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CHRISTIAN CHARISMATIC MOVEMENTS IN MODERN AFRICA: A MEETING POINT BETWEEN MISSIONARY CHRISTIANITY AND AFRICAN INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS

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Abstract

This paper examines the spread of charismatic Christianity in modern Africa from the beginning of the 20th century to present day, and the implications of this for missionary Christianity and African socio-religious contexts. Through a qualitative exploration of primary and secondary sources, the paper examines the history of missionary work in Africa and the development of a distinct African theology informed by the traditional African spirituality and worldview, and how it has in turn shaped missionary Christianity in the continent. Finally, this paper argues that the spread of charismatic Christianity in modern Africa represents a unique meeting point between missionary Christianity and African indigenous worldviews, often synthesizing the spiritual, economic, and cultural forces in both, enabling further dialogue on the matter. The paper suggests that this unique meeting point and future dialogue have great potentials for the African church's success in the 21st century.

Keywords: Charismaticism; Missionary Christianity; Indigenous Worldviews

Introduction

One of the most remarkable trends of the last few decades among the Christian population of Africa has been the dramatic rise of charismatic movements; making contemporary religious landscape in Africa to become increasingly charismatic. This is traceable to the outburst of revival groups within the mainline churches in the wake of the twentieth century. Thousands of these movements have cropped up in recent times which are rapidly becoming a powerful new social and religious force. These movements arose as a result of the contact between Christianity and African ancestral cultures. They appear in many different forms and challenge the understanding of the established churches. The explosion of this charismatic Christianity has provoked an enormous upheaval in the African religious field and has acquired a great visibility within and over the years.

The early foreign missionary activities in Africa were carried out as if Africans have no culture whatsoever, with the missionary very often knowing nothing about the traditional religious values which formed the mental and social framework within which the gospel was to be received. This must have informed their attitudes towards African traditional worldviews and consequent condemnation of almost everything about the people as being opposed to Christian principles and morality, resulting in socio-cultural and religious dislocation of Africans occasioned by the establishment of missionary Christianity in the continent. However, charismatic movements arose at the turn of the twentieth century and call for a dialogical approach to doing mission in Africa by rejecting the easy condemnation of non-Christian religions and spiritual traditions. It further recognizes the resilience of the force of African religiosity among Christians and demands that Christianity engages the interior of the indigenous worldviews to reclaim it for Christ. This set the stage for the

meeting point between African indigenous spirituality and Missionary Christianity that followed.

Previous studies on African charismatic movements seem not to have paid enough attention to how the movements championed the course of dialogue between African indigenous spirituality and missionary Christianity. Ojo (1988) for instance examined the origin and growth of the Deeper Life Bible Ministry in southwest Nigeria. His emphasis was on the origin, doctrine and practices of the emerging “Holiness Movement” in southwest Nigeria. The study exposes how African charismatic leaders originated from the mission established churches based on dissatisfaction with what they regarded as fire outage within the mainline churches. The work is of great value to this current study in the area of exposing African initiative in Christian ‘holiness movements’ that pursued missionary expansionist programme with dogged determinism. This, the author said was achieved through the use of literature and vigorous evangelistic activities yet, the work did not do much in the area of such historic meeting point. Marshall (1992) worked on the socio-political involvement of African Pentecostal churches in the public sphere. Her study exposes how religion, especially indigenous initiated churches could influence political and social dynamism of a people, but with just a cursory glance at the enduring dialogue. Gifford (1992) gives an overview of the growth of charismatic movements in many countries in African with no much attention to how these movements occasioned Africa’s liturgical revolution. Gifford (1994), however, showed how Nigerian Pentecostalism influenced the growth and activities of some Ghanaian charismatic organizations, but did not show the impacts of charismatic movements in Africa’s religious revolution.

Hackett (1998) exposes how Pentecostal and charismatic movements in Nigeria and Ghana appropriated media technology in their evangelism. The emphasis of the study is on media evangelism and its impacts on trans-national status of Africa’s new religious movements. Nothing much was said on charismatism and Africa’s religious revolution. Ojo (1997) worked extensively on cross-cultural missionary activities of Nigerian Pentecostal movements in Africa. His work is very useful to the current study especially given the comprehensive nature of the study on African Christian initiative. However, the work left a gap in the area of African initiative in Christian liturgical revolution. Corten and Marshall-Fratani (2001) largely examined Pentecostal movements in Africa within the context of trans-nationalism and globalization. The work was not on the impact of charismatism and African initiative in contemporary African Christianity. Anderson (2002) observes that all over Africa in the 1970s, new independent Pentecostal and charismatic churches began to emerge. He maintains that many of these churches were influenced by the Pentecostal movement in Europe and North America. This view seems to disregard African imprints on Christianity and presents African charismatic Christianity as if it is totally foreign.

