churches.

²⁹ See Ayegboyin & Ishola, *African Indigenous Churches*, p. 28.

³⁰ These mean 'Spiritual Churches'. See Ayegboyin & Ishola, *African Indigenous Churches*.

the Holy Spirit inspired the institution of their churches and these leaders are usually men and women in quest of spiritual contemplation. It may be recalled that some of the leaders were forced to leave the mainline churches because of their radicalised approaches to pneumatological concerns which the white and 'black-in-white' ministers perceived as threatening to destabilise the status quo. The mission pneumatology of the AICs incorporates the missionary temperament of the Spirit, the consciousness of the Spirit as well as responsiveness to the mission of the Spirit. Their sensitivity to the Holy Spirit explains their underlying beliefs and spiritual interpretations given to practically all events especially failures, catastrophes, adversities and disappointments. At the same time, positive undertakings, accomplishments and all kinds of achievements are attributed to the intervention of the Holy Spirit.

Fundamental Place and contextualisation of Prayer

A universal and frequent facet of the NPCs spirituality as well as worship is their intense stress on prayer. Concerning their disposition to prayer they insist that 'Pentecostal prayer', if it is worthy of the name, entails total commitment. The motivation for this is that they believe fervent prayer is the gateway to receiving spiritual gifts and walking in the Spirit. In most NPCs prayers are contextualised to match with some prayers which the Africans used to pray in traditional society. The NPCs pray out loud, individually and with enthusiasm, repeating some catchphrases like 'In the name of Jesus', 'Holy Spirit', 'Blood of Jesus', 'Holy Ghost's fire'. The prayer sessions are usually characterised by frenzied actions. Concerning the practice of prayer, they maintain that the Bible should be the ground of true prayer. They memorise and recite some verses or portions of scriptures when praying. This is described as 'conceiving the word in the heart'. With this, one can now pray positively and affirmatively. Olukoya, the General Overseer of the sprawling Mountain of Fire and Miracle Ministries, says praying in the affirmative way 'is not asking for something to be so, but affirming that it is so.' He captures the practice of the NPCs in his practical prayer manual.³¹ A few examples will suffice:

*'On how to pray to unseat the strong man'*³²

Olukoya writes that this is a programme to unseat the 'strongman' (the devil) who works against one's marriage, work, house, family, finances etc. The guidelines to follow are stated:³³

- (i) Have three days fasting and prayer using Isaiah 49:24-26
- (ii) You must repent and ask God's forgiveness. Once you are right with God you are on the road to deliverance from the strongman.
- (iii) On the first day of fasting and prayer make confessions to God with Matthew 12: 29; Mk3:27. Then in your praise worship say the following prayer points to destroy every strongman in any area of your life by fire!
 - (a) I order confusion and the scattering of tongues among all wicked associations militating against my peace in this establishment in the name of Jesus.
 - (b) O Lord, let my life be barricaded by the edge of fire and let me be soaked and covered with the blood of Jesus.

³¹ D.K.Olukoya, *Prayer Rain*, Lagos: MFMM, 1999, p.v.

³² Olukoya, *Prayer Rain*, p. 146.

³³ Olukoya, *Prayer Rain*.

- (c) Let every handwriting contrary to my peace receive intensive disgrace in the name of Jesus ...
- (iv) On the second day make confessions with Mt.12:29; Mk3:27 and Lk.11:21. Then pray in the spirit for 10-15 minutes. After these, in your praise worship say these prayers:
- (a) I fire back every demonic arrow targeted at me and my family in the name of Jesus;
- (b) I break every spiritual mirror and monitor fashioned against me, in the name of Jesus,
- (c) I unseat every stronghold delegated against me in this establishment in the name of Jesus...
- (v) On the third day make confessions with Mt.12; 29; Mk3:27 and Lk.11:21. Then in your praise worship say these prayers:
- (a) I render null and void every ritual, incantation, spell and curse issued against me by any strongman in the name of Jesus.
- (b) I disband any wicked meeting held in the spirit realm against me and my position, in the name of Jesus.
- (c) Let my office, my car, my home and all my properties be too hot for this strong man to handle in the name of Jesus³⁴ ...

There are over one hundred and twenty prayers on issues such as 'deliverance for homes', 'gift of the womb', 'doors for promotion to be opened', 'against the demonic spirit of fear', 'victory over financial handicap', 'dissolving unprofitable growth', 'against marriage breakers', 'gates for multiple breakthroughs'³⁵ etc.

