

The Medicine as Poison, the Physician as the Killer

**Modern Pentecostal Theology and Practices as Sources
of Insecurity**

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Abstract

Pentecostalism and neo-Pentecostalism are realities in the religious expression and behaviour of modern Christians. They are two of the varied expressions of modern Christianity and new religions. In this study some of the popular aspects of modern Pentecostal theology are examined vis-a-vis ancient Christian orthodoxy. It is also shown that some aspects of Pentecostal teachings today especially prosperity theology in its extreme form could breed greed, disharmony and, in the long run, become sources of insecurity.

Introduction

Religion is one of the most researched and most investigated subjects in the field of social science and psychology. Several studies also exist which show the favourable impact of religion in general and religious participation in particular on the individual and collective well-being. (See Levin and Vanderpool, 1987; Larson et al, 1978; Craggie, Jr., et al, 1990) The positive role of religion has also been noted and documented in the area of human stability, happiness, personal well-being, societal progress, marital stability, health and healing, emotional stability, ethical behaviour, financial integrity and international trade. (See Bergin, 1991; Larson, et al, 1990; Beit-Hallami, 1974; Mookherjee, 1994; Moberg, 1979; Williams et al, 1991; D'Antonio, 1980; Kennedy, 1983; Burchinal, 1957; Byrd, 1982; Freeman, 1985; Allport, 1968, Fagan, 1996, Ferris, 2002; Greeley and Hout 2006; Hadaway 1978; Ingleheart 2010; Krause 2008; Ellison 1991; Ellison, Gay and Glass, 1989, Myers, 2000, Witter et al, 1985) Religion provides social dimensions to individual lives. Thus religious involvement enhances subjective well-being because religious organizations offer opportunities for social interaction between like-minded people, nurturing friendships and social ties. (Durkheim 1951; Simmel, 1997; Krause 2008) Religion also enhances subjective well-being by offering its practitioners personal networks and support. (Lim and Putnam, 2010)

But religion has also been an instrument of instability and insecurity as situations in India, Lebanon, Sudan, Pakistan, Nigeria and other nations have shown. The aftermath of 9/11 and the strong pull of a globalized world has continued to influence world politics (Kinnvall 2004) and, consequently, international relations and security. It is ironical that religion, which is supposed to be an elixir to unity, togetherness and harmony being concerned with the worship of God has become the exact opposite in our day. There is no other place today where this irony is so powerfully demonstrated as Nigeria where more than 20,000 have perished in ethno-religious riots since the advent of the democratic dispensation. As I write this the dreaded Islamic sect *Boko Haram* has caused the deaths of more than 2500¹ through serial suicide bombing, engagement with security forces in sporadic shootings, terrorist raids and sabotage and bombing of public facilities. In short, in Nigeria today religion is one of the sources of insecurity and instability.

How Religion Aids Security and Insecurity

Religion makes truth claims, fantastic claims which can never be verified or disproved: Heaven, hell, Angels, eternal punishment, etc. Religion also speaks or attempts to speak for God and hence it speaks the language of certainty rather than doubt: "I am the Way, the truth and life, no one can come to the father but by me.;" 'Except ye be born again ye cannot see the kingdom of God'²etc. All these reinforce the sense of human security. The fact that God has set the rules and made them difficult to contest relieves the individual psychologically from the responsibility of having to choose. (Jurgensmeyer, 2000; Mol, 1976) By supplying a consistent structure, religion thus provides order from the chaos and uncertainty in the world. (Kinsvall, 2004) Religion also creates security by giving a sense of assurance and peace to its adherents. Religion sustains individual and group identities and thus a vital and major power in the world. (Wellman,2004) Religion also assures people "that the universe follows a plan which guarantees that if you follow the rules everything will turn out well, in this world or the next. This belief reduces stress, enabling people to shut out anxiety and focus on coping with their immediate problems." (Norris et al, Ronald Inglehart, 2010)

But religion can also be an instrument of fostering serious conflicts and even bloody wars. Some of the bloodiest wars in history have been religious wars. Some of the lasting and gruelling conflict in human memory has been connected with interpretation and meaning of aspects of religion. (Norris et al,2010.) Some of the most hideous forms of violence, directed against defenceless civilians, is inextricably related to religion (Ferrari, 2004) Because religion deals with authority figures and express authority views it tends to bind people together within a collectivity and unites them for a common action, provides a new focus of loyalty and interest and creates an organized following for leadership. (Coleman, 1958) In this way religion is similar to nationalism.(Kinsvall, 2004)

Pentecostalism and Theology

Pentecostalism is today the most popular, widespread and fastest-growing segment of Christianity. The Third World, particularly in Latin America and Africa, provides the most fertile soil for this type of religious proliferation. (Sepulveda, 1989) It is seen as a 'popular religiosity' which speaks the language of the masses and appeals to the native customs and culture of indigenous society thereby offering the " possibility of a particularly intense religious experience."³

...Pentecostalism is characterized by a great ability to convey the evangelical message in popular language. Although it offers a deeply felt new religious experience that differs from the existing religiosity, its forms of expression correspond to those of popular language. This is made evident in worship liturgies and in Pentecostal language. (Sepulveda 1989: 87)

It's a form of religion which grew from the confluence of several traditions within evangelical Protestantism in the middle and later years of the nineteenth century.⁴ Pentecostalism especially in its classical form became a prominent and noticeable part of Nigerian Protestantism in the 70's and 80's; and in his neo-classical form in the 1990's and the 21st century and today has become (or has it?) the popular face of protestant Christianity.⁵

But Pentecostalism is also prone to several flaws, image blemishes and institutional abuses. As a distinctively American creation⁶it is not immune to those fundamental flaws and excesses of American society: consumerism, marketing, salesmanship techniques and self-centred individualism; traits that are perfectly normal in a capitalistic society but which are out of place in a religious faith tradition. It is a brand of Christianity given to much fervency, noise, emotionality and intensity. Pentecostals were (and largely still are) anti-intellectual, (Martin,1997)⁷ahistorical, first in their lack of interest in the history of the church and, secondly, in their lack of conceptualization of the relation between Scripture and the cultural context in which it arose.⁸Modern Pentecostalism, especially the Nigerian brand, is also given to a form of existentialism, not the philosophical kind of

existentialism, but the “unphilosophical, practical kind in which questions of daily existence not only take precedence over but crowd out the deeper questions of being and truth. “Will it work?” is more often asked than “Is it true?” “ Do I feel good about it?” is felt to be more important than “What grounds are there for thinking this?”“ Will people buy it?” replaces “ Have we tested it?”⁹

All these have bred a lack of intellectual rigour, inattention to Scriptural details, absence of spiritual depth and inwardness; and, consequently, theological poverty. Pentecostals, as has been said above, constitute a very vibrant segment of Christianity. The PFN, the umbrella body of Nigerian Pentecostals has more voice and visibility than probably its size. Thus to some extent Pentecostalism can be a mirror of what is going on in Nigeria.