There have indeed been local initiatives and in many respects African charismatic Christianity resonates with the African world view. The current study, therefore, sets to disagree with his position, agreeing with Kalu (2008) that African charismatic movement has indigenous origin before they started feeling the influence of American electronic churches. Kalu (2008) did an extensive study on African Pentecostalism. He laid emphasis on the indigenous origin of Pentecostal movements in Africa. The study is of great significance to the current work as it was a foundation upon which this current study stands to argue about the indigenous origin of charismatic movements in Africa. Yet Kalu’s work did not pay attention to how charismatism reshaped the African religious landscape.

Mwaura (2008) did a study on African Pentecostalism and charismatic movements, where she focused on how the new Christian movements have gained prominence due to their aggressive evangelistic campaigns through the mass media, involvement in personal, social and political transformation and emphasis on a pietistic deliverance theology. Her study further exposes religious transformation of African due to the activities of these movements. She, however, did not give detailed attention to liturgical revolution in Africa as a result of indigenous charismatic movements. Asamoah-Gyaduto (2008) carried out a research on charismatic renewal in Ghanaian mainline churches. The central thesis there is that the push for the integration of a charismatic agenda into non-Pentecostal liturgies is facilitated by charismatic renewal prayer groups operating within historic mission. The attention was more on the implications of indigenous charismatic movements for African diasporan Christian denominations. Ojo (2008) draws attention to the symbiotic relationship that exists in religious networking and indigenous missionary enterprises within the Anglophone and Francophone West African countries. He, however, did not give insights on how indigenous charismatic movements contributed to setting in motion the message of the early missionaries in Africa. These are gaps for this current study to fill. This current study therefore advances knowledge on the concept, character, indigenous origin of African charismatic movement and most importantly their impacts in inducing the overdue meeting point between African indigenous spirituality and missionary Christianity.

The Concept and Character of African Charismatism

The new Christian movement in Africa was named charismatic, perhaps describing both their character and origins. By charismatic movements here we refer to the revivalist groups seeking to express a deeper level of religious experience without leaving the mission-founded denominations. Asamoah-Gyaduto (2008) calls them renewal groups within existing historic western mission denominations who sought to give active expression to their new-found experiential religions. Mwaura (2008) refers to them as renewal movements within mainstream Christianity, both Protestants and Catholics. The charismatic story here is woven into the wider travesty of Christian presence and African response that challenged the mainstream or missionary established churches. It was an African reaction to a Christianity that did not adequately address their religious experience. These movements later consolidated into ecclesiastical institutions as precursors of African Pentecostalism, particularly when revivalists were expelled from the mainline churches or fellowships grew and evolved into churches. Indeed, Pentecostalism in contemporary Africa started as charismatic movements, with membership drawn from within various churches as the people sought to create a new religious space for themselves. These movements also catalyzed the charismatization of the mainline churches.

The movement is defined by a theology that emphasizes a personal spiritual encounter with God and at the same time cast a diatribe against the theology of the mainline churches. Drawing from the strength of primal religions, the movement pushes further by imagining faith as a person's way of receiving the grace that enables the charisma that is freely given to achieve self discipline, sobriety, holiness, and righteousness and create the potential to recover primal piety in trances, dreams, and visions, as well as primal hope in the expectancy of miracles, supernatural interventions in human affairs. That is the ascension of the charismatic power, a transforming experience that energizes revivalism. It is an experience of new relationship with Christ as saviour, healer, sanctifier and the

sustainer of the hope of glory. Holiness, healing, and pre-millennial eschatology are woven into the charismatic theology that imagined the mainline churches as benchwarmers who have lost the power of the gospel that was very real in the early Jesus movement. Africa charismatism is a quest for a deeper faith and spiritual power that the mainline churches could not offer.

