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THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE PRACTICE OF EVANGELISM  
AMONG NIGERIAN NEO-PENTECOSTALS

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the Faculty of  
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Tunde Abednego Samuel  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

**THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE PRACTICE OF EVANGELISM  
AMONG NIGERIAN NEO-PENTECOSTALS**

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For the glory of God

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## PREFACE

This thesis widens my horizons of understanding of the inevitable roles of the Holy Spirit in the presentation of the gospel. However, as important as the place of the Holy Spirit is, my discoveries reveal that one can be tempted to deviate from the biblical roles of the Holy Spirit in the practice of evangelism. The present situation of some Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals is not exempted from this deviation, as the results of my field research show. My four-year journey in this research was never done in isolation. My immeasurable gratitude goes out to everyone whom God has brought my way during this doctoral pilgrimage. I am continually appreciative of everyone who participated in my questionnaire and interview exercises.

Dr. John Klaassen not only mentored me through this doctoral work but also imprinted on me the virtue of hard work and patience, as he has provided thorough guidance for standardization in academia. I owe a debt to anyone whom God brings my way. I learned earlier during my master's program that tough professors are not enemies. God uses them as tools to sharpen students in order to bring out the best in them. Both Dr. Klaassen and Dr. George Martin have acted in this capacity from the beginning of this program to the end. Thank you again, Dr. Martin. I also extend a hearty "thank you" to Dr. David Bosch and all the other professors I came across in the course of my studies at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Thanks also to all my fellow doctoral students; you all made me better! We ended up becoming brothers at the end of it all. Further, my professional editor, Torey Teer, deserves a big thanks for his meticulous work.

God has made use of my darling wife, Peace, as an encourager and divine resource to tap from. Her God-given wisdom, Spirit-filled life, and immense

contributions were the brain behind this success. I could not have gone this far if not for Peace's support. Our children—Temple, Gospel, and Miracle—are instruments whom God used, along with my wife, as my prayer partners. My family encouraged me along the way and persevered with me when the going got tough at times. I return all glory and praise to God. He orchestrated this journey, and he was faithful to provide all of the resources my family and I needed as international students when all sources of help from Nigeria got cut off just a few months after our arrival in the US. God arranged his own men and women with hearts of indiscriminate love at every junction to meet our needs. These men and women were sensitive in responding to God's voice about us. Thanks to you all!

It is high time that the Nigerian church rediscover the true gospel presentation under the genuine power of the Holy Spirit. If the revival in our nation is not based upon the true gospel, then it is a counterfeit revival. The multiplication of churches in quantity without quality disciples for Christ is an exercise in futility. Hence, it is essential that we pray to God to raise up real men and women for the harvest of souls and building up of the true church.

Tunde A. Samuel

Louisville, Kentucky

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Misconceptions about the Holy Spirit have been debated since early church history. For instance, in AD 325, Arius was condemned as a heretic for his belief that the Holy Spirit was only an influence emanating from the Father (God).<sup>1</sup> Tosan Blessing clarified in his lecture on the Holy Spirit,

The Holy Spirit is the most misconstrued of the Godhead. The Orthodox sees him as the unseen guest—something like a vapor with fluid inside. The Pentecostal sees him as a vital force that motivates speaking in tongues with great emotional display. The Charismatic sees him as a worker of miracles, signs, and wonders resulting into [sic] diverse manifestations like falling under the power (slain in the Spirit), whereas, some other groups see him as a dove, water, a feeling or fire.<sup>2</sup>

Blessing states that, contrary to some of these descriptions, the Holy Spirit is not a force that makes people fall, an emotion, a fire, a dove, or water—he is God.<sup>3</sup>

Through the scriptures, the Holy Spirit is portrayed as a being or a personality with intellect, will, and emotion.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Jesus places the Holy Spirit as equal with the other persons of the Godhead.<sup>5</sup> As Wayne Grudem asserts, “The Holy Spirit is fully God.”<sup>6</sup> Once one understands God the Father and God the Son to be fully God, then Trinitarian expressions (e.g., Matt 28:19) “assume significance for the doctrine of the

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 243.

<sup>2</sup> Tosan Blessing, “The Holy Spirit” (lecture delivered at the Word of Faith Bible Institute, Abuja, Nigeria, June 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Blessing, “The Holy Spirit.”

<sup>4</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 245.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 41.

<sup>6</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 245.