In this study we shall examine how the theology and practices (*orthodoxy* and, as liberation theologians would say, *orthopraxis*) of this segment of Christianity are capable of creating a climate of insecurity both for individuals and also the nation as a whole. Understanding the faith and theology of Pentecostals, especially in Nigeria, requires some tact, caution, experience and close observation and scrutiny. Usually the theology of any group should be embodied in its statement of belief, rule of conduct and tenets of faith. But with Pentecostals, researchers need to go deeper than this to study the actual practices, religious behaviour, ethical conduct, manners, characters of the leadership and founding personalities, the cultic tendencies, attitude to material things, etc. Often time it is difficult to capture the totality of this phenomenon simply from the statement of faith because most time what people claim to believe is not often what they do.

Next is classification: specifically what group of churches does this study cover? Usually Pentecostals are classified into three groups:¹⁰ the classical Pentecostals,(such as Deeper Life, MFM, RCCG, Zoe, Winners, Christ Embassy etc)the charismatic movement in the traditional churches (e.g Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Gospel Baptists etc) and the indigenous Zion-type churches, the Aladura Pentecostals (such as CAC, C&S, COLA etc) The first group has been further subdivided into three using Aiyegboyin and Asonzeh¹¹model as : Holiness Movements,(the Deeper Life Bible Church is a good example) the Prosperity Churches (like Winners Chapel, Christ Embassy etc) and the Deliverance Ministries (Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries is a good example) For the purpose of this study we shall dwell on the last two groupings- the *prosperity* and *deliverance* churches, although in a general sense much of the observable lapses also appear in other variants of Pentecostals.

Stating the Problem

Nigerians are said to be among the most religious in the world. Nigeria has probably one of the highest numbers of churches per square area. More Anglicans and Methodists go to church in Nigeria than in England, the birth place of Anglicanism and Methodism. Some of the crowds that turn out to grace the Bonnke crusades in this nation are unbelievable. But this is where the trouble is. Facts, as Lenin once said, are stubborn things. Statistics is not on our side. Nigeria also has one of the worst human suffering indices in the world, it is one of the most corrupted nation on earth based on corruption-perception index.¹²Life expectancy in Nigeria is 48.4 years, unarguably one of the worst in Africa and the world. About 70 percent of Nigerians live below the poverty line surviving on only about \$1 per day and about 70 million have no access to portable water. Nigeria also loses about 1.2million out of the 6.02million babies born yearly and about 10 million children of school age are permanently out of school; all of which have necessitated the remark that Nigeria is today one of the worst nations for a child to be born. Nigeria also has one of the sharpest inequalities in the world. Even though Nigeria earns billions of naira daily from crude oil this benefit does not even percolate to the masses as, according to World Bank report, 80% of the money benefits only 1 % of the Nigerian population.¹³ All these in a nation where religion is the second nature and where God is on every lips.

How does this affect Christians and Pentecostals? Where is the church in all these? Of course the church is, in a sense, part of the problem. Reuben Abati the former ace columnist of the *Guardian* has observed "that nearly every bank chief that was indicted in the recent shake-up in the banking sector is a Christian."¹⁴ The female Managing Director of a bank who was convicted of stealing or misappropriating about N140b of depositors' fund thus putting her bank at risk and sending many shareholders into needless pain is a Pentecostal and member of one of the 'expressway churches.' The INEC commissioner in whose account billions of naira were discovered at his death was a pastor in the Redeemed Christian Church of God; even though he was also discovered to have a second wife.¹⁵ How about the one who collects stolen money from a bank staff and was called a "pastor of thief"¹⁶?

Expectedly, Nigerians are asking questions: Should this be the result of religion? Should religion make a person better or worse? Is religion a positive agent, a catalyst of progress or of decay and corruption? Should a Christian be morally different from a non-Christian, in the light of the Cross, or not? If the brand of Christianity currently in vogue, especially its Pentecostal brand, is genuine how come it has not impacted this nation positively? How come that the more religious Nigerians are becoming, the worse in character they also become?

These are right questions, legitimate questions. It is a fault, and a very serious fault and flaw, in our scholarship that no theologian or scholar has attempted radical answers to some of these observable flaws in the religion of the present day. Volume of critiques have been printed and published in newspapers and magazines against the church in Nigeria in general and the Pentecostal movement in particular, their principles, lifestyles, leadership styles etc.¹⁷ It is sad that for the most part these critiques have gone unrefuted or unanswered by both the Pentecostals themselves or their apologists- a case of being guilty as charged.

In this paper an attempt will be made to explain how Christianity, especially in its modern Pentecostal brand, by its new teachings, practices and certain aspects of its popular theology is capable of endangering collective security; and why religion generally is no longer producing saints but recycling sinners. In this study we shall focus on five major areas namely: prosperity, money, success, deliverance and imprecatory prayers. The first three are common with the prosperity churches while the last two are more pronounced with the deliverance ministries.

The Gospel According to Pentecostals

Exactly what gospel does the modern Pentecostals preach today? Is it the same gospel of Apostles and of historic Christianity or is it *another gospel*? Is it the gospel of Reformation or of Evangelical Movement of which modern Pentecostalism claims to be heir? These questions are important from the beginning because until we understand the Pentecostal perspective of the gospel we cannot locate the modern Pentecostal theology. Specifically, what constitutes the gospel and what constitutes *another gospel*?

The Reformers' cry of "Sola Scriptura" (i.e. scriptures only) belongs to other days, it no longer has any meaning among a people who claim to be the spiritual offsprings of the Evangelical fathers. I believe the verdict of Walter Chantry is true of Pentecostalism today:

...Our message and manner of preaching the Gospel cannot be traced back to the Reformers and their creeds. They are much more recent innovations. Worse, they cannot be traced to the Scriptures. They have clearly arisen from superficial exegesis and a careless mixture of twentieth-century reason with God's revelation. (Chantry 1972:13)

I have said before that there is theological poverty among modern Pentecostals. Pentecostals have been led mostly by people who are strong on entrepreneurial skills but weak on exegetical skills. These *pastor-preneurs* have gone ahead using marketing methods and ideas much similar to Broad Street than the Bible to build empires

and to reproduce themselves and give birth to children in their own image. There is no membership, no mechanism for excommunication, no clear process for dealing with false teachers. Anyone can declare himself "evangelical" (or rather Pentecostal) and make himself a teacher- and who's to say otherwise? Churches today are often planted by individuals who are neither doctrinally nor personally qualified for church leadership.¹⁸