Worship, music and dance are the most attractive characteristics of African charismatic Christianity. The music and dance aspect of its liturgy engages the whole person instead of just the person's reason. They realize the impact of music and dance as two powerful tools for winning souls and for attracting the masses, especially women and young people. They are aware of the psychological effect of music and dance in worship, in accessing the supernatural world and in effecting conversion and healing. Music and dance are crucial for the survival of Christianity in contemporary African religious landscape; it is an inculturating pathway for touching youthful audiences already enmeshed and wired in the electronic culture and bored with the equally-packaged institutional Christianity. Music has always been central in human expressions of heart-felt responses to the divine. According to Kalu (2010) "singing and liturgical dance serve as modes of praise and worship and as muscular strategies for inculcating the gospel message because they unite the body, soul, and spirit during worship"(p .86).

This African charismatism has been negatively affected by hostile response from opponents who either ignored or condemned the spirituality as unbiblical, irrational religious enthusiasm, lacking in historical tradition, and wallowing in folk religiosity. The most virulent critics were those who hold the ideology that seeks to encrust traditions inherited from foreign missionaries, turned missionary-founded churches into great opponent of religious radicalism of any colour. The capacity of this changing dimension of African charismatism to harvest some members from the mainline churches, created more tension. Nevertheless, this brand of Christianity has shown a creative response to the deep-level challenges of African environment by applying the spiritual resources of biblical theology that the missionary Christianity muted. This brand of Christianity is like a new period in the history of African religions, continuing the story begun in the primal or traditional religions and a new period in the history of Christianity in which the tradition is being expressed in intellectual, social and religious believes which it has not previously entered.

The Indigenous Origins of African Charismatic Movements

The rapid spread of charismatic movements in Africa since the 1970s constitutes a major development within contemporary African Christianity. The movements were the fastest growing endeavour in West Africa in the 1980s and 1990s. From about 10 independent charismatic organizations in the mid-1970s largely restricted to Nigeria, the number has grown to over 10,000 groups across the continent (Ojo, 2008). Yet, the image of these Africa's religious initiatives has been dominated by the globalism discourse. By this, we mean that attention has been focused more on how global cultural forces have overwhelmed local identities and how charismatic Christianity in Africa originated from Azusa Street, and that it is an extension of the American electronic church. Maura (2008), for instance argues that:

African charismatic movements have their roots in the students' movements and fervent missionary activity of the 1960s and 1970s. In structure and organizations

they are close to their mother churches, that is, the classical Pentecostal churches that were introduced by American and British missionaries in various parts of Africa between the 1920s and 1950s. (p. 181).

This narrative most likely stems from stupendous claim that all forms of charismatic movements around the globe stem from the Azusa street revival experience and merely adopted and adapted the spirituality without paying reference to the origin. Kalu (2010) seems to bemoan this narrative when he states that ‘Sociologist from the 1990s to date employ the modernity/globalization discourse to portray African charismatic as a movement that originated from and has been developed by external change agents, and dependent on trans-national networks’(p. 36). This line of historiography appears as a dirty epithet and a symbol of the failure of African religious creativity. The narrative lacks a long historical perspective, focuses on the contemporary urban contexts, and ignores the rural communities and the socio-cultural process that birthed such religious waves in Africa. Indeed, the Pentecostal awakening in 1906 among the marginalized in North America was preceded by similar experiences among the poor, women and children in African continents. The rise of Garrick Braide’s movement, for example, in the Niger Delta in 1902 came before the revivals inspired by Azusa street experience. Furthermore, this story line may have ignored the clue from different regions that the same Holy Spirit manifested itself to believers all over the world without difference to any single geographical source. Gerloff (2008) notes that:

Such narratives overlook the fact that there were similar uprisings with ‘signs and miracles’ as in the New Testament, not only in the history of Eastern and Western churches, but also in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean long before Azusa, such as in the ‘Jamaica Revival’ 1860–1861 –a first symbiosis of African and Christian elements in the Caribbean with large-scale religious, social and political consequences; in Tirunelveli 1860–65; Travancore 1873–1881, and the Mukti Mission 1905–1907 in India; among the Bataks in Indonesia; the Karans in Myanmar and indigenous groups in China; in the Korean renewal movement from 1903 or in the early beginnings of the African Indigenous churches (AICs) at the turn from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries. (p. 209).

