

EVANGELISM AND THE RISE OF PENTECOSTALISM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

In every nook and cranny of the country today, hardly can one walk without observing the planting of churches of different denominations. Among these denominations are the Pentecostal Churches, regarded as the fastest growing Church not only in Nigeria but Africa in general. What could have been the secrets behind the sporadic growth? Is it that other denominations before them have not been obeying the divine mandate of Matthew 18:20? The author observes that before the advent of Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria, the existing denominations were simply interested in physical and structural growths as seen in the building of cathedrals and little or no attention was given to soul winning. No doubt, there were migrations of church members from one denomination to the other and this could not be regarded as evangelism. However, the arrival of Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria seems to have changed the outlook of evangelism. New and vibrant methods of evangelism were introduced with positive results. The objectives of this paper were; to show over the years that Christian evangelism rejects the false assumption that somehow one can get a Christian social order without getting truly Christian men and women. Also, to examine the roles of evangelism in the growth of Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria, to survey methods used by Pentecostal Churches in evangelism and to equally investigate the impacts of evangelism on Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria. The work adopted historical method of research in order to trace the extent to which evangelism was carried in Nigeria before the emergence of Pentecostal Churches. The paper contributes to knowledge in that it enables churches and religious leaders in particular to know problems associated with evangelism and how to proffer solutions to such problems.

Keywords: evangelism, Church, Pentecostals, Pentecostal Churches

Introduction

The preaching of the gospel otherwise known as evangelism is a call to all believing Christians. As such, it has no gender specification. It is a command given to all by Jesus as mandated in Matthew 28: 19-22. However, it is sad but very common for churches to grow lukewarm in the zeal for bringing the unsaved to Jesus Christ. The brethren at Laodicea exhibited the same lukewarm attitude to evangelism in the first century. Therefore, it should not be a thing of surprise if a church experiences spiritual decline but as Christians, we should not be lethargic about it. Before the advent of Pentecostalism, poor performance in the aspect of evangelism among churches in Nigeria have led to waste of God's power invested on the apostles at Pentecost, for it is written, "but you shall receive power, after the Holy Spirit is come upon you and you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part

of the earth (Acts 1:8Kjv).” Many modern churches, however, have used evangelism as a means of church growth, and as such they failed. Evangelism should not be considered as a one-time event that merely increases the number of people who attend the church, but as an entire process that wins people and make disciples. There are many Christian denominations in Nigeria and many unbelievers even go there for various reasons. Unfortunately, most churches have few strategies for evangelism. Some might have relatively succeeded in drawing members but do not have the next step that makes them disciples. Evangelism brings about revival. Yet, there is no true revival that does not result in evangelism owing to the fact that revival brings about true reawakening of Christian who might have grown cold and lukewarm. The writer discovered that most times, the church invests a great deal of money and time into Summer Camp but with little to show for it. This is because very little attention is given to making it evangelistically fruitful. Where other denominations are failing, the Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria are doing exploits in evangelism by getting everybody involved and creating effective evangelistic outreaches. The denomination gets feedbacks and ideas from the church members in preparing for evangelism and try as much as possible to find out what hinders people from being involved and what they think about the current evangelistic efforts. It is on this platform the paper examines the impacts of evangelism in the church revival, using the Pentecostal churches in Nigeria as a focus.

Literature Review

Evangelism

Evangelism is not a new phenomenon in the history of the church. It is as old as the Church itself. It is equally believed that God is the originator of the concept of evangelism. This is because in the book of Genesis 1:3, it is recorded that, “God said, let there be light.” This was the first evangelistic message ever heard in the world. As such, it is often regarded as the beginning of the story of salvation (Erastas, 4-5). In the Septuagint (LXX), Philo and Josephus used the word to denote dissemination of good news. In the Palestinian Judaism, it is also for proclaiming good news (Isa. 31: 9; 25:18) (Buttrick, 712).The word *evangelizomai* was used extensively in the New Testament. It occurs once in Matthew (11:5), 10 times in Luke (1:28), 15 times in Acts (16:17), 21 times in Pauline Epistles, two (2) times in Hebrews, three (3) times in 1 Peter while it appears two (2) times in the book of Revelation. However, its usage was not recorded at all in Mark, Gospel of John, Ephesians, James, 2 Peter and Jude (Kennedy, 13).