A well-known trait of the AICs is the belief in and loyalty to issues that relate to prayer. They lay claims to the fact that 'prayer not only forms the bedrock of their practice and doctrine but that it is also the spring of all their blessings'.³⁶ It is not surprising then that the Yoruba refer to these churches as the *Aladura* (Praying people). This designation bestows on them a distinctiveness that portrays them as having no other business than to pray and that all other functions are derived from prayer. Among the Yoruba the spiritual leaders are fondly referred to as *Baba Aladura* (Praying Father) while the women are *Mama* or *Iya Aladura*. The AICs emphasise perseverance in prayer and demonstrate fidelity in setting time for prayer daily. In public, as well as in private prayer sessions, there are prolific chants of long passages from the scriptures (usually from the book of Psalms). The passages used and the number of times the prayers are said are very significant. Belief in the efficacy of intercessory prayer and meticulous adherence to the directives of the revelations received are widespread among the AICs. They have a deep sense of the sacred and a sense of mystery. Prayer directives may go this way:

Very early in the morning before talking to any human being, kneel down or prostrate before your Maker. Light three (or one or seven or twenty-one) candles, then read the book of Psalm 51 three times and ask for the forgiveness of sins you have committed or inherited from your parents. After this read Psalm 53 (also three times). Then conclude with Psalm 121. The enemies will be defeated and the desires of your heart shall be

³⁴ Olukoya, *Prayer Rain*.

³⁵ Olukoya, *Prayer Rain*, pp. vi–viii.

³⁶ Ayegboyin and Ishola, *African Indigenous Churches*, p. 29.

fulfilled. Thus says the spirit of the Lord.³⁷

In both the AICs' and NPCs' style and track of praying there seems to be a kind of technical approach, which is quite analogous to the way the adherents of Yoruba traditional religion bid clear-cut goals to attain specific ends. As Adewale points out, the traditional religion of the Yoruba makes profuse use of systematic guidelines, symbols and signs.³⁸ *Three*³⁹ in Yoruba traditional Religion is a significant number. It is a symbol of unity as well as emphasis.⁴⁰ Spiritual beings are invoked three times, three strokes or three dots symbolise unity, stability, completeness and strength.⁴¹

On the theological perception of prayer, two influences of the AICs on the NPCs stand out. The first is the utilitarian attitude to prayer. As Peel points out, in the AICs 'prayer may be supplication to God to fulfil the individual's wishes and desires or else a way of getting guidance from God or, in religious terms, knowing His will.'⁴² Adewale discloses that in Yoruba traditional religion prayer 'centres primarily on material things here on earth,⁴³ it could be ritualistic but usually it does not encompass anything so much about the hereafter.'⁴⁴ And concerning the contents of prayer, emphasis is placed first on the needs of the worshipper, then on his immediate neighbours before other things.⁴⁵ Adewale observes also that prayers in Yoruba traditional religion are grouped under three sets namely: *owó* (wealth) *omọ* (children) and *alafia* (peace).⁴⁶ Concerning the effectiveness of prayer, Adewale observes that among the Yoruba the worshippers' attitude to religion brings either fortune or misfortune, good or evil, success or failure; prayer must be accompanied with other things like offering sacrifices, observing some covenants or keeping away from some taboos and an undertaking to give a vow which will delight spiritual beings and hasten their action and response positively.⁴⁷

It seems obvious then that a combination of a prediction for the Old Testament and African traditional practices which are apparent in the AICs are being re-enacted in the NPCs.

Centrality of Life and Healing

Life is so momentous and of cardinal value in African societies that it has become the

³⁷ Conflation of personal observation with personal interview: Prophet Emmanuel Adeniji of St. Michael Church, of the Lord Ogbomosho. See also, H.W. Turner, *African Independent Church, The Life and Faith of the Church of the Lord (Aladura)* (Glasgow: OUP, 1967), p. 84f.

³⁸ S.A. Adewale, *The Religion of the Yoruba: A Phenomenological Analysis* (Ibadan: np, 1988), p. 58.

³⁹ According to Adewale, in making medicine or magic, three elements: alligator pepper, kola nuts, bitter kola etc are always used. The rituals of the third day after the birth of a child are also important to know the destiny of the child.

⁴⁰ Adewale, *The Religion of the Yoruba*.

⁴¹ Adewale, *The Religion of the Yoruba*.

⁴² J.D.Y. Peel, *Aladura: A Religious Movement among the Yoruba* (Ibadan: OUP, 1968), p. 122.

⁴³ Adewale, *The Religion of the Yoruba*, p. 52.

⁴⁴ Adewale, *The Religion of the Yoruba*. This is not to say that the Yoruba are unmindful about their fate in the hereafter. Adewale agrees that they also pray for 'good death and good heaven', p. 55.

⁴⁵ Adewale, *The Religion of the Yoruba*.

⁴⁶ I Adewale, *The Religion of the Yoruba*.