Kalu (2010) echoes that “there was a repeat of the astonishment that perplexed Peter in Caesarea or the Swedes from North Dakota who went to south Africa at the turn of the twentieth century and were scandalized when the heathens spoke in tongues”(p. 17). These interpretations obviously run counter to an exclusively Eurocentric model, and to only one fixed historic pattern of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This means that charismatic derive from the discovery of a ‘series of sparks’ in Los Angeles, Wales, Africa, Chile, Brazil, Armenia, China or elsewhere. Irvin and Poewe (cited in Kalu, 2010) were therefore right to conclude that:

A new framework of mission studies is actively under construction today extending these insights in the light of the growth of Christianity world-wide. In the emerging paradigm we find the agency not just of western missionaries but of the prophets, catechists, preachers, priests and other indigenous church leaders who were responsible for continuing the history of Christianity in various global regions figuring more prominently. (p. 18).

In such an interpretation, Gerloff (2008) insists, the black elements in the charismatic outburst should be perceived as a ‘preludium’ and as Africa’s ‘gift’ to western theological

traditions to initiate a worldwide renewal: source or springboard, not byproduct. The emphasis here is that the outburst of charisma is different from the story of cross-cultural missionary enterprise. While the latter requires a gospel bearer to proclaim the message, the former could begin by the baptism of the Holy Spirit without any human agency. It is on this premise that this study images African charisma as having indigenous origin. The argument here is that in spite of the missionary impulse of the early foreign missionaries, they lacked cross-cultural training and orientation that could have ignited such fire in African Christian congregations.

It is to be noted further that many early devotees of the charismatic movement in Africa did not even know about American Pentecostalism or any other form of it, and do not refer to themselves as Pentecostals. According to Kalu (2010), in Congo Brazzaville, they refer to themselves as revival churches; in Ghana, as charismatic churches, in Kenya, they perceive themselves as neo-Pentecostal movements to distinguish them from the classical Pentecostal churches that were established much later in the twentieth century, and in Nigeria as born again Christians. The pattern of naming memorizes the expression that constituted the origin of the phenomenon.

Inherited Missionary Traditions and Charismatic Explosion in African Christianity

The Christian churches which were brought to Africa by foreign missionaries made little or no effort to acculturate the gospel message and to dialogue with the practices and spirits of traditional African religions. They brought the Bible, condemned old beliefs and practices, replacing them with ecclesiastical traditions and practices that had been developed elsewhere. In this way they introduced a new socio-religious order which was not internationalized enough to provide security in the face of the questions and trials of life in Africa. Yet:

The effectiveness of Christian faith or of any particular manifestation of it is accordingly open to the test whether it gives access to power and prosperity and for protection against natural or spiritual enemies, purposes to which much traditional practice were directed and satisfactorily enforced. (Walls, 1990: 5).

Cross-cultural mission as civilization project further created a bad press for the gospel and may have emasculated its full impact. Collusion with European civilizing project diminished the spiritual vigour of missionary presence and turned it into cultural and power encounters. In the cross-cultural encounter, the missionaries nursed a suspicion about indigenous religions especially what they considered the persuasive power of indigenous spirits, the noise of hypnotic demons and the potential use of music and dance in achieving ecstasy, trance and prophecy. This accounts for what appears to be the muted doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the missionary engagement with African people. They therefore sought to replace the indigenous religious traditions by inculcating western traditions in the process of transplanting Christianity. This fact stands at the backdrop of the explosion of African charismatic agency and response to missionary Christianity. However, it is to be noted that Africans were not mere passive proselytes; indigenous religions remained resilient. In spite of the control systems, Africans wrote their own hidden scripts. A new wind blew across Africa with a call for prudent dialogue with indigenous religion that would foster the assimilation of positive values from indigenous religions whose agents should be treated with great respect and esteem. This exploded a liturgical revolution, sanctioning a deviation from inherited patterns that resulted in the spread of charismatic movement through African

agency, challenging Christianity to shift from its missionary moorings. This wave could be described as setting to work of the message of missionaries and at the same time recovering those pneumatic elements of the gospel which had been saccharined by liberal theology in its tango with enlightenment worldview. This emerging charismatism became less concerned with missionary orthodoxy and more about a renewed relationship with God, intimacy with the transcendental empowerment by the Holy Spirit and protection by the power in the blood of Jesus.