When David Oyedepo the founding bishop of Winners Chapel declared in his book that "we have passed the era of doctrines and now in the era of mysteries"¹⁹ he gave to the modern Pentecostals in Nigeria its *Tedeum*. Truth in modern Pentecostal understanding is whatever works or brings results. Results are all that matter and truth must be defined by results or experience not the other way round. As a subculture, it is more concerned with doing rather than knowing, with experience or results rather than doctrine or orthodoxy. It "appears to place doctrine in the backseat downplaying the importance of a well-defined understanding of biblical content in comparison to experience."²⁰ Its theology is experientially based and deduced. Thus we understand why the current emphasis- or is it overemphasis rather- on miracles rather than meaning and success, in place of contentment, is such a manifest feature of modern Pentecostalism in Nigeria. While we ought not to discount the role our experiences play in making us more aware of passages we had ignored or in responding to passages we have recently understood, shifts in one's theology ought to be motivated by a change of mind that has come about after careful reflection on the meaning of scripture. Our experiences are never sufficient in overturning theological convictions we claim to have derived from the text itself.²¹

Neither Jesus Christ nor the Cross has any dominant place in the orthodoxy or theology of modern Pentecostalism. The early Pentecostals dwelt on Jesus and Jesus alone. A.B. Simpson's great hymn, *Jesus Only is Our Message* was more or less the anthem of those early Christians. The Evangelicals- the forerunners of modern Pentecostalism- dwelt on the Cross. A survey conducted by *British Weekly* newspaper among evangelicals in 1896 found that the most-used evangelical preaching text was Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ that lives in me and the life which I now live I live by the faith of the son of God who loves me and gave himself for me." As late as 1992 the *Church of England Newspaper* discovered through a survey among its largely evangelical readership that Isaac Watts's "When I survey the wondrous cross" was the most preferred hymn.²² And A.W. Tozer the great teacher and scholar noted that the emphasis of the church from the very beginning and throughout the era of power and glory has always been the Cross.

To any who may object to this or count it merely a narrow and private view of truth, let me say God has set His hallmark of approval upon this message from Paul's day to the present. Whether stated in this exact words or not, this has been the content of all preaching that has brought life and power to the world through the centuries. The mystics, the reformers, the revivalists have put their emphasis here, and signs and wonders and mighty operations of the Holy Ghost gave witness to God's approval. (Tozer 1966:45)

That was then. A generation has arisen who knew not the Lord and who does not care a hoot about the Cross. Another Pharaoh has ascended the throne who knew not Joseph. Jesus is not the dominant theme of modern Pentecostalism. Neither is the Cross. As a matter of fact, it is much easier to find snails in salty water than to hear a modern Pentecostal preacher talk on his pulpit about the Cross. The emphasis of modern gospel is on miracles, prosperity and success. The so-called children of Reformers and Revivalists have majored on issues which have no bearing whatsoever to the core of Christian message implicit in Reformation theology and scholarship. That is the level of departure between Pentecostalism as it is today and its forbear Evangelicalism and even apostolic Christianity.²³ The cravings after miracles, prosperity and success can only breed dissatisfaction, discontentment and insecurity not holiness, righteousness or stability. Because with every miracle there is need to see another, with every level of prosperity and success there is the urge to go to the next level. And there is always another

level after every next level. The Cross on the other hand emphasizes death, self-denial, contentment and resignation to the supreme will of the Almighty- virtues which are needed and required to make a holy people and build a honest and patriotic citizenry. Thus the general lack of honesty and corruption in public service can be understood within the context of *another gospel* now current in most of the church in general and among the Pentecostals in particular.²⁴

With no mechanism for self-correction, self-study or even self-understanding and no commitment to theology, sound theology anchored on a sound and balanced biblical worldview, the stage is set for the creation of a monstrosity, "a religion divorced from earnest and lofty thought (that) has always, down the whole history of the church, tended to become weak, jejune and unwholesome."²⁵

Prosperity

One of the finest talking points which seems to unite all Pentecostals in contemporary Christianity is the message or preaching of prosperity or health and wealth. The teaching and preaching of prosperity- or the promise of health and wealth- in this world is one of the successful baits that have been used, and still been used to recruit members and adherents. That the masses of people should fall for this gospel is understandable in a nation racked with endemic poverty, squalor and destitution and where the leadership is characterized by official corruption, ignorance and irresponsibility.

The preaching of prosperity, let it be said, is not wrong in itself, contrary to what some have also said. God promises to bless the work of our hands. Several exhortations in the Bible, especially in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes encourage diligence, skill-acquisition and hardwork. The Atonement of Jesus makes prosperity feasible and our commitment to our calling and discipline makes it attainable. The Quakers were very prosperous and dominated the commanding heights of British industrialization based on a strong and Protestant work ethic and an unselfish character that seeks the betterment of society and the highest good of their fellowmen. Max Weber in his classical study on *The Protestant Work Ethic and the Rise of Capitalism* noted this point:

For everyone without exception God's providence has prepared a calling, which he should profess and in which he should labour. And this calling is not... a fate to which he must submit and which he must take the best of, but God's commandment to the individual to work for the divine glory. (Weber 1958: 160)

What is wrong with the contemporary teaching of prosperity is that it makes it the real issue, the only issue thus crowding out other important items. It is based on the philosophy of existentialism and pragmatism that cares only for survival and nothing about ethics. It dwells mainly on the materiality and not on spirituality unlike the early days. It is concerned about the end not about means. The Quaker prosperity benefited the church and the British society and even the world. Bournvita and other Cadbury beverages developed by an industry founded by a Quaker and the state of Pennsylvania founded by William Penn, another Quaker, bears testimony to this assertion. The Quakers exalted God above anything and their prosperity was based on a righteous lifestyle and a solid Christian perspective anchored on a robust Christology and *Crosstheology*. As a result they blessed humanity and left their footprints on the sands of time. But the contemporary prosperity teaching of modern Pentecostalism benefits neither the society nor the suffering masses except, of course, the votaries and the apostles who preach and propagate it.²⁴ (Pastors now constitute the largest number of jeep owners in Nigeria, it is said.) Today inspite of teaching on prosperity our nation still has one of the largest numbers of poor people on the planet.

Another thing that is wrong with the teaching and practice of prosperity in the modern church is the attempt to use God for human ends and turn religion to a casino. The idea of calling out people to give a certain amount of

money or the idea of selling handkerchiefs, (called mantle) aprons, olive oil, special appointment or prayer card with the pastor or overseer etc; and promising them a hundred fold return (what a good investment!) means that God can be used and Pentecostalism is a form of casino.

In one church where the author was present the leader, an architect turned preacher, told his audience that the anointing oil he has is for those who could pay N10,000.00 to the church. In some places you have to pay for chair to sit and, in one of the most curious cases in the history of Christianity, a church was charging N1000 for admittance before the New Year service, showing that the God of modern religion is not for the poor. Some of the costliest universities in Nigeria are owned and operated by Pentecostals driven solely by profit motive even though the same institutions were built with offerings and pledges of members but they are accessible only to the rich.