Holy Spirit, because they show that the Holy Spirit is classified on an equal level with the Father and the Son.”<sup>7</sup> For instance, regarding the personality of the Holy Spirit, Scripture often uses the pronoun “he” for the Holy Spirit (John 16:7, 13). The Holy Spirit is also described as a being with an intellect (1 Cor 2:10). Many scriptural verses confirm this truth. As with the other members of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit is omniscient (1 Cor 2:10-12), omnipotent (Job 33:4), and omnipresent (Ps 137:7-10; John 14:17). He possesses all of the attributes of God. Thus, the presence of the Holy Spirit is indispensable in the life of every believer. He is on the earth “to manifest the active presence of God in the world, and especially in the church—which the Scripture most often represents as being present to do God’s work in the world.”<sup>8</sup> Hence, Christians cannot do spiritual work effectively if they do not understand the place of the Holy Spirit in that work.

### **Research Questions**

Luke builds the message of the entire book of Acts around its key verse, Acts 1:8: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses . . . .”<sup>9</sup> The place of the Holy Spirit in the presentation of the gospel remains dominant, especially among Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals (NNPs). The Scripture demonstrates the Holy Spirit’s pivotal role in world evangelism. Thus, it is necessary to examine the practices of NNPs, specifically, the role of the Holy Spirit in their presentation of the gospel. The assertion of Will Metzger deserves double attention:

Because we are committed to evangelism, we must speak in antithesis at times. If we do not make clear by word and practice our position for truth and against false doctrine, we are building a wall between the next generation and the gospel. The unity of evangelicals should be on the basis of truth and not on evangelism as such. If this is not so, “success” in evangelism can result in weakening Christianity. Any

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<sup>7</sup> Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, 41.

<sup>8</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 635.

<sup>9</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the New International Version.



consideration of methods is secondary to this central principle.<sup>10</sup>

Hence, how do Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals understand the roles of the Holy Spirit? How do they apply this understanding to the practice of evangelism? What are the practical implications of this understanding for the continuing practice of evangelism in Nigeria? These questions form the main focus of this research.

## **Background**

Readers must not think that I have a negative view of my own continent, Africa, or my country, Nigeria. Hence, a few facts require clarification. The facts originate from biblical accounts and historical narratives. Africa was never a cursed land; it has been integral to the biblical story from the beginning. For example, God allowed Israel, his covenant nation, to sojourn on African soil for about four hundred years, waiting for the fullness of time to cast out the Canaanites, the Jebusites, the Amorites, and others, so that the Israelites could move in and occupy their land. It was in Africa that Israel grew large enough to stand as a nation.<sup>11</sup> An African man was the only one audacious enough to rescue the prophet Jeremiah from the dungeon (Jer 38:7). Africans were projected as people who would be God-seekers from the beginning: “Envoys out of Egypt and Ethiopia will seek the Lord” (Ps 68:31).<sup>12</sup> The Queen of Sheba, a friend to

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<sup>10</sup> Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel Wholly by Grace Communicated Truthfully and Lovingly* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 16-17. Metzger was quoting Francis Schaefer’s 1966 address to the World Congress on Evangelism in Berlin, Germany.

<sup>11</sup> According to the biblical account, the Israelites spent over four hundred years in Egypt (Gen 15:13-14; Exod 12:40-41; Lev 18:28; Ps 105:23-24). The prophet Hoshea foretold this episode in the life of our Savior: “When Israel was a child, I love him, and out of Egypt I called my son” (Hos 1:1; cf. Matt 2:15).

<sup>12</sup> According to Deji Ayegboyin and F. K. Asonzeh Ukah, “Ambassadors will come from Egypt, Ethiopia will stretch out her hands to God (Psalm 68:31) is understood to be a prediction of the incursion of the Ethiopians (that is black Africans) into the household of God. J. S. Pobe explains that this prophecy is construed by some Africans to mean a shift of Christianity’s center of gravity from the North (Euro-America) to the south (Africa).” Deji Ayegboyin and F. K. Asonzeh Ukah, “Taxonomy of Churches in Africa: The Case in Nigeria,” *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 13, no. 1 (2008): 5. The truth that Africans will seek God was always the center of Billy Graham’s evangelistic message in the African continent. See *Huffington Post*, “Billy Graham Preached ‘Jesus Was Not a White Man’ in South Africa in 1973,” last modified December 19, 2013, video (2:02), [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/12/19/billy-graham-white-jesus\\_n\\_4474404.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/12/19/billy-graham-white-jesus_n_4474404.html).