The word “evangelism” is the Christian word for the “Great Commission.” It is the command of the Lord given to the Church of all ages (Matt. 28:19f). The term has been severally defined by scholars the way they deem it fit. Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary opined that:

Evangelism adherence to evangelical doctrines as a preaching of or zealous efforts to spread the gospel as in revival meetings. Of those Protestant Churches as the Methodist and Baptist, that emphasis the salvation of faith in the atonement of Jesus and reject the efficacy of the sacrament and good works alone (10).

Sweazay submitted that:

Evangelism is every possible way of reaching outside the Church. To make contacts with a definite person; to cultivate their knowledge of Christian faith and living; to lead them to confess Christ as their Lord and Saviour; to bring them into Church membership and; to help them commence Christian habits and Church participation (51).

Judging from the above definitions, it is very clear that evangelism involves reaching out, that is, not only within the four corners of the Church, to a particular person not just general outreach, but reaching the un-reached (Paul, 98). This implies bringing the lost souls to the saving grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Similarly, Douglas (773) defined evangelism as reaching people with the basic message of the Bible and presenting the facts that the Holy Spirit can lead them to repentance and faith. Thus, to evangelize means to announce, proclaim, or bring good news of salvation to sinful man. One can therefore say that to evangelize is the announcement of the “Good News” to the world in the power of the Holy Spirit in order to bring the sinful world to the knowledge of his master (Kittel, 712).

Church

In contemporary usage “Church” as a word dominates the ecclesiological vocabulary. It comes through the German and Latin, from the Greek word *Kuriakon* which means “that which belongs to the Lord.” In New Testament Greek, *ecclesia* usually translated in English as “Church” is by no means so dominating or centre, a term. Out of about 112 appearance of *ecclesia* in the New Testament, 90% are from Pauline letters, the books of Acts and Revelation (George, 514). The English term “Church” is used in a variety of ways. In the Gospels, the term occurs 2 times, both times in Matthew (16:18; 18:17). The first refers to words of Jesus to Peter, “Upon this rock I will build my Church.” The second instance deals with Church discipline and the sinning brother, “tell it unto the Church, and if he refuses to hear the Church also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the Republican (Millard, 30).”

The word *ecclesia* was used in the New Testament to denote the gathering of believers in Christ Jesus (Jewel, 226). It has a pre-Christian origin. It grows to become a distinctively Christian word, through the Greek world and right down to New Testament times (Acts 19-39). The term was designed to mean “regular assembly of the whole body of citizens in a free city-state (MacNaire, 27).” It means “call out (Awojobi, 3-4).” According to Malphurs (119), “the Church is a fellowship of persons united by a common loyalty to Christ and by a desire to worship and do the will of God as revealed in Christ.” The in its universal sense consists, therefore, of all those who have had a personal encounter with Jesus Christ regardless of their race, nationality, denomination, or position in life (Downey, 34, 43).

Pentecostals

Pentecostal means the fiftieth day (Lindhart, 42). It is the Hebrew festival, celebrated on the fiftieth day from the day of the Passover or on the day of the giving of law at Sinai (Ndagogo and Mcgann, 26). In the Christian Church, Pentecost is celebrated seven weeks after Easter to commemorate the day of the descent of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:1-14 after the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Fatokun, 61). Therefore, Pentecostal in contemporary parlance applies to a “charismatic phenomenon which puts its emphasis on the visible gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially the gifts of

tongues and faith healing (Isiramen, 303). In the view of Ukeh (12, 22), Pentecostal is that “movement within Christianity, which emphasizes personal relationship with the Holy Spirit as the mainstay of authentic Christianity (Oragbunam, 91).” Pentecostals strongly believe in the ecstatic, physical and vibrant manifestations of the Holy Spirit as reflected in vibrant prayers, speaking in tongues, performing miracles, prophecies and visions.