Soon, this new wave of liturgical revolution swept through the continent as many indigenous prophets responded to inherited missionary traditions by forming charismatic movements. Some emerged from the traditional religious cultures after experiencing Christian visions urged a religious transformation, like Beatriz in Angola. Some were prophetic figures who emerged from within the Christian band endowed with healing powers and evangelistic ardor to revolutionize the pace, nature and direction of Christian enterprise in the region. In West Africa, the period between 1910 to 1914 saw the emergence of indigenous prophets like Garrick Sokari Braide, a CMS agent in the Niger Delta pastorate of the Anglican mission, William Wade Harris, a Methodist agent from the Grebo ethnic group in Liberia, Sampson Oppong and Peter Anim. Around 1923, a Methodist catechist, William Egyanka Appiah, started speaking in tongues, seeing visions, prophesying, and healing the sick through prayer in Ghana. These were followed by series of other charismatic figures who emerged from revivals among some missionary churches, including Joseph Babalola of the Christ Apostolic Church in Ilesa, Nigeria; the Ibibio revival in southern Nigeria that occurred among the Qua Iboe Mission in 1927, and among the Quakers in the western Kenya in the same year. In eastern Africa, a revival movement broke out among the Anglicans in Rwanda and through Rwanda to Kenya and Tanzania in 1930. The revival was commonly referred to as the '*Balokele*' (Saved Ones in Luganda) or '*Ahonoki*' (saved Ones in Gikuyu). In 1947, there was a similar revival outbreak in Swedish Free Church in Congo, while youthful charismatic movement sprouted in Malawi in 1970.

Then there was a variety of African initiated churches that promoted the charismatic movements into full time evangelical ministries. The Hour of Deliverance Ministry which operated in Lagos, Nigeria before the Nigerian-Biafran war started; the radicalization of the Scripture Union in eastern Nigeria that occurred in the years 1967 to 1974; The Hour of Our Freedom Ministry which started in the midst of civil war in 1969 and blossomed in the eastern Nigeria in the immediate aftermath; and the growth of the Christian Union in Nigeria universities. In 1971 many university graduates from southern regions of Nigeria served in northern Muslim regions under the compulsory National Youth Service Corps programme. They founded the "Corpers as preacher" programme (Kalu, 2010). Meanwhile, some Roman Catholic students joined the charismatic fellowship. The Calvary Ministries (CAPRO) was established in April 1975 in Zaria also by some young Christian graduates undergoing their compulsory National Youth Service in northern Nigeria. After an earlier unsuccessful evangelistic campaign to the Muslims in the Zaria old city, by 1976 CAPRO has firmly taken off as an evangelistic association targeting Muslims in northern Nigeria and in the neighbouring countries. In 1980, following a visit of a member of CAPRO to Gambia, it established a network with a foreign-based mission group working in the country, and in that year sent out its first foreign missionary. In 1982, an additional missionary was added. By 1987, CAPRO foreign missions have been extended to Senegal, Niger Republic and Guinea Conakry. As it expanded into other African countries in the late

1980s and early 1990s, it created numerous networks with indigenous evangelicals in these countries to sustain its mission work (Ojo, 2008). Christian Missionary Foundation (CMF) was also established in Nigeria as the evangelistic and missionary arm of CSSM. CSSM sought to incorporate socio-political concerns with evangelistic outreaches based on the ideological conviction that Nigeria and the whole continent of Africa will become more comfortable to live in when the Christian faith and its ideals completely penetrate and permeate the fabric of the national life. As part of CSSM's plans to reach out to the rural areas with its social gospel, Idere, a village in the Ibarapa division of Oyo State was chosen for its outreach following reports of widespread guinea worm infection. Subsequently, in May 1981, rural and medical missions were organized to Idere with some Christian doctors, medical and nursing students from the University College Hospital, Ibadan (Ojo, 2008). Dijk (1992) further reports that during the early 1970s the populace of some of the townships Malawi's largest city, Blantyre witnessed the emergence of a new religious phenomenon. Young boys and girls, referring to themselves as *aliliki* (preachers), began to attract crowds by conducting large revival meetings. This massive movement set the stage for the charismatization of Eastern Africa in later years. It started in Rwanda mission that was led by evangelicals from the Christian Union of Cambridge University. They sought to bring African indigenous spirituality in appreciating and expressing the gospel.

Some other indigenous charismatic movements exploded under the colonial canopy and creatively appropriated the pneumatic resources of the gospel and transformed the cultural content of Christian expression. Mwaura (2008) reports that:

As early as 1912, a revival already occurred in the Anglican Church in Kenya and manifested itself in a popular charismatic (Roho) movement among young people. Its main leaders were Ibrahim Osodo and Alfayo Odogo Mango. Besides experiences of spirit baptism, zealous evangelism and other experiences of the Holy Spirit, the movement exhibited anti-colonial sentiment. (p. 183).