King Solomon, was from Africa (see 1 Kgs 10). There is a direct link between Africa and the land of Israel in fulfillment of biblical prophecies about the Messiah.<sup>13</sup> In their reference to Matt 27:32 and Mark 5:21, Darrow Miller and Scott Allen write, “At the other end of his earthly life, God used another African, Simon the Cyrene (Cyrene is modern-day Libya), to aid Jesus at His moment of suffering.”<sup>14</sup> Roland Werner, William Anderson, and Andrew Wheeler further stress,

Therefore, it seems clear that it was a Meroitic court official who heard the gospel of Jesus from the deacon Philip, and brought back his new-found faith to the Meroitic capital of Napata. This Sudanese man was therefore the first known non-Jewish believer in Jesus Christ—before the Roman centurion came to faith (Acts 10), and long before the gospel reached Europe. So it can be said the message of Jesus was sown in Sudanese soil only a few years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ certainly before the year 40.<sup>15</sup>

A well-known Nigerian scholar, Byang Kato, also discussed this involvement of Africa as a continent in God’s salvific agenda for the world. According to Kato,

On the day of Pentecost, Africa was represented. Settlers of Cyrene in North Africa were there when the Holy Spirit inaugurated the Christian Church (Acts 2:10). An African—the Eunuch of Ethiopia was one of the first converts outside the Jewish circle (Acts 8). When the first “missionary conference” was held, an African was there (Acts 13:1) a reference to Simon named Niger cf. Living Bible). Africa in the first four centuries of Christian’s era produced outstanding theologians like Augustine, Tertullian, Cyprian, Athanasius, Arius and Origen. In the first 200 years of the existence of Christianity, North Africa and the modern-day Turkey had the strongest churches.<sup>16</sup>

At this point, it is no longer a hidden truth how the good news of Jesus Christ came to the people of Africa.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> For instance, the baby Jesus was hidden in Africa for safety when Herod was seeking to kill him (“I called my Son out of Egypt [Africa]”; Matt 2:15).

<sup>14</sup> Darrow L. Miller and Scott Allen, *Against All Hope: Hope for Africa* (Phoenix: Disciple Nations Alliance, 2005), 18.

<sup>15</sup> Roland Werner, William Anderson, and Andrew C. Wheeler, *Day of Devastation Day of Contentment: The History of the Sudanese Church across 2000 Years* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications of Africa, 2000), 23.

<sup>16</sup> See more in Byang Kato, “Africa under the Cross” (typescript of Voice of Kenya at Nairobi Baptist Church, Nairobi, Kenya, November 16, 1975), 1-3. See also Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (New York: Penguin, 1964), 46.

<sup>17</sup> Miller and Allen, *Against All Hope*, 19.

In addition to the involvement of Africa in early Christianity, history maintains that the *Septuagint*—the first Greek version of the Old Testament—was written in Alexandria, Egypt.<sup>18</sup> Christians from North Africa and Turkey evangelized Western Europe and the British Isles.<sup>19</sup> As Miller and Allen state, “What a thrill to read that the gospel went first, by way of Aithiopia [sic], along the umbilical cord of the continent of Africa, before it extended to the Gentiles of Europe by a Jew named Paul in the late forties and early fifties.”<sup>20</sup>

Christianity spread from the Middle East (Jerusalem) to Africa, Europe, and then Asia. Converted Christians later returned to many unreached areas of Africa.<sup>21</sup> Christianity has, therefore, been present on the African continent for centuries. The trends of Christian history are now shifting, placing Africa again at the forefront of the spread of Christianity worldwide. Further, Allan H. Anderson remarks, “West Africa, and in particular Nigeria and Ghana, has been the scene of an explosion of a new form of Pentecostalism since the mid-1970s, to such an extent that it may become the future shape of African Christianity, which turns increasingly Charismatic.”<sup>22</sup> Recently, scholars and observers have noted a demographic shift in the contemporary world of Christianity: the center of gravity has shifted from the global North to the global South and East. They believe that the exponential growth of Christianity in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and

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<sup>18</sup> Center for Online Judaic Studies, “250 B.C.E. The Septuagint and the Library of Alexandria,” October 10, 2016, <http://cojs.org/250-b-c-e-septuagint-library-alexandria/>.

<sup>19</sup> Miller and Allen, *Against All Hope*, 19

<sup>20</sup> Miller and Allen, *Against All Hope*, 19.

<sup>21</sup> Kato, “Africa under the Cross,” 3. See also, Ruth Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983), 21.

<sup>22</sup> Allan H. Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 160. In response to Anderson’s point of view, it must be stressed here that the Nigerian Pentecostals of the 1970s to early 1980s were still a bit orthodox (biblical) in their theological worldview. But it will be questionable to project the current Neo-Pentecostal movement as an ideal Christianity.

the Pacific is behind this shift.<sup>23</sup>

Such development continues to attract the interest of scholars in many fields of human inquiry. According to Philip Jenkins,

We are currently living through one of the transforming moments in the history of religion worldwide. Over the past five centuries or so, the story of Christianity has been inextricably bound up with that of Europe and European-derived civilizations overseas, above all in North America. Until recently, the overwhelming majority of Christians have lived in White nations, allowing theorists to speak smugly, arrogantly, of “European Christian” civilization. Conversely, radical writers have seen Christianity as an ideological arm of Western imperialism. Over the past century, however, the center of gravity in the Christian world has shifted inexorably southward, to Africa, Asia, and Latin America.<sup>24</sup>