Pentecostal Churches

Pentecostal Churches are Christian denominations that emphasize the work of the Holy Spirit and the exact truth of the Bible. They are Protestant Christian movements that emphasize direct personal relationship with the Holy Spirit (Alian, 174). Pentecostal Church takes its name from the Spirit’s outpouring which occurred on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:1-4. The primary distinction of a Pentecostal Church is the belief that Christians can receive the same experience as the 120 did, of being baptized with the Holy Spirit, evidenced by speaking in other tongues. A Pentecostal Church generally identifies with the long standing history, traditions, and theological views of the Pentecostal movement. The difference between Pentecostal Churches and other Mainline Churches is the exercise of charism, the gifts of discernment of the spirits, speaking in other tongues, and its interpretation, the working of miracles, prophecy, visions, healing and baptism in the spirit.

Evangelism in the Biblical Era

Suffice it to say that the Bible is not silent on the issue of evangelism. Evangelism goes beyond speaking and preaching. It is the proclamation with full authority and power of God. As such, signs and wonder often accompany it. The Christian scripture is replete with instances of evangelism, both in the Old Testament and New Testament. According to Han (115), the calling of Abraham can be considered as the beginning of the “good news” in the Old Testament, though one can still find several examples of good news of God before the time of Abraham. To Abraham, the promise of the blessing of all mankind was given. The blessing of all mankind was indeed good news, even more because it was from God Himself (117). Again, the Bible is full of evidence which show that the whole history of the Old Testament centred on the nation of Israel. Therefore, the concept of evangelism revolves round Israel as God’s agent for the noble purpose. Thieme (32) buttresses the above when he submitted that;

Since Israel was appointed God’s custodian of the divine truth, the nation was given the responsibility of evangelizing the world (Rom. 3:1-2). But unfortunately, Israel failed God. Instead of fulfilling their assignment as God’s missionary agent, the Israelites arrogantly came to regard salvation as a Jewish monopoly and ultimately failed to obey God’s command to spread the Gospel. It is worthy to note that the dismal performance of the Israelites in spreading the good news of salvation made God to adopt a final and better method of saving the world. God sent His only begotten Son to save mankind. This agent is the heart of evangelism in the New Testament.

The New Testament books can be succinctly described as the books of evangelism. Evangelism is the heartbeat of God and the chief evangelist was Jesus Christ. He was sent to the world to evangelize human race and to save mankind and reconcile them to God. He gave his life on the Cross so that the world might be delivered from the captivity of sin and consequently broke the barrier between man and his Creator. Jesus Christ's first teaching and introduction to his new followers in the first chapter of the book of Mark is, "come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." His last instruction on earth to his disciples is, "but ye shall receive power after the Holy Spirit is come upon you and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the world" (Acts 1:18). The thrust of Jesus Christ's teaching, according to Kennedy (13) is summed up in the Great Commission where he commands his followers to go into the entire world and preach the gospel to every creature. While describing the evangelistic ministry of Jesus Christ, Han (116) asserts that the entire life of Jesus is characterized by preaching the good news of the kingdom of God to every creature.

Likewise, Apostle Peter understood the inevitability of evangelism, having being trained by Jesus himself. As such, the Great Commission was not seen as anything strange or artificial. It was simply the way Jesus had lived, and he was only asking his disciples to follow the same lifestyle (Leslie, 149). Thus, Peter was a true apostle of Jesus when it comes to the matter of evangelism. Han stresses that after Pentecost, the content of the disciples' preaching was concentrated upon Jesus Christ. According to Acts 5:42; "the disciples did not cease to teach and preach Jesus Christ daily in the temple and in every house (Charles, 10)." The first evangelistic message that was preached at Pentecost after the departure of Jesus was given by Apostle Peter (Acts 2:14-42).

The contribution of Paul the Apostle to the spread and development of the Christian Church in the first century cannot be over emphasized. He labored to make sure the gospel was preached. At a point, he put curse upon himself if he refused to preach the gospel, "woe unto me if I preach not the gospel," (1 Cor. 9:16). Paul's impact was better felt among the Gentiles. He preached the gospel throughout the Gentile world. He readily made himself available to preach the gospel and reach the unreached. Thus, he taught his disciples to be actively involved in evangelism. In his Second Epistle to Timothy, he warned him as a son, "but you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry" (2 Tim. 4:5). This shows that evangelism is an urgent assignment for every believer irrespective of one's status or position in life. If every member of the church engages in evangelism, the church will experience both qualitative and quantitative growth.