The idea that man can use God is novel but it is real. The teaching and practices of modern Pentecostalism in its grossest and basest essentials show that such perception exists. The way some Pentecostal leaders talk about God makes one shudder and even wonder whether it is the same God before whom Moses, a mighty man in his own right, quaked and the angels much mightier and powerful- and even demons- tremble;²⁶ or another god. In this regard John MacArthur's thought is relevant here: "virtually every false religion ever spawned by man worships a god whose function is to deliver some sort of cargo. That is, human religions invent gods for utilitarian reasons; the deities exist to serve men, rather than the other way around."²⁷ Thus modern Pentecostalism "has turned Christianity into a system of no different from the lowest human religions- a form of voodoo where God can be coerced, cajoled, manipulated, controlled, and exploited for the Christian's own ends."²⁸ The God that can be so used by humans is, most surely, not the God of the Bible or of historic Christianity. It is not surprising therefore that there are fraudsters, bank embezzlers, robbers, rogue politicians in the rank and file of the memberships of the church.

The belief that God will give wealth to every Christian is fraudulent to the point of being sinister. How many people in the whole of the Bible, which is the Christian's guide, can be called wealthy? There are only three persons in the entire Old Testament, and even in the whole of the Bible, who commanded great wealth. These are Abraham, Job and Solomon. The trio of Joseph, Moses and Daniel commanded political power but they were not wealthy. Of the three, two were directly entrusted with specific tasks for which money was required: Abraham as a progenitor of a race, a holy race, must be wealthy in the midst of hostile and uncircumcised tribes to survive and Solomon must be wealthy to build the sanctuary and the Temple. Only Job's wealth was given without attachment to specific task except as a reward for his faithfulness in the midst of one of the worst temptations or trials in human history. This agrees with Moses's reason for wealth: *But thou shall remember the Lord for it is he that has given thee the power to get wealth THAT he may establish his COVENANT...*²⁸ (My emphasis) Thus the promise of wealth and wealth transfer for every believer is a fraud, even in the light of the Bible and the history of the church.

And let us not suppose that a life of wealth is all a bed of roses or without problems as is currently being canvassed by popular Christianity. About 100 years ago William James in his classic study on psychology of religion touched on the subject of wealth and poverty and how a preoccupation with the former can breed corruption and insecurity.

It is true that so far as wealth gives time for ideal ends and exercise to ideal energies, wealth is better than poverty and ought to be chosen. But wealth does this in only a portion of the actual cases. Elsewhere the desire to gain wealth and the fear to lose it are our chief breeders of cowardice and propagators of corruption. There are thousands of conjecturers in which a wealth-bound man must be a slave, whilst a man for whom poverty has no terrors becomes a freeman. Think of the strength which personal indifference to poverty would give us if we were devoted to unpopular causes. (William James 1958: 284,5)

Then the great professor of psychology added this point as if he foresaw today's conflict:

...it is certain that the prevalent fear of poverty among the educated classes is the worst moral diseases from which our civilization suffers. (William James 1958:284,5)

There is another dimension to the prosperity teaching that should alarm every right-thinking Christian. Elaine (not her real name) who was in Satanism for many years and rose to the highest level as a bride of Satan wrote about the bait of prosperity.. She stated that one of the strategies Satan taught them for the destruction of Christian churches is the teaching of prosperity.

“One of the most destructive Satanic doctrines of today is the health and wealth message. One of the best ways to keep people from being willing to suffer anything to help out a brother and to discourage a true Christian undergoing persecution... is the teaching that every Christian should be healthy all the time and wealthy...”²⁹

Success

Closely connected to prosperity in the Pentecostal theology is the teaching of success in the world. Success is crucial to Pentecostals because it gives them the feeling of divine approval and wellbeing and serves as a legitimating and validating instrument for their theology and practice in the eyes of society. Success in the Pentecostal schema is defined in purely existential and earthly perspective: houses, cars, mansions, good jobs etc.

Both Daystar Christian Centre and Winners Chapel make success their core emphases. The July, 2012 Holy Ghost Service of the Redeemed Christian Church of God was devoted exclusively to the pursuit of success. About 9 other programmes between 2010 and 2012 have themes that were indirectly connected with success.³⁰

Both Vineyard Christian Centre and Christ Embassy belong to this category as well.³¹

A prosperous lifestyle and ministry are part of the gospel of success. The idea of the ‘big man of the big God’³² finds its fulfilment in the success theology. Under this theology a Christian, if he or she is a true one must be happy and successful. He must have the good things of life. As a matter of fact a person’s anointing or power or favour from God is measured by his level of success in the ministry and by how much of the worldly things he is able to acquire. It also goes deeper than this. Pastors with similar success stories only associate together and those below their success levels, even if they were classmates, are advised not to mix.³³

The problem with this teaching is that it tends to drive a wedge within the social fabric of the body of Christ by segregating people to success and failures. Another thing with this is the false logic inherent in the theology. How do you measure or compare success when the nature and place of assignment, the talents and gifts to individuals, the situation and circumstances are not the same? How for instance do we measure the success of a pastor with 100 members in a small village with that of another pastor of 1000 in the city where there are millions? Then how do we measure the success of a Christian writer, for instance, since he is not likely to have crowds and ultimately, many of the flashy things of life as a pastor will likely have? Then what happens to other specialized ministries devoted to the poor and special causes like prisons, hospitals, students’ etc- people who are not likely to pay back here on earth? Where do all these stand in the success hierarchy? How do we measure the success of an obscure missionary in a back street of a Third World nation?

The devotion to success in Pentecostal theology is understandable. In a Third World nation characterized by policy failures and leadership irresponsibility the idea of success comes handy. To a people haunted by years of failure occasioned by leadership incompetence the promise of success by a non-state actor like the church will be welcome. But success does not help our cause in itself. The kind of success being preached by Pentecostals will not likely help the Christian cause, it may even hinder us. As Calvin Miller puts it:

We believe we will be respected in this world if we “succeed.” But do successful Christians draw people to Christ by their example of success? If so what sort of Christ are they drawn to? A Christ who enables devout men and women to glory in their substance and never feel guilty for their indulgence. (Calvin Miller 1987:44)

Deliverance

The theology of deliverance is another notable feature of modern Pentecostalism especially in our nation. It is one of the controversial subjects even within the subculture of Pentecostalism. This theology is based on the fact that humanity does need deliverance and can be delivered from the bondage of corruption to the glorious liberty of the children of God based on the atonement of Jesus Christ. But the practice also goes beyond this in our Pentecostal churches, to include deliverance for all known and unknown sources of trouble and afflictions. Thus deliverance is conducted for men, women, children, firstborn, brain, hand etc. Failure to succeed in a chosen career, inability to attract human favours, marriage partners or progress, constant and unrelenting attacks, demon possession or oppression and repeated failures- these are shown to be sure signs that the individual needed deliverance. The Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries represents the best exponent of this type of ministry, among several others.³⁴