The fact remains that the impact of global Pentecostalism, and especially the African Neo-Pentecostals, in this magnificent shift cannot be over emphasized. Jenkins adds,

Already today, the largest Christian communities on the planet are to be found in Africa and Latin America. Some 2 billion Christians are alive today, about one-third of the planetary total. The largest single bloc, some 560 million people, is still to be found in Europe. Latin America, though, is already close behind with 480 million. Africa has 360 million, and 313 million Asians profess Christianity. By 2050, only about one-fifth of the world’s 3 billion Christians will be non-Hispanic Whites. Soon, the phrase “White Christian” may sound like a curious oxymoron, as mildly surprising as a “Swedish Buddhist.” Such people can exist but a slight eccentricity is implied.<sup>25</sup>

Jenkins paints a vivid picture of the demographical reconstruction currently occurring. He indicates that the era of Western Christendom as the geographical epicenter of Christianity has already been altered by this shift, and he goes on to say, “The trend in the phenomenal shift will continue apace in coming years.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> See Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Daryl Balia and Kristeen Kim, eds., *Edinburgh 2010: Witnessing to Christ Today*, vol. 2 (Eugene, OR: Regnum Books International, 2010), 11; Matthews Ojo, *The End-Time Army: Charismatic Movements in Modern Nigeria* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2007); Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Mark Noll, *The New Shape of World Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009); Mark Shaw, *Global Awakening: How 21st-Century Revivals Triggered a Christian Revolution* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010).

<sup>24</sup> Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 1-3. See Mark A. Noll and Carolyn Nystrom, *Clouds of Witnesses: Christian Voices from Africa and Asia* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 9.

<sup>25</sup> Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 1-3.

<sup>26</sup> Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 2.

Furthermore, amidst severe persecution, “China now boasts of the fastest growing Church in the world, with an estimated 16,500 new Christians every day. Africa, once called ‘the missionary graveyard,’ now represents the fastest growing Church for any continent as a whole: 24,000 new Christians every day.”<sup>27</sup> The largest Christian gatherings are now found in the global South,<sup>28</sup> while the largest churches in Western Europe, according to Timothy Tennent, are “pastored by African Christians.”<sup>29</sup> Aided by the trends of globalization and glocalization, this era of Christianity is not limited by geographical borders, cultures, languages, academic differences, or racial prejudices. Christianity is now being expressed in diverse cultural flavors. Renowned scholar R. C. Sproul predicted this very reality:

I believe that within thirty years the largest and strongest branch of Christendom will be in Africa and that it is absolutely critical that the church in the United States right now pour as many resources as possible into the emerging churches of the Third World, particularly in Africa. We have the materials; we have things that these people need, to be grounded and strengthened for future generations. They cannot provide it, but we can.<sup>30</sup>

It appears that all hope for the future sustainability of global Christianity is shifting toward the global South. The significant presence of Christians in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific demonstrates that Christianity is truly a global phenomenon. Lamin Sanneh contends that God designed the Christian faith to be a global movement rather than a faith of a particular people, place, or region. Although Christianity began within the Palestinian world, Sanneh states that the events in the New Testament—in the ministries of the apostles of Christ and the early church—prove that

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<sup>27</sup> Timothy Tennent, “The Translatability of the Christian Gospel” (convocation speech delivered at Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY, 2011).

<sup>28</sup> C. Peter Wagner and Joseph Thompson, *Out of Africa: How the Spiritual Explosion among Nigerians Is Impacting the World* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2004), 8-18.

<sup>29</sup> Tennent, “The Translatability of the Christian Gospel.”

<sup>30</sup> R. C. Sproul, *Acts*, St. Andrew’s Expository Commentary Series (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 28.

God intended to spread Christianity from its original geographical and socio-political contexts to other parts of the world.<sup>31</sup>

### **Statement of the Problem**

Randy Arnett points out the current impacts of Pentecostalism on African Christianity:

Within a century, Pentecostalism has risen from obscurity to ascendancy in global Christianity. The repercussions of this movement may not be dismissed easily. The movement shapes today's Christianity. A significant center of Pentecostalism's global footprint lies in Africa. Pentecostalism projects a vision that captures the imagination of Africans, especially West Africans.<sup>32</sup>

Today, the Nigerian church occupies a significant place in this dramatic shift. As Babatunde Oladimeji observes, "The Christian church in Nigeria has become a major force in global Christianity. Nigeria has produced a number of highly influential figures in Christianity."<sup>33</sup> Further, Babatomiwa M. Owojaiye writes,

Nigeria is sub-Saharan Africa's most populous country and is home to the region's largest Christian population. This Western African nation has more than 80 million Christians, who accounts for about half of the country's total population. There are more Christians in Nigeria than in traditional Christian Western Europe. In fact, Nigeria's Christian population is nearly the same size as the total population of Germany.<sup>34</sup>

Twenty-first century Nigerian Christianity includes a missionary vision that challenges and reshapes expressions of Christianity around the world. According to Allen Effa, "We have to regard African Christianity as potentially the representative

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<sup>31</sup> Lamin Sanneh, *Disciples of All Nations: Pillars of World Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 54.