⁴⁷ Adewale, *The Religion of the Yoruba*, p. 55.

starting point for some theologies.⁴⁸ As Stinton recognizes, the 'African concept of life is fundamental to the ways in which Christians interpret and appropriate the gospel.'⁴⁹ It is in consequence of this that emphasis on *cura divina* (divine healing) has become the trademark of virtually all NPCs. It is believed that any one who is called to establish a ministry will also be equipped to perform signs and wonders, the foremost of which is to heal the sick and deliver the oppressed. At conferences, seminars and conventions the themes on healing and deliverance are overstressed. The enthusiasm and willingness of the NPCs to address people's problems like sickness, poverty, attacks from evil spirits, barrenness, loneliness and all kinds of unproductiveness and misfortunes demonstrate the centrality of healing and wholeness to the African. Amba Oduyoye and Amoah observe that the remarkable growth of the NPCs is due to the fact that 'Christ, the great Healer, is seen as the centre of the Christology of these charismatic churches.'⁵⁰ Pobee and Mwaura also underscored this thrust when they declared that 'healing is the most important reason for people joining these churches, often in reaction to the attitudes of the mission churches.'⁵¹

Without any doubt the *Aladura* had given the pride of place to healing and wholeness in their ministries right from the beginning. The reasons are obvious. As Ela insists: 'the African universe of sickness is inseparable from the spirit world and that consequently healing must be addressed within this symbolic universe.'⁵² Furthermore, Ela emphasises 'the importance of healing ministries, and again calls for the Bible to be reread in such a way as to relate the African people to the invisible world.'⁵³ Evidently, this is what the AICs had done all along and so there is no gainsaying the fact that the NPCs are only disseminating the kernel which they garnered from the AICs.

On the causes of sicknesses and diseases, as with the AICs, the NPCs accept the commonly held traditional view that sickness may be caused by the machinations of witches, sorcerers and implacable enemies. In both cases the background of the patients and the prophet-healer/ pastor-deliverance-minister helps to facilitate the accomplishment of the expected miracles. It is important to mention, however, that in the acts of healing and deliverance, unlike in the AICs, most leaders in the NPCs are opposed to *etutu* (placatory sacrifices), *li lu ago adura* (symbolic act of tolling the bell), use of symbolic objects like *mariwo* or *ida* (palm frond), *amure* (girdle), *abeḷa* or *imole* (candle), *omi adura* (drinking of sacred water), *iwe isegun* (ritual bath) and other forms of *ise isegun* (victory or rather crisis rituals), which they consider to be un-Christian. Also, the NPC ministers make efforts to de-emphasise the dependence of worshippers on their Pastors. This is the motive behind Pastor Olukoya's 'do-it-yourself-prayer sessions'.

⁴⁸ See eg. D. Stinton, 'Africa, East and West', in John Parratt (ed) *An Introduction to Third World Theologies* (Cambridge: UP 2004), p. 120.

⁴⁹ Stinton, 'Africa, East and West'.

⁵⁰ E. Amoah & M.A. Oduyoye, 'The Christ for African Women', in V. Fabella and M.A. Oduyoye(eds), *With Passion and Compassion: Third World Women doing Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 1988), p. 39.

⁵¹ See J.S. Pobee & Philomena Mwaura "Excerpts from *International Review of Missions*, in *Contact : A Publication of the WCC*, No.170, July-Sept. 2000, 10-11.

⁵² Stinton quotes Ela in Diane Stinton in *Jesus of Africa: Voices of Contemporary African Christology* (New York: Orbis, 2004), p. 73. See Ela, 'De l'assistance à la libération'

⁵³ Stinton in *Jesus of Africa*.

Trepidation about the enemy and externalisation of evil

Another fundamental sphere where the weight of the influence of the AICs on the NPCs is noticeable is in their inclusive externalisation of evil. The African cosmos is saturated with wicked spirits: demons, witches, wizards, sorcerers as well as the dark influences that mortals wield against one another through ruthless magicians and spiteful persons etc. There is the tendency within both assemblies to make out the devil with all his agents as the source(s) for nearly all the misfortunes, poverty, diseases and the trials that their victims stumble upon in life. As a result of these, the NPCs make much of setting at liberty of those who are oppressed by unseen and human enemies. There is much teaching on demonism in conjunction with deliverance and exorcism. Bible passages (usually taken from the Old Testament) which create in one's mind conquest of the evil one are stressed. Examples include:

No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord and this is their vindication from me. (Isaiah 54:17).

Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me (Micah 7:8).

Olukoya has copious prayer models which he believes 'can help to provide a way out for all those wallowing helplessly under satanic harassment'.⁵⁴ For example, he picks on Esther Chapt.7 to give an outline on how to pray to overcome the stubborn and unrepentant enemy.⁵⁵ The prayer is titled '*My Haman shall die in my place*'.⁵⁶ He explains:

If you take your stand for God and avoid any form of compromise in your Christian life, like Mordecai did during his time, any person or group of persons who may conspire to eliminate you from the land of the living shall end up being eliminated in your stead.⁵⁷

The guidelines to follow include reading and praying with Jeremiah 30:16 and 17:18. A list of 39 prayers to be said include the following:

- (i) Let every evil geographical hindrance to my praying to breakthroughs in this programme clear away in Jesus name;
- (ii) Every power scattering my resources and blessings, fall down and die in Jesus name;
- (iii) Every demonic panel set up against me, scatter into desolation, in the name of Jesus;
- (iv) Let every fetish material directed against my progress turn against its owner, in the name of Jesus;
- (v) I cancel every charge, every report brought against me in the kingdom of darkness in the name of Jesus;

⁵⁴ See editors' comments at the back of the book *Prayer Rain*.