The attempt to see every problem and trouble as a deliverance issue or case is one of the controversial aspects of this theology and which has generated dispute even within Pentecostalism as a subculture. This theology raises questions even though the scriptural validity of deliverance cannot be questioned. Where, for example, does human responsibility come in? Could repeated failures, for instance, not have been a result of lack of proper preparations? Could general hostility to a person and his actions not have been a result of trial or persecution which the Bible warns all Christians to be prepared for? Then the attempt to conduct deliverance on Christians who have already made a profession of faith is another thing that is very controversial. This practice tends to undermine the efficacy of the Cross and makes a person insecure on the long run. For instance if a Christian must still be delivered from the idols and trans-generational curses (this is one of the terms in deliverance theology) where then is the place of the Cross? And what did Paul mean when he said, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us for it is written, cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree."³⁵

That Pentecostals themselves are divided on the issue of deliverance is significant and this should be noted. Kenneth E. Hagin (1917-2003) Pentecostal Bible teacher and author noted in one of his last books, after over 55 years of ministry and reflection on the Pentecostal movement, on the ministry of deliverance:

Any kind of deliverance must have its foundation and practices firmly grounded in the Word of God- not in human experience. Much of what is going on today in deliverance ministries cannot be found in the Bible but is based on human experience and excess. (Hagin 1988: 251)

Hagin also disproves the idea that a Christian must undergo deliverance or that a Christian can be demon-possessed based on his experience of over 55 years

Another excess in the so-called "deliverance ministry" is the idea that believers need to undergo repeated deliverances in order to be set free. There is not one example in the New Testament where Jesus or the Early Church ever ministered repeatedly to a person with a devil. (p.252)

Hagin affirms that in over 55 years of ministry he never encountered or ministered to a single Christian believer who was demon possessed except few who were oppressed in their bodies and mind. Then he sees the popularity of deliverance ministry as being due to the fact that people want to avoid personal responsibility.

The very reason "deliverance" has become so popular is that it is an easy way out. Everyone wants an easy way out- an instant cure and an instant answer. Crucifying the flesh may take a little longer and be more difficult to do, but most often that's the real answer- not casting out demons. (Hagin 1988:252)

Sometimes the practice of deliverance gets to a point that it actually conflicts with reality and empirical facts which make one to wonder what the purpose of deliverance is. Take for instance the idea of deliverance for the firstborn. This is often anchored on some isolated scriptures on some firstborns in the Bible who failed while ignoring several other firstborns in the same Bible who succeeded.³⁶ *The Power Must Change Hands* program, MFM's flagship program, an equivalent of RCCG's *Holy Ghost Service*, for March 2012 was on the Deliverance of the Firstborn. But the idea of firstborn needing deliverance is flawed because extensive research in the realm of birth order studies show that the firstborn, far above any other child, is most likely primed to succeed.³⁷ Some of the outstanding characters of history who brought innovations to the world have been firstborns.³⁸ So where is the place of deliverance for firstborn in all these?

Imprecatory Prayers

Closely following on the logic of deliverance is also the practice of imprecatory prayers when an individual uses prayer as an instrument of vengeance and even destruction on the enemy or enemies. The average Christian today is enemy-conscious and demon-conscious. He sees enemy actions and the hand of the devil in everything and in every adversarial circumstance. The sad reality of the modern religious experience is that the devil is, albeit unknowingly, made so big, so big in fact that he looms over the space, and God is made so small. Virtually every church today practices imprecatory prayers but it is more pronounced among the indigenous aladura Pentecostal churches and the deliverance ministries. Prayer points like: Enemies of my progress fall down and die in Jesus Name, Enemies of my father's house fall down and die in Jesus Name; are common in their program. The idea of imprecatory prayers is anchored on the Old Testament curse theology especially those contained in the Psalms.³⁹ The deliverance ministries and the churches who engage in this type of prayer fail to see that some aspects of these Psalms do not apply directly today because while David- and even Moses- were fighting with flesh and blood, the same is not true under the New Testament dispensation. The real trouble with this type of prayer is that, if carried to the extreme, it is a form of witchcraft because it represents a personal attempt to take vengeance and dominate the enemy- usually human- the very thing the enemy is accused of doing. And when viewed in another way this is specifically what the witchdoctors and juju men are doing the only difference is that the Christian prefaces his own with "In the Name of Jesus." This again reflects on the fluidity and unsoundness of Pentecostal theology in particular because it turns prayer from its noble aims and intent to the selfishness and banality of existential considerations.

There is a clear upsurge in the practice of imprecatory prayers but it has only compounded our general insecurity. Ayo-Obiremi noted in his study the upsurge in the "practice of imprecatory prayers due to the kind of teaching and Biblical hermeneutics people are exposed to in church, on radio, television and via internet."⁴⁰ The natural human tendency to seek vengeance and retribution in the face of perceived wrong and injustice now so common in our society is a major reason for the upsurge in the practice of imprecatory prayers.

Vindictiveness, vengeance and a reflection of lower standards of ethical behaviour may be responsible for the upsurge in imprecatory prayers. Some feel they have been unjustly treated and they need to tell God what to do about the offenders. (Ayo- Obiremi2012: 302)

The most serious thing about this practice is that it changes the focus, purpose and object of prayer from God to man and shifts the focus from the divine to the banal and the selfish, from spirituality to carnality and sensuality. As James noted in his study on the psychology of religion which will shortly be referred to, this is the way of darkness.⁴¹ This practice has a tendency to create a climate of insecurity in society. Ayo-Obiremi equally noted that the practice has an untoward "effect on children because they too will learn the act."⁴² since children learn by imitation, and practice it. Then the real purpose of prayer as conceived by Jesus and as practiced by the great saints of Christian era would be lost and the larger society becomes the poorer and less secure for it.

If children should learn imprecatory prayers, the real use of prayer as communication with God, an opportunity to know God and relate with Him personally may be lost. Vindictiveness, vengeance and ill-thoughts leading to ill behaviour would be encouraged. Rather than help the society become better, it

would be a means to hinder pure positive societal values. Then, the building of a nation which is bound in 'freedom, peace and unity' would only be a great illusion... (Ayo-Obiremi 2012:302)

Money

The most controversial aspect in the theology and practice of modern Pentecostal churches in Nigeria today is on the issue of money. Money is a big issue, a very big issue in the modern church. The place, purpose, use and raising of money in the churches in general and the Pentecostal churches in particular have assumed a frightening dimension. Money holds a peculiar place in the modern church than in the early periods. Virtually nothing, it seems, can be done today in the church without money even in spite of the claims about the Holy Spirit and power. This shows a clear departure from teachings and attitude of Christ in the Bible. Evidently Jesus did not place as much faith in money as His modern-day followers now do. Tozer captured this very succinctly: "Our Lord simply did not think about money the way His professed followers do today; and more particularly He did not give it the place our religious leaders give it. To them it is necessary; to Him it was not."⁴³ Most preachers today have developed a mercantilist mind and entrepreneurial ability so much so that a new word has entered the Nigerian vocabulary- *pastor-preneur*. At the Livingsprings Chapel in Ibadan is a program titled 'Anointing for Money and Empowerment.' In other fellowships especially Winners Chapel, Business Meeting or Fellowship assumed a full setting on its own just like Bible Teaching where all that is taught concerns business and how to use Bible principles to get ahead in the world of business. In some places a meeting cannot be held without money being raised. In a particular program in which the author was present in one of the CAC Prayer Mountains the prophet raised money on virtually every meeting of the program calling for individuals who could give millions, hundreds of thousands etc.⁴⁴ But not once did he, to the best of my recollection, call for anyone to come to rededicate his life to God, give his life to Christ or even for repentance throughout the five days of the program. Is there a greater recipe for societal chaos, insecurity and lawlessness than this formula? How many salary earners in today's distressed economy can give 5million naira or even 1million naira at a go? But the fraudsters, the 419ers, bank embezzlers and political thieves and robber barons can do so. Is this the reason why these categories of people are in the church today? All these lead to ethical questions.