<sup>32</sup> Randy Ray Arnett, "Pentecostalization: The Changing Face of Baptists in West Africa" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), 3.

<sup>33</sup> Babatunde Oladimeji, "A History of Charismatic Influence on the Anglican Church in Nigeria," *Asian American Theological Forum* 6, no. 2 (May 29, 2017), <https://aatfweb.org/2017/05/29/a-history-of-charismatic-influence-on-the-anglican-church-in-nigeria>.

<sup>34</sup> Babatomiwa M. Owojaiye, "ECWA Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow" (speech delivered at ECWA IDCC Convention, Ilorin, Nigeria, November 14, 2015). Owojaiye is a young brilliant African researcher on world Christianity. He is presently a PhD candidate at Africa International University, Nairobi, Kenya.

Christianity of the twenty-first century. While in the previous centuries Northern Atlantic developments dominated global Christianity, the Christianity typical of the twenty-first century will be shaped by the events and processes that take place in Africa.”<sup>35</sup> Effa agrees that this prediction above is already a reality: “You want to see where Christianity is heading? Come, look at Nigeria. It’s already here.”<sup>36</sup> In sketching a quick map of Africa, the map has a similar shape to a gun’s revolver. Nigeria is said to occupy the position of the trigger, where the gospel is being shot out to other parts of Africa and the world at large.<sup>37</sup>

It is evident that the significant expansion of Nigerian Neo-Pentecostalism requires careful examination. As an insider, I have observed that the mass movement of people from mainline churches (e.g., Methodist, Anglican) to Neo-Pentecostal churches has been enormous within recent years. This research project examined the main reasons behind the “seeming success”<sup>38</sup> of NNPs in evangelism. Additionally, because it is the duty of every Christian to present the gospel in keeping with the message of Scripture, I engaged NNPs’ understanding of the practical role of the Holy Spirit vis-a-vis the presentation of the gospel.

### **Methodology**

First, I examined the biblical role of the Holy Spirit in the presentation of the gospel from an evangelical perspective. At this point, I established the biblical baseline that I will later use to evaluate Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals’ understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in evangelism. To accomplish this task, I presented a thorough exegesis of

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<sup>35</sup> Allan L. Effa, “Releasing the Trigger: The Nigerian Factor in Global Christianity,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 37, no. 4 (October 2013): 214-17.

<sup>36</sup> Effa, “Releasing the Trigger: The Nigerian Factor in Global Christianity,” 215.

<sup>37</sup> Effa, “Releasing the Trigger: The Nigerian Factor in Global Christianity,” 216-17.

<sup>38</sup> This thesis questioned this “success” because, sometimes, success in evangelism may result in the weakening of the church if our gospel message does not stand upon biblical truth.

Acts 1:8. I also consulted literature written by evangelical authors. Second, I examined NNPs' views and practices concerning the Holy Spirit's role in the presentation of the gospel. I achieved this goal by consulting books written by NNP pioneers and other indigenous authors<sup>39</sup> as well as by utilizing questionnaires and interviews. Third, using the gathered data, I evaluated the content of the gospel presented by NNPs as they embark on evangelism and the preaching of God's Word. I executed this task by making a comparison between NNPs' gospel presentation and the biblical gospel presentation. Fourth, I provided practical lessons or implications of the gospel according to NNPs on Nigerian Christianity as a whole.

According to Carol V. McKinney, it is important to gain an insider's perspective when conducting research on a certain group of people.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, I am not writing as a distant observer; this research work is a combination of library and field research. My research for this thesis began in the library, where its foundation is rooted, and consists of a review of books, periodic journals, magazines, and various unpublished materials related to the topic under consideration. In order to avoid an error of bias, the field research includes questionnaires and interviews for the collection of the necessary information. I distributed questionnaires to church founders (i.e., independent church owners),<sup>41</sup> pastors, unit leaders, and members in select Neo-Pentecostal and evangelical churches. I also distributed an interview profile to select key leaders from both Neo-Pentecostal and evangelical denominations. In total, I distributed about fifty-eight

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<sup>39</sup> Some of these include David O. Oyedepo, *Understanding Your Covenant Rights: A Scriptural Guide to Supernatural Breakthroughs* (Lagos, Nigeria: Dominion, 2003); Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*; Byang H. Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* (Nairobi, Kenya: Evangel, 1975); Emmanuel O. Malomo, *Evangelism and Church Growth* (Ilorin, Nigeria: Amazing Grace, 2010); Ojo, *The End-Time Army*; David W. Jones and Russell S. Woodbridge, *Health, Wealth, and Happiness: Has the Prosperity Gospel Overshadowed the Gospel of Christ?* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011).