⁵⁵ Elsewhere, Olukoya identifies the enemy as Pharaoh-like pursuers who openly threatened and harassed the Hebrews (Exodus 14), *Prayer Rain*, p. 239.

⁵⁶ Olukoya, *Prayer Rain*, p. 526.

⁵⁷ Olukoya, *Prayer Rain*, p. 526.

- (vi) I revoke and nullify every condemnation passed upon me in the kingdom of darkness, in the name of Jesus.
- (vii) I paralyse all satanic agents trying to drink the blood of my prosperity in the name of Jesus.⁵⁸

The belief in the reality of witchcraft can be seen from Olukoya's outline on 'Power against household witchcraft'.⁵⁹ He explains:

Household witchcraft is a sub-group of household wickedness which specifically uses satanic powers to harm, enslave, divert, mislead and overthrow victims through a continuous bombardment with problems. This satanic agent also uses curses, spells and incantations and death to torment its victims. The victim is placed under evil control, domination and intimidation and will as a result be weary, confused, anxious and depressed. He obeys strange commands and at times experiences accidents.⁶⁰

Olukoya admonishes: 'as you use these prayer points (52 listed)⁶¹ to attack every household witchcraft, you will have divine victory over it and have its counsels upon your life turned to naught'.⁶² Some of the prayer points include the following:⁶³

- (a) Let the thunder of God locate and dismantle the throne of witchcraft in my household, in the name of Jesus;
- (b) (Lay your hand right hand on your head and repeat) Every witchcraft plantation, pollution, deposit and material in my body, be melted by the fire of God and be flushed out by the blood of Jesus;
- (c) Let the thunder of God scatter beyond redemption the foundation of witchcraft in my household, in Jesus' name;
- (d) Let every local and international witchcraft network of my household witches be shattered to pieces, in Jesus' name;
- (e) Let the thunder and the fire of God locate the storehouses and strong rooms of my household witchcraft harbouring my blessings and pull them down in the name of Jesus;
- (f) Any material taken from my body and placed on any witchcraft altar be roasted by the fire of God, in the name of Jesus;
- (g) Any part of me shared out amongst household/village witches, I recover you, in the name of Jesus. And reverse any witchcraft burial fashioned against me, in the name of Jesus;
- (h) Every witchcraft padlock fashioned against any area of my life, be roasted, in the name of Jesus;
- (i) Any witchcraft bird flying for my sake, fall down and die and be roasted to ashes, in the name of Jesus;
- (j) Every witchcraft obstacle and hindrance put on the road to my desired miracle and success be removed by the east wind of God, in the name of Jesus;
- (k) As regards the household witches that are contrary to me let as many of them as are stubbornly unrepentant be smitten by the sun in the day and by the moon at night, in

⁵⁸ Olukoya, *Prayer Rain*, p. 526.

⁵⁹ Olukoya, *Prayer Rain*, p. 562.

⁶⁰ Olukoya, *Prayer Rain* p. 562.

⁶¹ Olukoya, *Prayer Rain* pp. 564-568.

⁶² Olukoya, *Prayer Rain* p. 562.

⁶³ Olukoya, 'excepts from points' pp. 565-568.

the name of Jesus.

The ingenuity of contextualising the problem of evil and how to deal with the dilemma noticeable in the NPCs were present in the theology of the early founders of the AICs. It may be recalled that one of the areas of dissimilarities between AICs and the MICs was in relation to religious worldview. Hiebet is accurate in his observation that 'people perceive the world differently because they make different assumptions about reality.'⁶⁴ The AICs believe that the enemy is ubiquitous. They hold that the enemy can be 'so much in close proximity to one as the cloth one wears'. Enemies are found within the family. It is much worse in polygynous homes and in extended families where envy and jealousies are believed to be the grounds of enmity. Indeed, not only Nigerians but Africans generally exhibit fear of the dark influences that mortals wield against close relations, friends and colleagues through enchantments and mysterious powers. Members of the AICs embark on a number of activities in order to overcome their enemies. They go to the mountains, seaside, sacred places and out of way places in order to pray or engage in rituals to prevail over the enemy. In some of the AICs, especially the Celestial Church of Christ, the use of objects like processed *missparis lafinda* (processed sanctified water), *imole* (candles), *amure* (palmfrond) soap, sponge, salt, sugar, coconut etc. may be used in one way or the other for *ise* or *áájò* (victory rituals) in order to triumph over or do away with the works of the enemy.