Evangelism in the Twenty-First Century Church

The primary assignment given to the Christian church is to preach the good news that God through Christ came to live, die and rise again to take the sins of the world. The questions are: why does the Church struggle to train believers to share confidently the glorious gospel? How do we equip the Churches to become inwardly strong yet outwardly focused with people who are ablaze with the love of Jesus? As Christians and as the Church of Jesus Christ, we are called by the Lord to "Go and make disciples." The call to bear witness is part of God's plan to bring the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. However, many of the evangelistic methods that worked in the past seem not to be effective again in the twenty-first century. Is there a way to approach evangelism that is biblically sound yet culturally relevant?

There is much discussion among scholars and missiologists today about the role of culture and the importance of expressing the gospel in culturally relevant ways. First, we must recognize that there is no such thing as a Christian culture or civilization. Therefore, all cultures have virtues and faults. The good news is that God made people of every culture in His image. Nevertheless, the more we understand the issues and questions that arise in each culture, the more effective we will be in arousing their interest in the gospel. Peter was able to preach the gospel to seemingly every language and culture. Yet, his message was clearly understood. This is because Peter declared God's Word through the power of God's Spirit and thus transcended all of their cultural differences. As such, evangelism in the twenty-first century demands being culturally sensitive while leaning on the power of God's Word and Spirit for accomplishment.

In addition, how do Christian Churches and believers in Nigeria creatively proclaim the gospel in our age of relativity that denies the possibility of absolute truth—when the truth of any truth is under suspicion and the validity of gospel truth is either denied or ignored? 1 Corinthians 15: 2-5 affirm the above; By this gospel you are saved, that Christ died for our sin, according to the scriptures, that he was on the third day according to the Scriptures, that he appeared to Peter and then to the Twelve. Kuzmic (198) observes that; The faithful, brave and creative proclamation of the gospel must be grounded in these foundational facts of the universally valid truth, for truth is foundation for trust.

The Christian Church must be faithful in disseminating the gospel. When the Church feel intimidated about telling others the Christian message, it is not simply due to fear of rejection. It goes deeper to the ability to “believe the message themselves” in a world that tells them that a religious conviction cannot be true in any factual sense and must be held only as a private opinion (Bridges, 136). The task of the Church is therefore to strengthen the modern believers' confidence that the “good news” is not just true for them, but it is true for the whole world and can be told with assurance.

The strongest and most vital evangelism in the twenty-first century is being done through the three approaches— “personal evangelism,” “small group evangelism,” and “proclamation evangelistic events (Kuzmic, 77-85).” These three approaches complement one another. Unfortunately, most Christian Churches use one approach and make evangelism ineffective. When the three are used together and the Church provides solid training in personal and small group witness as well as Outreach events, the end result is church growth.

Genesis of Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria

The history of the formative period of Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria dated back to 1914 and 1930 (Spurgeon, 73). This started with the emergence of the African Independent Churches otherwise known as Aladura Churches in Yorubaland of Western Nigeria. Among such churches are Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), Church of the Lord, Cherubim and Seraphim Church (C&S), Celestial Church of Christ (Adewale, 170-172). These churches exhibited elements found among Pentecostal Churches such as healing, miracles, visions and dreams, speaking in tongues and prophecy. The above-mentioned churches exemplified Pentecostal phenomenal such as clapping and singing, drumming and dancing to African music. However, the beginning of 1970s witnessed the birth of new Pentecostal movements.