<sup>40</sup> Carol V. McKinney, *Globe-Trotting in Sandals: A Field Guide to Cultural Research* (Dallas: SIL International, 2000), 3-4.

<sup>41</sup> Most Nigerian Pentecostal churches are founded and owned by individuals. In these types of churches, the founders are always called General Overseers (GOs) or Superintendents.



questionnaires and interview profiles. I analyzed the information from the interview questions with the aim of comparing the gospel presentations among Neo-Pentecostal and evangelical leaders regarding the role of the Holy Spirit. The interviews and the questionnaires included both diasporic Nigerians and those presently living in Nigeria.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

This research undertaking does not primarily focus on a systematic theology of pneumatology.<sup>42</sup> I do refer to issues related to the Trinity and the deity and personality of the Holy Spirit, but only in passing. Several authors have written on the vast advancement of Pentecostalism in global Christendom.<sup>43</sup> This research does not attempt to cover all that Pentecostals do, either in Nigeria or elsewhere—such a goal would require volumes of books. Instead, this research is limited to Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals’ practices of evangelism vis-à-vis the role of the Holy Spirit in such practices and what “receiving of the power of the Holy Spirit” really means for the purpose of effective witnessing. The central Scripture is found in the Lucan account: “You will receive power when the Holy spirit comes upon you . . .” (Acts 1:8). This research does not focus on all of the doctrinal perspectives of NNPs. Further, this research is not concerned with the various *methods* of doing evangelism employed among NNPs; rather, this thesis focuses on the *content* of the gospel being presented among NNPs—that is, the central messages that NNPs emphasize as they present the gospel. My interest is on what the gospel truly entails among NNPs. This research addresses issues such as speaking in tongues, anointing and power, deliverance, breaking of curses, material blessings, breakthroughs, physical healings, and miracles as they seem to play dominant roles in NNPs’ gospel presentations. Again, it would be a herculean effort to attempt to cover Nigerian Neo-

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<sup>42</sup> Several authors and scholars on systematic theology can be consulted on this subject.

<sup>43</sup> See, e.g., Paul Alexander, *Signs and Wonders: Why Pentecostalism is the World’s Fastest Growing Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009); Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*; Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*; D. R. McConnel, *A Different Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995).

Pentecostalism in detail; hence, this research focuses on the central messages embedded in the evangelistic efforts of Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals.

### **Definition of Terms**

For proper understanding, contextual definitions of terms that go in line with the topic of this research are very important at this point. However, the definitions provided here are not limited to the words or terms that appear in the title of this thesis; instead, they include terms that may frequently recur throughout this research work.

### **Evangelism and Gospel**

According to Douglas M. Cecil,

Scripture centers the definition of evangelism on proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. You will not find the word evangelism in Scripture. However, you will find the word evangelist three times in Scripture, which is as close as you are going to get. Evangelism is an English word derived from the Greek language in which the New Testament was originally penned. We tend to use the word as a noun. To better understand where we get the word evangelism, it is helpful to become familiar with three Greek words.<sup>44</sup>

The word “evangelist” comes from the Greek word εὐαγγέλιον (*euangelion*).<sup>45</sup> This same word εὐαγγέλιον, or “good news,” in classical literature designated the reward given for good tidings or news (εὖ, “good,” and ἀγγέλλω, “I bring a message”).<sup>46</sup> The word for “angel” has similar root and later connotes “good news.” As seen in the New Testament, the verb *euangelizo* (εὐαγγελίζω, “to evangelize”) and the verb *kerusso* (κηρύσσω, “to herald or proclaim) are synonymously used.<sup>47</sup>

Furthermore, Lewis Sperry Chafer defines evangelism as “the act of presenting

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<sup>44</sup> Douglas M. Cecil, *The 7 Principles of an Evangelistic Life* (Chicago: Moody, 2003), 31; See also R. Larry, *Free and Clear* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1997), 161-65.

<sup>45</sup> Cecil, *The 7 Principles of an Evangelistic Life*, 31.

<sup>46</sup> R. H. Mounce “Gospel” in *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. I. Howard Marshall et al., eds., (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 426.