It is imperative to call attention to the fact that in prayer and 'spiritual warfare' the NPCs engage in *deliverance* rather than *exorcism*. The latter is more dominant in the AICs. Kalu draws a helpful distinction between the two. Deliverance is more than expelling hindering spirits but 'includes replenishment with new power for coping victoriously'.⁶⁵ Thus, the NPCs do not only help to overcome the obstructing spirit(s) but also counsel with and teach the individual the mechanisms to ward off future attacks and gain more victories in life situations.

Contextualised Worship

The NPCs operate what may be described as 'free liturgy'. Their order of service is usually not stereotyped. It could be mutated now and again in harmony with the leading of the Holy Spirit. Worship leaders are expected to 'be sensitive to the way the Spirit is moving.' To the NPCs, worship is 'a celebration and a response to that experience for each person and for the gathered congregation.'⁶⁶ The initial activity of the preacher is to shout '*Praise the Lord* to which the congregation responds *Alleluiah*. This may be said several times until virtually every member of the congregation is wide-awake and ready to proceed.

It may be recalled that as early as in 1916, Garrick Braide, one of the earliest prophets and forerunners of the AICs, had recommended a move from fixed to free worship. By this he meant a departure from the worship style, which can be 'lifeless' to a form of service: '... in which Africans would praise God in their own dialects, in songs,

⁶⁴ P. Hierbert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1985), p. 45.

⁶⁵ Kalu, *Power, Poverty and Prayer*, p. 128.

⁶⁶ For a similar experience in England, see Elizabeth Collinge-Hill, 'The Experience of Worship :A Study of Worship in England at the Millenium,' M.Phil. Dissertation, Dept. of Theology, School of Historical Studies. The University of Birmingham, 2001.

prayers and worship...One, which will not look foreign to meet the needs and desires of the Africans'.⁶⁷

It is natural then that the emergence of the AICs was a revolt against the formal and almost monotonous liturgy in the historic churches. The AICs claimed then that the formal liturgy of the MICs which was conducted with solemnity, or rather serenity and restraint, did not meet the emotional and ritual needs of the African Christians. The AICs set in motion a liturgy, which was not encumbered with 'formalities, creedal statements and stereotypical' outlines. To them, worship means members joining together for reflections on the goodness of God in all acts of service. Consequently, they initiated a system of worship, which gave much room for active participation of members at virtually any point in time during the service. Usually, the preacher started his sermon by shouting 'Allelu, Allelu O' to which the congregation replied 'Allelu'. This was repeated until there was a final 'Alleluia'. Bishop Sarpong asked the Mission Churches to emulate this interactive trait because, according to him, 'monolog demagoguery is un-African'.⁶⁸ By reason of the motivation of the Holy Spirit the believer in the AIC is empowered to play a part in the ministry of the church, its worship in praise, in thanksgiving, prayer, sharing experience and communion with each other. Piercing prophecies, songs with dancing, ecstatic noise including speaking in tongues and strange sounds divorced from any human language and frenzied movements may be heard and felt at any time in the course of the service. Also, unlike in the historic churches where prayers are read and the congregation has to wait till the end to act in response, in the AICs *ex tempore* prayers are punctuated intermittently by congregational responses. That is why Ayandele stressed that every member is part of a *dramatis personae*, 'an active, heart-and- soul participant'⁶⁹ in the AICs' worship.

Also captivating is the NPC's attempt at contextualising preaching. Kock is in agreement with others who assert that Pentecostal spirituality is in a way doing theology through shared, sacred stories which arise out of and give guidance to the community of faith in their shared vision of the kingdom. Their teachings on blessings and prosperity smack of their counteraction to the problem of poverty and desperation in the society.⁷⁰

It is important to note that the fore-runners of AICs, Garrick Braide and Wade Harris adopted methods of teaching and preaching which were markedly different from those of the white missionaries and the mainline African clergy. They adopted the non-intellectual and practical approach. The leaders of AICs have followed this kind of approach ever since. The Aladura preachers draw on discourses, which are closer to everyday communication. They tell stories interlaced with testimonies and songs, which can reinforce their homilies. As Pobebe observes, one may not always agree with their exegesis or elucidation of some passages or terms but it is undeniable that the Bible is used as a crucial tool of mission, a powerful vehicle for the word of God by the AICs.⁷¹

Another aspect of NPCs' worship, which attracts attention, is their success in contextualising music. Quite a number of their songs are not necessarily in African

⁶⁷ See Ayegboyin & Ishola, *African Indigenous Churches* p.60.

⁶⁸ Kwasi Sarpong, 'Success of Faith and Healing Churches in Ghana,' *World Mission*, 25 (1974), p. 2.

⁶⁹ E.A Ayandele, 'The Aladura among the Yoruba: A challenge to the 'orthodox' churches' in Ogbu Kalu (ed.), *Christianity in West Africa: The Nigerian Story* (Ibadan: Day Star, 1978), p. 358.

⁷⁰ Kock J de Wynanad, 'Pentecostal Power for A Pentecostal Task: Empowerment through Engagement in South African Context', *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 16, (2000).