Originating in evangelical student revivals, a wave of Pentecostal expansion spawns new churches in the 1960s and 1970s. A leader of this expansion is Benson Idahosa, one of Africa's most influential Pentecostal preachers. He established the Church of God Mission International in 1972 ([Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.](#), 2020). In 1974, the Pentecostal umbrella organization of Grace of God Ministry is founded in eastern Nigeria. The Deeper Life Bible Church was founded in 1975 and became one of Nigeria's largest Neo-Pentecostal Churches with an estimated 350,000 members by 1993. Neo-Pentecostal Churches grew throughout the 1980s and 1990 (20). By 1986, David Oyedepo founded Living Faith Outreach Worldwide, popularly known as "Winner's Chapel." It opened as a "Faith Tabernacle" in the suburbs of Lagos in 1999 that can seat 50,000 people, Rhema Chapel by George Adegbeye (Ilorin), New Testament Church by M.R Popoola (Ilorin), Trumpeters Church by T. Oludare (Ilesha). Others are Household of God's Church by Gabriel Oduyemi (Oregun, Lagos), Patrick Anwuzia's Zoe Ministries, Latter Rain Assembly by Tunde Bakare, Christ Chapel International by Tunde Jota, Sword of the Spirits by Francis Wale Oke, Synagogues of All Nations by late T. B. Joshua, Christ Embassy by Chris Oyakhilome and Dominion Life Bible Church by Bode Amoo (2020).

Methods of Evangelism in Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria

Open-Air-Preaching Method

An Open-Air method of evangelism in the Pentecostal Churches is usually done outside rather than in a building. Open-Air evangelism often holds place as far as soul-winning is concerned (Donald, 47). In every age of the Christian Church, there have been pious men and women who have taken very literally the injunction of Jesus Christ to go out into the highways and byways and preach the gospel. Jesus himself led by example in doing what he admonished his disciples and Christians in general to do. He did virtually the greater percentage of his evangelism on the streets and in open fields of Palestine. Therefore, the Christian Church was born in an atmosphere of Open-Air evangelism method. George Whitefield, the Wesley brothers, Charles Spurgeon, Reinard Bonnke, Enoch Adejare Adeboye, Billy Graham, Benson Idahosa and a host of others were notable examples of Open-Air crusaders (Matthew, 12). Spurgeon (67), for instance, recommended several techniques for effective Open-Air preaching, such as, the use of illustrations and anecdotes to keep the crowd interested and not to speak at the top of one's voice so as not to be worn out too quickly. In Nigeria, Open-Air evangelism has become a common feature in church growth and for church planting, more especially among the Pentecostal Churches like the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Deeper Life Bible Church, Christ Embassy, Mountain of Fire and Miracle (MFM), and Winner's Chapel just to mention a few. Through this method, the population of members of these churches keeps increasing and this has continued to aid church proliferation in Nigeria. In the view of Spurgeon (69), Open-Air evangelism was instrumental in getting people to hear the gospel who might otherwise never hear it. As such, many Open-Air preachers in Nigeria today believe that it reaches many more people at once than other approaches to evangelism.

Trickle-Down Method

This approach to evangelism primarily concerned with converting high-ranking members of a society, so that their influence can serve as a springboard to the spread of Christianity throughout the society in question (Douglas, 770). The idea behind trickle-down evangelism is that it is the most efficient means of reaching people who are influential, who can be mobilized to

effectively reach their subordinates. This is because they are already influential and persuasive in the lives of others. Thus, this makes them the most natural place one can start this method of evangelism in order to reach a large number of people. The European missionary in the 19th century made effective use of this method. They sold the new religion to the king and the king's subjects followed the king's footsteps without being preached to by the missionaries. However, this method has two unintended consequences. The first is a neglect of the less apparently influential. By so doing, one tends to elevate human social influence over God's prerogative. A second unintended consequence is that trickle-down method can also keep a movement from reflecting the diversity of a given location. Whether one looks at ethnic, socio-economic, or cultural diversity, we naturally connect with people who are similar to us. Nevertheless, the trickle-down method has recorded a number of successes among Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria. Members of this denomination believe that if their pastors' preaching platform and bank accounts grow, the members of the Church celebrate as if the prosperity were their own. The belief is that the blessings and financial breakthrough of their pastors is supernaturally being transferred to them in the spirit-realm. For this reason, members of these Churches want their pastors to drive the latest cars, wear expensive name-brand clothing, and live in a large home in order that God's blessings would trickle-down to them (Oluwasegun, 2).