<sup>47</sup> Graeme L. Goldsworthy, “Gospel” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander et al., eds., (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 521.

to the unsaved the evangel or good news of the gospel of God's saving grace through Christ Jesus."<sup>48</sup> According to Delos Miles, evangelism is "being, doing, and telling the gospel of the kingdom in order that by the power of the Holy Spirit, persons and structures may be converted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ."<sup>49</sup> Hence, evangelism involves intentional public preaching or bearing personal witness with the primary goal of spreading the salvation message about Jesus Christ to sinners, urging and persuading them in the Spirit of Christ to embrace faith.

In his teaching on "pulpit," "passive," and "aggressive" types of evangelism, Francis Ladipo says, "In its core, it [i.e., evangelism] can be defined as the preaching of the gospel to people who don't believe in Jesus Christ as their savior."<sup>50</sup> Moreover, J. I. Packer agrees that "evangelism is so to present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit, that man shall come to put their trust in God through Him, to accept Him as their Savior, and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His Church."<sup>51</sup> In another simple paraphrase of his entire book, Packer maintains that evangelism means presenting the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the result(s) up to God. Even at the time of Packer's writing, there were misconceptions as to the purpose and aim of evangelism. Evangelism is the Christian's task, but the giving of faith is God's prerogative. One should not define evangelism in terms of the number of conversions. From the various definitions surveyed above, it should be vividly seen that evangelism always contains a definite message to present to a listening audience with the purpose of leading to the soul's transformation. As Cecil writes,

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<sup>48</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary, 1948), 7:143.

<sup>49</sup> Delos Miles, *Introduction to Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman, 1983), 26.

<sup>50</sup> Francis Ladipo, "Three Types of Evangelism Styles" (lecture delivered at ECWA Ilorin Mission Department, Ilorin, Nigeria, January 25, 2020).

<sup>51</sup> J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 37-38.

Evangelism is the communication of the good news of Jesus Christ—that He died for our sins and rose again—with the intent of inviting the listener to trust Christ. Evangelism is telling the Good News for the purpose of inviting the sinner to salvation. Evangelism is an event and not a process. We are to do the work of an evangelist. The definition of evangelism has two main parts: information and invitation. One part without the other is out of balance.<sup>52</sup>

So that proper focus is maintained, attention must be drawn to definitions that portray evangelism as witnessing and as an act of obedience done through the power of the Holy Spirit. Of first import is that evangelism involves *bearing witness*. J Ray Tallman maintains that the “Greek word ‘*martureo*’ means witness. From this word comes the term ‘*martyr*.’ Hence, Martyr means witness; to witness to something that God has done. The word martyr became known with death because Christians would bear witness of Christ and the gospel and suffer and die for it.”<sup>53</sup> Therefore, those who are indeed ready to present the total gospel of truth must be prepared to surrender themselves for death if necessary. Similarly, according to Arthur F. Glasser,

The gospel (*euangelion*) or “good news” has been entrusted to the church to proclaim to all peoples. It is variously described as an “eternal gospel” (Rev. 14:6), “the gospel of peace” (Eph. 6:15), “the gospel of Christ” (1 Cor. 9:12), “the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24), and “the gospel of the kingdom” (Matt. 24:14). These different designations do not mean different gospels, for there is only one gospel (Gal. 1:8). This word is also associated with the synonym *kerygma*, a noun used eight times in the New Testament to focus particular attention on the proclamation of the precise content of the gospel. These two words are identical in their definition of the gospel and both stress the fact that in essence the gospel concerns an event of surpassing uniqueness.<sup>54</sup>

As seen in all of the definitions above, the words evangelism and gospel have similar definitions: “Evangelism announces that salvation has come. The verb ‘evangelize’ literally means to bear good news. In the noun form, it is translated ‘gospel’

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<sup>52</sup> Cecil, *The 7 Principles of an Evangelistic Life*, 31-2.

<sup>53</sup> J. Ray Tallman “Martyrdom” in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau, Harold Netland, and Charles Van Engen, eds., Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2000), 602. The apostles who witnessed the resurrection of Christ stood their ground when they said, “For we cannot stop speaking about [or bearing witness to] what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20 NASB).

<sup>54</sup> Arthur F. Glasser, “The Gospel” in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau, Harold Netland, and Charles Van Engen, eds., Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2000), 403.

or ‘evangel.’”<sup>55</sup> The proclamation of the message is evangelism, whereas the content of the message that is proclaimed in evangelism is the gospel. In fact, throughout this research project, the two words are often used interchangeably. As touching the *message* of the gospel, Packer maintains that the evangelistic message is made up of four essential ingredients.