⁷¹ J. S Pobebe, 'I will lift my eyes to Muzano', *International Review of Mission*, LXXV, 298, (1986), p. 127.

vernacular - some are in English language or Pidgin English - but this is ostensibly to appeal to the youth who now flock into the NPCs. They sing choruses, accompanied with clapping, swaying or elaborate dancing, with uncontrolled enthusiasm. Evidently, contextualisation of Christian music and the overture to singing African music, choruses were initiated by the AICs. Their songs are lively, short, put in simple tunes and repeated several times for every member to follow regardless of age, with dancing, and clapping as dynamic components of worship. Every aspect of worship in the AICs is celebrated as a sharing experience. For example, 'offering time is indeed a blessing time'. This is a segment in worship that members look forward to. Unlike in the MICs where offering is collected by ushers, in the AICs the worshippers make their way to the front singing, dancing, hurling their handkerchiefs in praise and rejoicing as they drop their offering in the bowl. The reason for these acts is obvious. As Mbiti rightly notes singing and dancing reach deep into the innermost parts of African peoples and many things come to the surface under musical inspiration which otherwise may not be readily revealed.⁷² In their music they vent their pains and frustrations to God as they worship.

Contextual forms of leadership

Leadership is very crucial in the NPCs. The structure and running of the NPCs differs markedly from the administration of the MICs. In most NPCs charismatic leadership provides the basis of church organisation due to the importance attached to spiritual insight and wisdom inherent in leaders. As Cox notes, 'the leaders of NPCs constitute the African expression of the world-wide Pentecostal movement'.⁷³ The history of most of the NPCs exhibits to some extent reliance of the members on the spiritual insights and leadership of the founders who are believed to manifest tremendous faith in their daily lives and particularly during worship. Leaders are typically revered. Some are addressed as 'spiritual fathers' or *Papa* irrespective of how young they may be and this is because of the strong sense of veneration of the *alàgbà* (elder-the embodiment of wisdom and experience) in the traditional societies. In most NPCs the heir apparent to the founder is usually a member of his own family, usually the wife or a son.

The indigenous leadership style, rooted in giftedness, charisma and spiritual authority that one possesses, which is now evident in the NPCs, can be traced to the AICs. By and large, leadership in the AICs does not rest on academic attainment and or theological training for the ministry. Leaders were magnetic figures who have had some deep religious experience in prolonged meditations, visions and dreams before they were called to establish their ministries. In the Church of the Lord and Celestial Church of Christ the children of the founders have been appointed at one time or another to take on the mantle of leadership.

Mission and Evangelism

The NPCs embark on vigorous and dynamic missionary policy and programmes by making extensive use of modern means of communication: the mass media, including

⁷² See J.S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, p. 67.

⁷³ H. Cox, *Fires from Heaven, The rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Cassel, 1966).

video, radio and magazines.⁷⁴ In recent time, most of the well-known evangelists who speak on the radio or make weekly or daily appearances on the television are from the NPCs. David Martin, citing the example of Pentecostals in West Africa, says they 'increasingly reject the traditional withdrawal into enclaves of faith and are inclined rather to contest public space. There they are in direct and successful competition with secular media'.⁷⁵ They proclaim a pragmatic gospel seeking to address practical needs like sickness, poverty, unemployment, loneliness etc. More importantly they claim that mission is everybody's business. Some design elaborate curriculum on evangelism by which members are initiated into the programme of reaching out to prospective members. Some of their innovative strategies include: house to house evangelism, mail prayer ministry, distribution of tracts, handbills, newsletters, car and bible stickers etc. Matthews Ojo asserts, with ample evidences, that over the past two decades there has been tremendous progress in indigenous missionary enterprises all over West Africa.⁷⁶ These African initiatives, Ojo reveals, have largely been nurtured and sustained by the 'charismatic movements which are a new religious phenomenon in African Christianity'.⁷⁷ He concludes that charismatic missions have been successful in 'spreading charismatic renewal and contributing to church growth in Africa,⁷⁸ and, we may add, in other continents as well.

We have stressed elsewhere that one of the exceptional characteristics of the AICs is their dedication to evangelism.⁷⁹ They are known to organise regular crusades, revivals and prayer sessions in all towns and villages. These aided the growth and development of the AICs. Indeed, one of the traits of the AICs which the MICs leadership were compelled to appreciate is their evangelistic prowess. Writing in the late 1980s Mala hinted that the 'AICs dominate the evangelistic work in the country'.⁸⁰ Undoubtedly, all initial leaders of AICs were mission-minded and exceptional evangelists. The effects of the amazing grassroots evangelistic impacts of their movements are still evident today. Olukoya, the founder of the MFMM, underscores this thrust in his dedication of a book to Apostle Joseph Babalola of Christ Apostolic Church:

This book, *Prayer Rain*, is dedicated to Brother J.A Babalola and his team of aggressive prayer warriors (who) entered forbidden forests, silenced demons that demanded worship, paralysed deeply-rooted, anti-gospel activities. Sometimes...they emptied hospitals by the healing power of the Lord Jesus Christ, rendered witch doctors jobless, and they started the first indigenous Holy Ghost-filled church in Nigeria. So far-and we stand to be corrected-none has equalled, let alone surpassed this humble brother in the field of aggressive evangelism in this country⁸¹.