The voice of Simon Kimbangu was clearly heard in central Africa in resistance against colonial Christianity. In Southern African setting, racial segregation soon ruined the relationship between mission churches and African converts which resulted in the spread of charismatic movement through a nine member African agency into contiguous areas such as Zimbabwe and Malawi.

These movements attacked religious lukewarmness in the mission churches. They evolved as a response to the perceived lethargy of missionary Christianity and its being compromised by worldliness. They were informal and spontaneous mass movement initiated and sustained mainly by both African laity and clergy but predominantly lay. It was a revitalization movement indicating that traditional ways of being church are no longer appropriate, and no longer consistent with gospel message. They held revival and evangelistic conferences that emphasized separation from spiritually harmful cultures, confession of personal sin, and baptism of the Holy Spirit. They challenged the foundations of various missionary churches, disrupted the regimen of the theological colleges, and established a vibrant, ecumenical missionary movement. Perhaps, translation of the Bible into the vernacular opened their eyes into the creative possibilities in liturgy, polity and ethics from an African cosmological background.

Similarly, their innovative liturgy use western musical instruments combined with traditional percussions. There was massive vernacularization of the Christian liturgy that included inculturation of the indigenous lyrics, rhythms, percussion and symbols. But the

rhythm and lyrics betray the fact that a new musical tradition is being created that borrows from the traditional to serve a new God. The praise names for local deities are now employed to praise God. Such spiritual flow can best be understood from a providential model or the finger of God in African Christian history. These elements of charismatic spirituality not only serve to restore the bashed image of Africa but pointed to evangelical models. The vigour and centrality of evangelism is a key difference between this charismatic spirituality and the inherited mission tradition. Protestant missionaries in Africa, for instance tended to delimit the areas of operation by each denomination. This trend was strengthened by the outbreak of ecumenism after Edinburgh 1910. One consequence was a loss of missionary impulse, and a tendency towards consolidation in enclaves. But from the turn of the twentieth century, African charismatic movements recovered a spirit of evangelization with the ultimate desire to campaign into the un-reached parts of the continent. They provided a healthy revitalization model of mission that called the church to its missional vocation, and re-established a large space for the Holy Spirit in mission. Their goal was both to re-evangelize the mainline churches as well as to win new souls for the kingdom. Mwaura (2008) writes that evangelism is a major focus of the new movement. The purpose is to create awareness of salvation by exposing people to gospel values and realities.

Additionally, in its contemporary context, evangelism has become the antidote bringing positive change to the deteriorating socio-economic and political situations in Africa. Charismatics hope that the economic, social and political situations of Africa will be transformed into a better one when the gospel has saturated the continent. Social reform therefore must always start with the individual by seeking to bring him into a saving relationship to Christ. Africa's deliverance does not lie in shrewd politicians, renowned economists or learned educationists . . . but in using the strategy of evangelism. Therefore, to them, evangelism constitutes a causality of change first in the individual and later in the society as a whole (Ojo, 2008).

African Charismatism and the Reshaping of Christian Missionary Traditions

This section explores the force of charismatism in enforcing both religious and social changes in the African continent; its vitality in terms of transforming the religious space of which it is an integral part. It offers an insight into how African charismatism takes seriously the power and reality in the symbols and rituals of indigenous communities and thus offers the gospel message in ways that appeal to African mindset. It narrates how the liturgical revolution of the charismatic movements is affecting the continued relevance of the mission-founded churches in the continent.

The explosion of charismatic movement has provoked an enormous upheaval in the African religious field and has acquired a great visibility over the years, both in urban and rural areas. African charismatic fervor has reshaped the structure that the missionaries built. They have changed the face of Christianity in Africa particularly due to their emphasis on the pneumatic elements of the gospel and provided space for women and youth. They seem to have burst into the African religious landscape to challenge the temper of Christian practice and doctrinal bastions, and more so because of its aggressive evangelism and deliberate endeavour to reshape African religious space. Though the mainline churches remain significant in Africa, nevertheless, considerable numbers of the membership of historic mission denominations maintain allegiance to their mother churches for Sundays. In the rest of the week, however, the same members went in search of Christian spirituality

that made sense in a precarious African environment with its belief in malevolent forces that impede human health and progress. Gifford (2004) confirms that:

The mainline churches have in many ways been eclipsed by something quite new. Nobody in Africa is unaware of the shift. Everyone is aware of charismatic prayer centres, their all-night services, crusades, conventions, and Bible schools, their new buildings (or schools and cinemas and halls they rent), their car bumper stickers and banners, and particularly the posters that everywhere advertise an enormous range of forthcoming activities. Everyone is aware of their media effects. Above all everyone knows of their new religious superstars. (pp. 23-24).