It was specifically this ethical issue especially as it relates to money that US-based scholar Ebenezer Obadare took Pastor Enoch Adeboye on sometimes last year.⁴⁵ The popular pastor had solicited for pledges from covenant partners which were to be a source of protection and covering from death for ten years for all those who participated in the pledge.

When I asked God, He said there will be a new set and it will not be for ten years. He said, because those people were in covenant with you for ten years, I had no choice but to keep them alive for ten years. Now, the Lord says to me the new set of partners will be for only three years. He said after three years, we can review...⁴⁶

There were ten groups with the lowest contributing N100 (\$1.00) monthly and the highest contributors at N2,000,000 or \$20,000 monthly into the coffers of RCCG as their own part of the covenant.

This raises several ethical questions: Does a child of God need a covenant, a covenant that is fully backed with cash to enjoy blessings, the same blessings that Jesus already paid for on the Cross? Why would God need a specific amount of money to keep His children alive for a specific period of time after which there must be another review, like a contract or casino? Does the difference in contribution also mean differences in blessings and protection? Then is God a respecter of persons?

Obadare asks further: "Has God mysteriously lost his powers to *do all things*? Suppose, for instance, that a former covenantee resolves not to renew his/her lease, what happens? Does he or she then forfeit God's blessings?... Gone are the days when God would bless you for merely obeying his commandments. No more. He is not only tired of keeping people alive for so long; the terms for securing God's blessings have changed. You've gotta make a deposit, man!"⁴⁷

The question should naturally arise: why is money so important in modern Christianity compared to the old time? Why is it that the spirit can no longer move among the churches except money is involved? Why is it that nothing seems to move except with money and money appears, in the modern church, to be the driving wheel of the gospel? Much pressure over money today in the modern church is not for evangelism but due to shift of focus from the primary role of the church to other things. Does the church really need the number of universities that

she currently has when the government with access to both taxes and other revenue is finding it difficult to fund her own? Does every denomination need a university of its own? Of course all these will increase the church's visibility and authority but then "authority requires money to maintain itself in power, and it is not otherwise when that authority is ecclesiastical."⁴⁸ Thus having saddled herself with non-essential but money-consuming tasks she is left with no option than to bear the financial burden and share same with her children. Thus more time goes for fund-raising and a little time for religious instruction.⁴⁹

Unethical Practices

All these lead to unethical practices which lead to engagement of high-pressure tactics in fund-raising. At the 2012 Passover service held by Christ Embassy in Lagos, one of the neo-classical Pentecostal churches, participants were charged N1000 at the gate before entry as seating fee even though the property was their own and the chairs were owned by the church. The same Chris Oyakhilome, pastor of the same church was accused in 2007 of collecting stolen money from one of his members who worked in a bank.⁵⁰

The idea of calling out members to give a specific amount of money before the whole congregation is another practice common today with Pentecostal churches which creates insecurity, anger and envy as it "apparently raises a feeling of inadequacy in people who may not have the opportunity to give."⁵¹ This in effect will further drive a wedge within the body of Christ thus creating division and disunity between the haves and have-nots. In some cases the speaker compels the would-be giver in a way that they would not be able to resist if they fear God. At the Annual Convention of Foursquare in 2002 Felix Omobude asked all who had N10,000 at home and who are children of God to come and give it in the Name of Jesus. Many went out to pledge more in deference to the Name of Jesus. But this departs from the Pauline standards and requirements for giving based on individual purpose and personal decision.

In some places certain packages like handkerchiefs, books or some personal items of the pastors are handed out to the donors for pledging- all these to provoke people to give and, consequently, to insult the sensibilities of those who had none.

Sometimes this drive for money gets to a point that it borders on criminality. A newspaper reported a particular church in Ogba where the pastor blessed the computer of a member who specializes in 419 (advance-fee fraud) so that he will continue to have *mugunto* defraud. Another prophet of a white-garment church told me that often times they were engaged to bust a case involving a client with the authorities so that the client can escape justice- for a fee. All these compromise collective and individual security because by not asking for the source of money being donated to religious causes we make the church to be partner-in- crime in the event that the money being donated was slush fund or reward of crime. Needless to say, that apart from violating the ethical codes of society, these unethical practices in finances create, by and large, insecurity in society.

Core Emphases

A closer examination and study of Pentecostal movement in Nigeria shows that the core emphases today revolve around three things: miracles, success and prosperity. This fact is important and we cannot understand the religious behaviour of these churches by ignoring their emphases. The Living Faith Church a.k.a Winners Chapel has nine core emphases two of which are prosperity and success.⁵² Daystar Christian Center has success as one of its core emphases and talking points.

What does this tell us about this category of churches? First we need to understand that the emphasis of modern Pentecostalism has shifted from what it used to be in the early days. It used to be about God, Jesus and the Cross but today it is more about prosperity, miracles and personal success. What is significant about these emphases is that they are all connected with *self* and *self-gratification*; not about God, spirituality or other-worldliness but about the self, materialism and this-worldliness. This is why the idea of heaven and hell and other practical teachings of the New Testament seem so nebulous to the modern age and "why so much of what is presented as Christianity today is simply a sanctification of worldly desires in the name of Jesus."⁵³ The same selfishness has distorted the message and the impact of the gospel. Dave Hunt captures it well:

The same selfish ambitions and longings which motivate the world, the same fleshly goals, and the same kind of success are offered as enticements to get people to "come to Jesus"- a "Jesus" who never rebukes sin but only heals, prospers, and "positively reinforces" a person's self-esteem.(Hunt 1988:47)

Then he adds this which clearly situates the logic of the modern gospel as a counterfeit gospel:

Many Christians imagine that victory in Christ is to become the epitome of what the world desires in wealth and success and fame and do it all better than the ungodly because Christians have "Jesus on their side." Such is the misguided promise of Positive Confession... though such a false hope may seemingly be supported by an isolated verse here or there taken out of context, it is the very antithesis of the consistent message of the New Testament. (Hunt 1988:47)

This pre-occupation with this-worldliness is a manifest feature of most of the Pentecostal churches. J.D.Y. Peel has noted, for instance, this change of focus or emphasis about the RCCG from the ethical rigorism and "other-worldly emphasis in the early days when its austerity and emphasis on restitution got it the nickname of *Ijo Elekun*"⁵⁴ But this has given way to a more marketable, prosperous and pragmatic approach.