⁷⁴ van Dijk, *Christian Fundamentalism*, p. 13.

⁷⁵ David Martin, *Pentecostalism: The world their Parish* (Oxford: Blackwell), p. 144.

⁷⁶ Matthews Ojo, 'The Dynamics of Indigenous Charismatic Missionary enterprises in West Africa' *Missionalia: The Journal of the southern African Missiological Society*.

⁷⁷ Ojo, 'The Dynamics of Indigenous Charismatic'.

⁷⁸ Ojo, 'The Dynamics of Indigenous Charismatic'.

⁷⁹ Ayegboyin & Ishola, *African Indigenous Churches*, p.32.

⁸⁰ Babs Mala, 'African Instituted Churches in Nigeria', p. 23.

⁸¹ Olukoya, *Prayer Rain* (Lagos: MFMM, 1999), p. v.

Dignified place of Women

Until very recently women played a very passive and supportive role in historic churches. Susie Stanley uses the term “stained-glass ceiling” to describe barriers to women’s leadership and advancement in Christian denominations with a long history of ordaining them. In the AICs, however, right from the beginning, women were accorded eminent standing in the church. Women were and are still provided with opportunities for leadership and the exercise of authority. Omoyajowo has a long list of women who have risen to the top echelon of the indigenous church hierarchy.⁸² The NPCs, since their emergence have made more distinctive contributions to the historical evolution of religion by removing some limitations imposed on women in the AICs⁸³ and by involving women, at all levels of ministry.

Borrowing a leaf from the AICs and also from the trend in global Pentecostalism, women have exercised ministerial leadership in numerous ways, serving as stewardship personnel, evangelists, worship leaders and religious activists, and sometimes having charge of churches along with their husbands as co-principal administrators or founders. They have perhaps been even more consistent and innovative in the practice of the ministry and ordination of women than their predecessors. The distinctive leadership orientation of women in the NPCs has led to progressive levels of female empowerment and male-female cooperation that will prove vital to the success of Pentecostalism throughout the twenty-first century.

Annual conventions and communal ethos

One of the benefits of the African worldview, which has been celebrated by African scholars, concerns how people relate to one another. In Africa, it is understood that it is good for persons and groups within the society to relate cooperatively. It is important to emphasise that in this worldview, even in the same society, the relationship between those who are in the ‘in- group’ and those in the ‘out- group’ are distinct. Whilst those who are in the ‘in-group’ are treated more as ‘one of us’ with a communitarian ethos those in the other group may be treated with reserve.⁸⁴ The NPCs have imbibed this culture by inculcating a spirituality which is communitarian. Most of them have established ‘holy cities’ to which members converge at least once in a year. The conventions are reminiscent of the Jewish holy gathering at Shiloh (1 Sam 1:3). As in Shiloh, the NPCs’ conventions are times of sacrifice of praise, worship, prayer, testimonies, making vows, and covenant renewals. Not only these, they are also occasions to make new acquaintances and have fellowship with one another. The Living

⁸² See J.A. Omoyajowo, ‘The Aladura Churches in Nigeria since Independence’ in Fasole-Luke *et al* (eds) *Christianity in Independence Africa* (Ibadan: OUP, 1978); See also, K. Asare Opoku ‘Changes within Christianity: The Case of Musama Disco Christo Church’ in Fashole –Luke *et al.* (eds), *Ibid.*

⁸³ In the Celestial Church, for example, ‘women are not permitted to preach the sermon or read the lesson or make announcements during Christian devotional services’. They are not allowed to ‘perform any spiritual functions connected with conducting of services in the Church other saying the prayers when asked and reading portions of the Bible quoted by the preacher’. Also, ‘under no circumstances shall women say the grace during devotional services or lead men in prayers’. But outside the Church ‘amongst a congregation of women and in outdoor preaching, female members may perform spiritual functions of preaching. See Deji Akinola, *S.B.J.Oshoffa and Celestial*, Lagos: Flash Litho, 1987, 110.

⁸⁴ See e.g. Charles Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2001) pp. 51-58, 65, 358.