Door-to-Door Method

Door-to-Door preaching is a method of evangelism where a Christian goes from one household to another in a certain area to evangelize to residents, often in conjunction with passing out gospel tracts (Thieme, 40). The Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria use door-to-door evangelism as an instrument for church growth and church planting. Among the Redeemed Christian Church of God, for instance, this method has given birth to the planning of new parishes through its programme popularly called "let go and fish." Pentecostals use this technique as a means of inviting people to special church event, to find out the spiritual needs of their immediate community, to offer prayers with people who mentioned a spiritual need and to engage in evangelistic conversations when people are open to such conversations (Sweazey, 31). In Pentecostal Churches, door-to-door evangelism does not replace home visitation, rather, it works alongside the other techniques as part of a holistic evangelistic strategy. Nevertheless, door-to-door method is not without its critics. Since 1973, church growth experts have unwisely labeled this method as old-fashioned and ineffective in modern society. However, recent studies have challenged the validity of these widely-held convictions of church growth researchers (51). Yet church leaders are coming to the conclusion that door-to-door evangelism is an essential if a church is serious and desirous of contacting an entire community for Christ.

Creative Evangelism Method

The method involves the use of creative arts like music, visual arts, drama films to present the gospel message (Downey, 42). In some churches, this creative art is simply referred to as the practice of finding creative ways to evangelize (44). Creativity comes from gearing the method to the individual like Jesus did. The approach may be subtle; it may arouse curiosity or it may carry a surprise element. The influx of youths from the Orthodox Churches in the 21st century to Pentecostal Churches could be attributed to creative use of arts in worship services in Nigeria. Creative use of Christian songs and theatre plays has been able to pave way for enabling environment for youths to have a sense of belonging as against the stereotype form of worship obtainable in Mainline Churches in its earliest inception in Nigeria. Pentecostal and Aladura

Churches use this approach especially for Christmas and Easter services when many unsaved people are most likely to visit their churches (Kalu, 1-39). The Christian scripture speaks of the tribe of Issachar as having leaders who “understood the signs of the times and knew the best course for Israel to take” (1 Chro. 12:32). Therefore, the Pentecostals believe it is essential to adapt to times and use all available means of witnessing (Adewale, 170). The goal is not a quick surge in baptism or membership numbers but rather the fostering of long-term, Christ-centred relationships, with no strings attached.

Lifestyle Evangelism Method

Lifestyle method is an approach to evangelism characterized by someone demonstrating his faith by his actions in the hope that people around him will be impressed with how God affects the person’s life.⁵⁴ Protagonists of this method often cite Matthew 5:16 to buttress their point. They claim that Jesus drew people to God by showing them kindness and performing good deeds. Others believe this method is more effective than direct evangelism because of the perception that it is harder to live “righteously” than to preach the gospel (www.glorytabernacle.org/clt.php, 2020). The Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria are bedevilled with notable personalities worthy of emulation owing to their lifestyles. This is because such men and women have been able to keep themselves spotless and unblemished not only before their congregations but the general society. One of such church leaders in Nigeria is W. F. Kumuyi of Deeper Life Bible Church who is well known for his holiness teaching and who practices what he preaches as visibly seen in his lifestyle. As such, his congregation simply follows his line of actions and deeds. Similarly, Enoch Adeboye Adejare of Redeemed Christian Church of God is another leader whose lifestyle should serve as examples for Christians and non-Christians to follow. His humility can be described as devoid of deception and his simplicity in dressing and attitude to material possessions are worthy of emulation.