Indeed, Gifford captures the tone and shape of African charismatism. His narrative is a typical example of how Africans have received the gospel from the missionaries and appropriated it through the prism of African ecosystem, manifested in an outburst of simultaneous movements and characterized by such features as open air crusade not only in the urban cities of Africa, but even more in the remote villages. Their esthetic posters and handbills announce the healing and prophetic presence of the Holy Spirit in the towns and cities. Urban dwellers can hardly ignore the sights of their alluring billboards and car bumpers announcing mega crusades and renowned guest speakers. Their evangelistic zeal extends to the remote parts of the villages where all-night power prayers are organized as campaign against witchcraft and evil forces. Their shared doctrines, liturgical styles, devotional practices and fund-raising strategies indicate that this movement has made recognizable impacts on African spirituality and have changed the pattern of Christian practices in the continent. It could be said that this movement has stemmed from mission founded churches in Africa and explains their declining numbers. Asamoah-Gyadu (2008) informs that “people join the charismatic movements because they provide the indigenous ecclesial contexts where the pneumatic phenomena facing resistance within the mainline churches enjoy freer expression” (p. 197). The salience of African charismatic movement has gone beyond the tales of the tapes as mainline churches are responding with encapsulation strategies that broadened the scope for charismatic activities within their own institutions.

The captivating character of these African charismatic movements lay in their emphasis on mode of receiving and transmitting spiritual powers, dreams, visions, laying of hands, anointing with oil, prophetic speaking and intuition, diagnosis, cleansing, deliverance and healing. The followers of these charismatic leaders are millions of Africans who have heard about a form of Christianity that takes seriously the fears and hopes emanating from the interior of their primal worldview; a religion that serves better the goals of traditional African religion. The movement is a pursuit of the line of continuity between the biblical and the indigenous African worldviews. It replaces the loss of efficacy of missionary Christianity by alleging that mission churches suffer from power failure. It does not merely adapt but gestates the resources of mission churches, transforming it along the grooves of resonance to serve its needs. This explains why the movement answers more adequately the challenge (power and evil) in the African ecosystem than the fruits of earlier missionary endeavours.

Charismatic Response to Socio-religious Challenges in Modern African Communities

Traditional African religions, which are based mainly on ancestral beliefs and practices and are supported by strong ethnic solidarity gave to individuals and groups a certain overall

equilibrium and social integration. When these things become obsolete under the pressure of a new socio-historic reality, particularly in urban centres, there develops a spiritual and socio-economic vacuum. Berger (cited by Mwaura, 2008) adds that while modernization brings promises and tangible benefits, it also produces tensions and discontents both institutionally and psychologically. In addition to the external institutional dislocations resulting from changes in the economic and political structures, there is massive alienation as a result of the loss of community and the turbulent upheavals caused by social mobility, urbanization and technological transformations of everyday life in Africa. That individual should feel constrained, in such circumstance to find alternatives to ethnic solidarity as well as dealing with existential spiritual and socio-economic uncertainties is not surprising (Haes, 1993). In this socio-cultural and religious dislocation, the African masses turn to the prophets and charismatic leaders in order to find meaning and logic in their social order where the old behaviour patterns still prove to be necessary for life and for survival. In the big urban centres particularly, individuals who are uprooted from their old traditions and from their traditional social institution are thrown into a new world which does not offer them any structures within which they can seek solutions to the numerous problem of their new situation. Creating a special balance between African traditions, modernity and biblical inspiration, charismatic leadership therefore provides a platform that represents hope for despairing and voiceless individuals who are lost in the anonymity of the big urban centres. Gerloff (2008) interpret the development as a 'post-modern transnational' movement which paradoxically combines the pre-modern with the modern, creates valid alternatives to western logic, political and clerical power, and serves as an antidote to the manifold alienating processes in urbanization, industrialization, migration and poverty. New forms of solidarity and brotherhood arose; ensuring solidarity and security, mutual assistance and support. In modern African societies where individualism and the bourgeois thinking of the dominant class are taking hold, the traditional African values of sharing and solidarity find in charismatic movements a concrete expression; a system that provides a social security fund which can be resorted to in times of difficulty; there is assistance available in cases of need; visits to and prayers over the sick are assured.