This holiness attitude has never been repudiated but under its dynamic second leader, from the mid-1980s onwards, Redeemed has not only moved up-market sociologically, but became more this-worldly in its emphasis on prosperity, both in the preaching it offered individuals and in building up its corporate wealth. It seems to me that Redeemed has developed rather than repudiated its Aladura background...(Peel 2006: 27)

Most of the programs of Pentecostal churches revolve around these three items and about self. They are not about knowing God or going higher spiritually but about making it and getting success and wealth in this world. It is a religion devoted exclusively to self and nothing else. This is one of the serious drawbacks of Pentecostal theology and emphases.

The Cult of Self

Watchman Nee, the Chinese saint has noted that you can gauge the falsity or authenticity of a religious experience by its attitude to self.⁵⁵ How a religion or religious phenomena treats self or what role self occupies in a religious scheme tells a lot about its authenticity and spiritual worldview. A recent survey by George Barna shows that over half of evangelical Christians agree with the fact that " the purpose of life is enjoyment and personal fulfilment."⁵⁶

Religion today has assumed a new philosophy of existentialism and pragmatism. Religion exists today solely to take care of self and the desires of self. Modern Christianity, especially in its Pentecostal- evangelical brand in Nigeria exists solely to feed the cravings of self and worldly desires. Prosperity, blessings, goodly mansions, wife, miracles, healings, deliverances- these are the goods being hawked by modern Pentecostalism to interested buyers. Its motive is about self and man's natural desires; its perspective is this-worldly rather than other-worldly. Its focus is this world and not the other world. It is man-centred and not God or Christ-centred. Its ends tend towards self-fulfilment, self-realization and personal greatness in the world and not self-denial, self-abnegation or cross-carrying for the greater glory of God and the benefit of suffering humanity. In short it is about selfishness and maximum enjoyment.

It is interesting that the Stoic philosophers of the pre-Christian times were even more other-worldly in their outlook than the votaries of modern Pentecostalism. Religion has thus become an avenue to get what we want rather than a medium of worshipping the Creator. God has become a channel or button to be pushed to get us that particular thing- that prosperity or success- that we so desperately need. The god of modern Pentecostalism is actually a god that can be used. He is a god who can be courted to provide all that a person needs and more without asking any question about personal holiness or sanctity. That is not the God of the Bible or of historic Christianity. This is where the trouble is. Selfishness is the way of darkness not light. All the great saints of history were agreed on this point. Hear how Dr. W.B. Inge captures it:

*It will be found that men of preeminent saintliness agree very closely in what they tell us. They tell us that they have arrived at an unshakable conviction, not based on inference, but on immediate experience, that God is a spirit with whom the human spirit can hold intercourse, that in him meet all that they can imagine of goodness, truth and beauty; that they can see his footprints everywhere in nature, and feel his presence within them as the very life of their life, so that in proportion as they come to themselves they come to him. They tell us what separates us from him and from happiness is first self-seeking in all its forms, and, secondly, sensuality in all its forms; that these are the ways of darkness and death, which hide from us the face of God; while the path of the just is like a shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. (Inge 1899: 326 quoted in William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p.216)*

Take note of the expressions: self-seeking and sensuality; and their consequences: death and darkness. As long as modern religion continues to advertise as its aims and chief goals the gratification of self and selfish desires and earthly desires so long will religion continue to be a vehicle of darkness and death instead of life.

Pentecostal Religion and Insecurity

How do all these affect the society at large? How does a dominant belief within a particular segment of faith tradition affect the mass? As it has been shown Pentecostal religion in this nation is about self: self-gratification, self-promotion, self-protection etc. It places the highest premium on personal success and distinction and the good things of this world. It is not averse to sharing the good things of life and the innocent enjoyment of its pleasures. Its philosophy is that of existentialism and pragmatism through and through. But selfishness is the way of darkness not light, as all the saints agreed to tell us; and selfishness is not as hideous as when it is in the holy place.

Thus a religion devoted exclusively to the promotion and fulfilment of earthly desires and worldly wishes, with the promise of health, wealth, success and security with heaven at last and no strings or conditions attached or responsibility required is bound to be a religion of the popular masses but such a religion is also, in the same breath, bound to be the very antithesis of the New Testament and a recipe for chaos and insecurity. Such religion is bound to be concerned mostly with externality and nothing with interiority, a religion full of noise and short of contemplation and meditation. Studies have shown that this type of religion is even worse than no religion at all. (See Allport, 1968; Kahoe, 1974; Wiebe and Fleck, 1980; Donahue 1985; Bergin et al, 1987)

Social science research has established that religious behaviour can be classified into two distinct categories and orientations: "intrinsic" and "extrinsic." One is internalized and directed towards God while the other is about self and the pursuit of self goals.

Intrinsic practice is God-oriented and based on beliefs which transcend the person's own existence. Research shows this form of religious practice to be beneficial. Extrinsic practice is self-oriented and characterized by outward observance, not internalized as a guide to behaviour or attitudes. The evidence suggests this form of religious practice is actually more harmful than no religion: religion directed toward some end other than God, or the transcendent, typically degenerates into a rationalization for the pursuit of other ends such as status, personal security, self-justification, or sociability. (Fagan 1996)

Needless to say that modern Pentecostalism in our nation today both in its practice, behaviour and teachings fits into the classification of 'extrinsic' religion- a form of religion which is even worse than no religion at all. Although religion has figured prominently in the social transformation of our country particularly in the promotion of civil societies, community values, and educational uplift, religion in its Nigerian practices and manifestations has also become a major source of national bondage, so much that it threatens human knowledge and cultural values.⁵⁷

Could this be the reason why the more churches of this category that we are having the more crises and darkness seem to engulf the land and the more insecurity is resulting?

Conclusion

Modern Pentecostalism is one of the main features- one of the dominant form- of religious expressions in our nation today. Religion by its nature is a glue that binds a group of people within a collectivity to an ideal, a super motif or purpose. But religion can also be an instrument for chaos and insecurity. The aim of this study is to show that certain aspects in the phase of modern Pentecostalism as it is practiced in this nation today can lead to insecurity and disorder.

It is focused on external, worldly and selfish goals not on internal, heavenly or spiritual and other-worldly concerns. Simply put it is concerned primarily with the self. It's more extrinsic, outward and external instead of being intrinsic, inward and interior. Its votaries and exponents seem too concerned with money and materialism to the exclusion of the more spiritual and eternal values. This type of religion is a threat to public security. Pentecostalism is often presented by its votaries as a cure- all, a kind of all-purpose therapy for all ills: healing, prosperity, peace, salvation, abundance, deliverance etc. But empirical data shows that Nigerians are farther from these promises today than even before Pentecostalism became prominent on this shore. If anything the experience of most Nigerians have been the reverse from those ideals. And the message and emphases of modern Pentecostalism as well as the practices and methods of its advocates have been largely responsible for these reverses. In such a case the *medicine* becomes poison and the *physician* becomes the killer.