Impact of Evangelism on Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria

Spiritual Impact

The primary purpose of evangelism in the Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria is to encourage mature Christian living. Pentecostals are taught to live well so as to win the unbelievers for Christ through their actions and deeds within their immediate society. Therefore, the central concern of evangelism in the Pentecostal Churches is the spiritual growth of the members. This means that one’s involvement in opportunities through varied means, all focusing on explaining and applying God’s word. Member’s involvement in evangelism has often led to their spiritual growth. Thus, teachings, seminars, and workshops are organized from time to time on mature and acceptable living so as to help the members to continue to grow spiritually. It is believed that only a mature believer can produce fruits and the fruits remain. Hence, evangelism is considered in the Pentecostal Churches as a tool that builds one’s character. Its influence on moral standard has been far reaching and it continues as a vital force in the building of Christian citizenship. The Pentecostal Churches are well-known for their healing programmes, extended to both the members and non-members alike. The Christ Embassy headed by Chris Oyakhilome and the Redeemed Christian Church of God championed by E. A. Adeboye have healing programmes tagged “atmosphere of Miracle” and “Holy Ghost Revival” designed to address whatever spiritual challenges one may be facing (Oragbanam, 89). It is the belief of the Pentecostal Churches that every Christian is expected to enjoy good and robust health as equally stated in the scripture.

Owing to this, a lot of effort is put in place to attract people to these revivals and crusades for divine healing and spiritual encounter.

Numerical Growth

Evangelism has greatly impacted the numerical growth of Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria. The mandate of soul-winning is seen as an urgent assignment that must be undertaken by all Christians without gender specification. This has, over the time, contributed to the rapid growth and expansion of the denomination in Nigeria. Therefore, the Church is not only growing qualitatively through the efforts geared toward evangelism but also quantitatively. One of the significant effects of evangelism in Pentecostal Churches is that it has led to its numerical growth. Space contestation is becoming a big challenge in major cities of Nigeria where the headquarters of these churches are planted. They struggle for accommodation and religious worship centres. This can be attributed to numerical growth. Abogunrin (27) submitted that, "Pentecostal Churches are found in their tens and scores on a single street...sometimes two or three churches occupy different floors of the same building...." This is because the training received by members has been able to transform the lives of the congregations. They, in turn have been able to bring more people to the Christian fold.

Leadership Impact

The place of leadership for church growth and expansion cannot be overemphasized in the members' involvement in evangelism has been able to produce people who are growing personally, growing in the words of God, growing in the ministry and leadership skills. In other words, great leaders in Christendom have been discovered during the course of evangelizing the world Jesus Christ. Through evangelistic activities, members of Pentecostal Churches have learnt to practice Christian basic principles of behaviour and leadership. New skills and creative abilities are developed in soul-winning. A large number of Pentecostal Churches were products of evangelical campaigns. Therefore, through evangelism, dynamism is brought into Pentecostal movement and a lot of new methods and techniques leading to population explosion are becoming a daily occurrence. Leadership training is a core to the growth of Pentecostal Churches. As such, hardly can one see a Pentecostal Church in Nigeria that did not make room for Christian Training Institute, basically for the leadership training and spiritual development of her ministers. In Glory Tabernacle Ministry, Ibadan, Oyo State, principles of skill acquisition for effective Christian leadership are taught. The objectives are to impart leadership competencies in future Christian leaders and to raise men and women committed to evangelism and missions (www.glorytabernacle.org/clt.php), 2020.

Conclusion

The paper considered the rise of the Pentecostal Churches and its impacts on evangelism in Nigeria. The ultimate goal of the paper was to examine the problems associated with evangelism prior to the advent of Pentecostalism in Nigeria. The paper discovered that churches in Nigeria invest money and time in organizing seminars, praise worship programmes and concerts but with little to show for its evangelism. However, the advent of Pentecostal Churches brought a new dimension and complete outlook on what evangelism should be. The denomination has been able to make people especially her members realize that evangelism is the heart beat of the kingdom of God. Therefore, the denomination has been able to evaluate the existing evangelistic activities with

the goal of making them relevant, more productive against the traditional practices and result-oriented. The work discovered that Pentecostalism in Nigeria witnessed a tremendous growth and became generally acceptable because the founding fathers of these churches came from the same background as the people they ministered unto. Similarly, the positive impacts of the Pentecostal Churches also endeared the people to them. These impacts can be easily seen in their contributions to the spiritual development of both their members and non-members alike and in the members' willingness to actively participate now in evangelism. Unlike before where many church members believe that the church leaders are being paid to evangelize, the denomination has succeeded in making her members realize that evangelism is a priority of every Christian. As such, churches that do not make it a high priority are really making it no priority at all.

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