Amidst the vagaries and uncertainties of the new urban centres, faith communities emerge where the prophet, charismatic leader appears to his followers a man powerful in word and deed, stronger than the *dibia*, those strong men of the traditional African religion whom the foreign missionaries never managed to vanquish. In these faith communities socio-economic and spiritual challenges are met with prayers of deliverance and Bible readings which for the faithful open up avenues of hope and collective security under the guidance of charismatic, spiritual leaders, who are seen as real protectors around whom daily life recovers its stability and security. The faithful present all their problems, physical, spiritual and social, to the charismatic leaders, who adopt the role of therapist within the community. Haes (1993) cites an example with a certain prophet in the city of Kinshasha, Prophet Magi Mobikisi, whose first convert was a woman called Mukidi. The prophet told her that she would conceive in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. These words surprised her because she had been sterile for eight years. The prophet asked her to do just one thing, only believe. The words of the prophet were fulfilled and the woman gave birth. After that, the house of Magi Mobikisi became a place of worship and consultation. The idea that events, especially unfortunate ones, have unseen or spiritual causes, is one of the most banal facts of life. Rather than sidelining these problems, as mainline churches appear to do,

charismatic churches confront them directly, and make the vanquishing of evil spirit and other “agents of Satan” one of the central elements of church practice.

It must be noted further that African charismatic Christianity responds to African socio-economic and political challenges, riddled with poverty, failed economies and so on, and since they develop in a society that is experiencing serious crisis in all fields, these new movements exploit the atmosphere of pervasive uncertainty, and create a set of relationship which, in the harsh reality of today’s Africa, give some point of reference, some support, solidarity and hope. This explains why the movement is growing in the poorer regions of the continent because it serves as a safe haven that empowers people to cope, provide emotional security and function as psycho-affective response to socio-economic forces; their liturgies (prayers, retreats, tarrying, music, dance, homilectics, and testimonies), provide healing catharsis, and their hermeneutics perfumed with biblical certitudes transform the inner person. Ojo (2008) adds that “the movements continue to spread because they are pragmatic in their approach to social and religious issues, and are also responding to the existential needs of Africans within the contemporary situations of socio-political disequilibrium” (p. 168). Mwaura (2008) argues that economic deprivation occasioned by poverty, bad governance and abuse of human rights in the Africa of the 1980s led to people seeking solace and welfare in the churches for they provided material, spiritual and social support. This dimension flow into the economic gains because the people are empowered to engage the modern economic space to operate with optimism that God is with them in their daily struggles to reject defeat from economic failures in the nation. It provides an inner power to survive the anxieties, unease, destabilization and crisis of modern Africa.

Conclusion

Charismatic religious movements in Africa certainly constitute a sign of the times which challenges the history and the missionary practice of the historic mission denominations in the continent. The challenges manifest in variety of ways and particularly, to be more concerned with the spiritual yearnings of Africans as derived from their indigenous worldviews. The challenges are to be found in theology, evangelism, liturgy, and involvement in social and political concerns (Mwaura, 2008). The historic mission denominations are keen to preserve their traditional identities as Methodists, Roman Catholics, or Presbyterians. On the other hand however, the challenge from their charismatic compatriots and the attraction that their informal, exuberant, and expressive charismatic worship hold for Africans, often forces the ‘hibernating’ traditional denominations, in keeping with current trends, to incorporate elements of charismatism into their own liturgies and theology in order to respond to the experiential dimensions of African spirituality. By strategically opening themselves to charismatic influences, the mainline churches have eventually opened up to the overdue dialogue between the ‘churches of the spirit’ and the ‘churches of the book’. The reforms started with the incorporation of locally composed choruses, drumming, dancing, and prayer vigils into historic mission church life. With time the charismatization of historic mission Christianity included the informal ‘praise and worship’ segments into church liturgy, the use of holy expletives like shouts of Amen and hallelujahs in response to preaching, hand-lifting, kneeling, and spontaneous applauses during corporate worship. In Africa today, historic mission churches now organize prayer pilgrimages for members. They hold national evangelistic/healing crusades, anointing services, and other charismatic-oriented programmes meant to empower people in the Spirit.

These developments in question constitute the meeting point between African indigenous worldview and missionary Christianity.

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