Modern Pentecostalism should attempt to recapture its other-worldly focus and the message of the Cross which used to characterize the movement in its early days. It should also begin to emphasize more on the inward qualities which shape behaviour and less on money and materialism for in the final analysis and as Christ Himself noted, a man's life does not consist of what he possesses.⁵⁸

NOTES

1. This figure is based on newspaper reports.
2. See John 3
3. Juan Sepulveda. "Pentecostalism as Popular Religiosity" in *International Review of Missions* Vol. LXX VIII 309, January 1989
4. Grant Wacker, "The Functions of Faith in Primitive Pentecostalism" in *Harvard Theological Review*, 77:3- 4 (1984) p.353-75.
5. For studies on Nigerian Pentecostalism see Ogbu Kalu. *African Pentecostalism, 2006*; Matthews Ojo. *God's Endtime Army*; Burgess.
6. Wacker *op.cit.*, p.353
7. Although Martin was referring specifically to evangelicals which is the broad term inclusive of Pentecostals. This fact might have been true before among the old generation and pioneers of Pentecostalism in this nation, but it is not true for the leadership of the modern neo-pentecostal churches. Both Pastors Kumuyi and Adebayo were university dons and Daniel Olukoya was a distinguished scholar of international repute.
8. Wacker *op.cit.*, p.368
9. Colin Brown. *History and Faith*, Inter-varsity Press, 1987 p.9
10. According to Juan Sepulveda *op.cit.*
11. Deji Aiyegboyin and Asonzeh Ukah. "Taxonomy of Churches in Nigeria: A Historical perspective". *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies* XXXIV/ 1-2 June and December 2002,78
12. According to Transparency International, Nigeria is the 35th most corrupt nation on earth based on its 2012 ranking. The 2011 ranking shows Nigeria as the 39th most corrupt. See *Punch* December 6, 2012.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Reuben Abati, " Laughing and Crying at Xmas" *Guardian* December 25, 2009 p.51
15. Several newspapers reported this in 2009.
16. See "Pastor of Thieves : How Oyakhilome Received Another Stolen Money" *TheNEWS* Vol.20, No.23 9 June, 2003
17. There is a barrage of critiques of religion especially Pentecostal religion in Nigerian newspapers. For the more serious critiques see Damola Awoyokun. "The Next Einstein and the Expressway Churches" *Guardian* May 22, 2008; G.A.Akinola. "Einstein and the false prophets" *Guardian*; BiodunJeyifo. "Occult Economy". *Talakawa Liberation Courier, Guardian*, 2007; Leolgwe. " Africa Needs Development not God" *Guardian*, February 11, 2009; Levi Obijiofor. "Looking for God with loudspeakers" *Guardian*, 13/3/2009, p.16; Ebenezer Obadare. "Pastor Adebayo's Private Jet" *Guardian*, 25/3/2009; Chinazo- Bertrand Okeomah. " The Many Tragedies of Today's Church" *TELL*, 3/9/2012, p.58; Izerelmosemi, "Religion and the Nigerian Society" *Punch* 17/9/2012 p.20; Abimbola Adelakun. "Jail is too good for Nigerian Pastors" *Punch*, 22 November, 2012; among others.
18. John MacArthur, *The Truth War: Fighting for Certainty in an Age of Deception*, USA: Thomas Nelson, 2007 p. 172

19. David Oyedepo. *The Communion*
20. John MacArthur *op.cit*
21. W. Armstrong, "In Pursuit of Power" in Michael Scott Hunter (eds) *Power Religion: The Selling Out of the Evangelical Church?*
22. John Martin. *Gospel People? Evangelicals and the Future of Anglicanism*, London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1997 p.13
23. F.F. Bruce. *When is a Gospel not a Gospel* John Rylands Library Lectures, 1965
24. James Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World* (New York: Scribner's n.d.), 21)
25. J. MacArthur *op.cit*
26. See James 2: 19
27. John MacArthur. *Charismatic Chaos*, Michigan : Zondervan Publishing, 1992 p. 265
28. Deuteronomy 8:18
29. Rebecca Brown, *He Came to Set the Captives Free*, pp.242,3
30. See www.rccg.org
31. From their website.
32. See OgbuKalu, *African Pentecostalism...*
33. See David Oyedepo, *The Excellency of Wisdom*, Lagos: Dominion Publishing
34. The MFM is a classic example of deliverance ministry. Dr Daniel Olukoya has written extensively on the subject.
35. Galatians
36. The author is in possession of three books written on the theology of firstborn deliverance.
37. See (Pinker, 2002; Sulloway, 2007; Ernst & Angst, 1983; Harris, 1998; Zajonc, R. B., & Markus, G. G. 1975
38. Like Samuel Johnson, Newton, Babalola, Darwin etc
39. Ayo-Obiremi. "The Upsurge of Imprecatory Prayers Today and the Effects on Children" in Akande et al (eds) *Indigenization of the Church in Africa: The Nigerian Situation, Essays in Honour of Ezekiel Bamigboye*, 2012
40. *Ibid*
41. *Ibid*
42. William James *op.cit*
43. A.W. Tozer. "The Money Question Needs Prayerful Restudy" in *Warfare of the Spirit*, Pennsylvania :Christian Publications, 1966, p.6
44. Prophet Oladeji at Babalola Anniversary on Erio Prayer Mountain, April 2012.
45. Ebenezer Obadare. "Pastor Adeboye and Casino Pentecostalism" in *Premium Times*, 2012, an online magazine
46. Obtained from their website at www.rccg.org
47. Obadare *op.cit*
48. *Tozer op.cit*
49. Popular Christian musician NiyiAdedokun captured it when he said that the church could spend 2 hours raising money but when it's time for preaching they will ask to be brief.
50. See "Pastor of Thieves" *TheNEWSof* 9 June 2003 Vol. 20 No. 23
51. See TemitopeOguntokun. "How Pastors Charm Their Followers" in *TheNEWSof* 9 June 2003 Vol.20 No.23
52. Information from their website.
53. David Hunt. *Whatever Happened to Heaven*, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1988.
54. J.D.Y. Peel. *YORUBA RELIGION: Seeing it in History, Seeing it Whole*, Lecture delivered at 3rd Ebenezer AdeoluAdegbola Memorial Lecture, Institute of Church and Society, Ibadan, 2008.
55. Watchman Nee, *The Spiritual Man*,
56. George Barna Surveys available online
57. Jacob K. Olupona. "Bonds, Boundaries and Bondage of Faith: Religion in Private and Public Sphere in Nigeria" Nigerian National Merit Award Guest Lecture, 2012, *Guardian*, Jan. 3, 2013
58. Matthew...

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