Faith Church Worldwide Inc.(Winners' Chapel) organises its annual Convention tagged *Shiloh on Canaan Land*, 'the covenant home of Winners' at Otta where the headquarters is situated. The Redeemed Christian Church of God coordinates the *Holy Ghost Festival* at the *Redemption Camp*, Kilometre 46, Lagos Expressway. The Mountain of Fire and Miracle Ministries Convention is at the *Prayer City*, Lagos Expressway. The Stone Church has proposed *Goshen Land*, Apatere for *Dunamis* convention. The Living Spring Chapel has her International Convention at *Dominion City* on Iwo Road/Ojoo Ibadan Expressway. Victory Life Ministry has her Victory Life World Convention at *Alomaja Victory City*, Ilesha-Akure Expressway. Members of various ministries identify the 'in-group' members with car-bumper, house, office and Bible stickers on which are written 'Winners Family' or the 'Winners', 'Redeemers' or 'Redeemed Family', 'Living springers' and the like.

This communitarian ethos has antecedent in the AIC tradition. Virtually all the founding fathers of the AICs have had their headquarters, birthplaces or burial sites transformed into 'holy cities'. The *Celestial City*, Imeko, is 'the final home of the remains of Pastor Oshoffa',⁸⁵ the founder of Celestial Church of Christ. The *Prayer Retreat Centre* of the Christ Apostolic Church is built in Ikeji Arakeji where Apostle Babalola had his divine call in 1928. The place also serves as the proposed site for the Joseph Ayo Babalola University (JABU). Since Saint Orimolade's death in October 1933, *Ojokoro gardens*, near Agege (Lagos) where he was buried has become a sacred place for the Cherubim and Seraphim Movements. *Mount Tabborar*, in Ogere, is the holy camp, the 'spiritual' headquarters, birth place and the burial site of Primate (Dr.) J. O. Oshitelu, the founder of the Church of the Lord. Members make periodic pilgrimages to these places at least once in a year for their annual festivals, prayer and fasting retreats and other meetings. As Anderson notes, the significance of the holy city to the AICs cannot be overestimated:

This place of pilgrimage becomes once a place of magnetic attraction to which converts flock to realise their new Christian identity and sometimes to find the ultimate source of empowerment in the person of the prophetic leader.⁸⁶

As it happens in *Mozano*, the Holy city of the Musama Disco Christ Church, regular pilgrimages at festivals create a sense of community among members.⁸⁷ As Oduro notes, 'the communal lifestyle in the AICs makes members 'feel a greater sense of belonging to a wider and more affectionate body'.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Prophet Oshoffa had asked that his burial ground be set aside as the Holy ground and a place of pilgrimage. The land was launched and named the Celestial City in 1983. See Deji Akinola, *S.B.J. Oshoffa and Celestial*, Flash Litho, 1978, 123.

⁸⁶ See Allan Anderson, *African Reformation: African Initiated Christianity in the Twentieth Century* (Trenton, NJ & Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press, 2001), p. 255.

⁸⁷ Pobebe, 'I will lift my eyes to Muzano', p. 125.

⁸⁸ T.O. Oduro, 'The History and Pedagogy of the Good News Training Institute', in D. A. Shank,(ed.) *African Independent Churches*, p. 135.

The 'we- feeling' is expressed through concern with the earthly plights of devotees and sharing together in personal and family events such as marriage, bereavement, retirement, christening of babies etc. As a mark of solidarity, members rejoice together as they listen

and celebrate victories shared in testimonies. They troop out and dance toward the podium, shout seven *halleuyahs*, seven *hosannas*, seven *hurrays*, and jump seven times with celebrants. During such occasions members also share and, at times, shoulder a greater part of the expenses in the celebrations. Besides, as a mark of 'in-group' identification, when the Celestians meet they start off their compliments with the words *hallelu o*, to which the response is *halleuyah*. For the Cherubim and Seraphim the compliments start off with *Ayo nio* (its, all joy for you) to which the response is *Ayo repete* (yes, tremendous joy indeed). In spite of the fact that these movements have become international and multi-ethnic, these marks of identification have continued.

Concluding Remarks

Who is wearing a borrowed robe now? An examination of the religious landscape shows that there is more competition amongst denominations for membership than ever before. Science, technology and globalization are compelling religious institutions not to remain static. Because of this, traditional conservatism is steadily wearing away while the spirit of mutual simulation is going on. It is becoming evident that some AICs which used to insist on practices like *fifi mariwo se isegun* (ritual use of palm frond), animal blood sacrifices and purification rites with a pail of water, candle, sponge and soap are abandoning them. Such practices have compelled some youth to leave the church to join the NPCs. At the same time some modernists in the AICS are advocating the adoption of some practices like using computer projectors and power point slides, optimal appropriation of media technologies, building mass choir, decorating the sanctuary, *rerodos* and the altar with flowers and linen material, which are archetypal of the NPCs (because of their openness to international Pentecostal influences). In recent years many mission or historic churches have also toned down on their claims to rigid orthodoxy by allowing freer forms of worship, engaging in miracle healing, Holy Ghost services, Prayer and fasting retreats, vigils, deliverance and anointing services etc. It is obvious then that Nigerians are now having historic churches of their own besides those initiated by foreign Christian missions. The final note then is that there is mutual borrowing of 'attractive robes'. This, in effect, means that the time has come for all segments to work together towards evangelism, church development and growth.