It is the gospel of Christ; who was crucified to save sinners from the wrath of a Holy and Just God with whom they have made themselves enemies. God put forth His Son as a wrath removing sacrifice, once for all, and lavishes His grace upon all who accept this free gift, thereby granting them a new, eternal life of fellowship with the living God. The gospel is a message about God, sin, Christ, and a summons to faith and repentance.<sup>56</sup>

Without these ingredients, there is no evangelistic message.

### **Charismatic and Pentecostal**

Although the word “charismatic” does not appear in the title of this research project, it appears again and again throughout the following pages. Because of the interwoven relationship between Pentecostalism and the charismatic renewal movement, a concise definition of “charismatic” is necessary. According to Oladimeji argues,

No experts agree on who the charismatics are. Whereas some scholars such as Afe Adogame uses the words Pentecostal and Charismatic interchangeably, Ogbu Kalu, and Matthew Ojo see them as two different movements. The term *charismatic* is generally applied to Christians within the Protestant and Roman Catholic churches who testify to the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues and the exercise of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>57</sup>

The above quotation captures the situation of Nigerian charismatic denominations very well. For instance, Travis M. Collins and S. Ademola Ishola argue that in Nigeria, the charismatic “movement emerged in when some of the beliefs and practices of the

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<sup>55</sup> Robert E. Coleman, “Evangelism,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau, Harold Netland, and Charles Van Engen, eds., Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2000), 341.

<sup>56</sup> Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 57.

<sup>57</sup> Oladimeji, “Charismatic Influence on the Anglican Church in Nigeria.” Oladimeji is a PhD Candidate at Asbury Theological Seminary. For further study of the terms “Charismatic” and “Pentecostalism,” see Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 9-12.

Pentecostal churches, such as speaking in tongues, baptism of the Holy Spirit, emphasis on physical healing and so on overflow into the mainline churches like Baptists, Methodists, Anglican, and even Roman Catholic.”<sup>58</sup> In addition, Randy Arnett maintains that “charismatics refers to those individuals and entities who generally hold to Pentecostal faith and practice, but choose to remain within existing non-Pentecostal churches. This usage assumes an ecclesiastical rather than a theological differentiation.”<sup>59</sup> Charismatics, therefore, seem to be a movement of people within existing churches who distinguish themselves with various beliefs on the Holy Spirit and his manifestations.

The difference between Pentecostals and charismatics is slim. Ogbu Kalu “seems to present Pentecostalism as the bigger umbrella, including the charismatics.”<sup>60</sup> Pentecostalism is a renewal movement that branched out from within Protestant Christianity by placing special emphasis on the personal revelation of God through baptism with the Holy Spirit. Some scholars describe Pentecostalism as follows:

Pentecostalism is a form of Christianity that emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit and the direct experience of the presence of God by the believer. Pentecostals believe that faith must be powerfully experiential, and not something found merely through ritual or thinking. Pentecostalism is energetic and dynamic. Its members believe they are driven by the power of God moving within them. Pentecostal churches stress the importance of conversions that amount to a *Baptism in the Spirit*. This fills the believer with the Holy Spirit, which gives the believer the strength to live a truly Christian life. The direct experience of God is revealed by *gifts of the Spirit* such as speaking in tongues, prophecy and healing.<sup>61</sup>

The word “Pentecostal” as used here refers generally to some denominations in Nigeria that believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of the “sign

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<sup>58</sup> Travis M. Collins and S. Ademola Ishola, *Baptists and the Charismatic Movement* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Nigeria Baptist Convention, 1995), 8.

<sup>59</sup> Arnett, “Pentecostalization,” 25.

<sup>60</sup> Oladimeji, “Charismatic Influence on the Anglican Church in Nigeria,” 10.

<sup>61</sup> BBC, “Pentecostalism,” last modified July 2, 2009, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/subdivisions/pentecostal\\_1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/subdivisions/pentecostal_1.shtml).

gifts.”<sup>62</sup> In addition, Pentecostals have denominations that also promote—to mention but a few distinctives—the financial and physical success of every believer, a life free from suffering of any kind, and the attainment of perfect holiness here on earth.<sup>63</sup> For instance, Chris Oyakhilome writes,

when you are born again, you received Zoe—the God’s kind of life into your human spirit. The new nature you receive in the divine nature of God. The divine nature gives you the ability for absolute success in life. You can be a winner always. You can have your life marked in the right direction only; the direction of success, prosperity and the good life. Failure and sickness are no longer a consideration. Life become a matter of choice. You can choose to be healthy always. You cease to talk failure or sickness. You refuse to be sick by allowing eternal life [Zoe] to have on your body.<sup>64</sup>

### **Neo-Pentecostal**

From a historical Nigerian point of view, there are two streams of Pentecostal movements: the old indigenous Pentecostal movements (1930s to 1970) and the Neo-Pentecostal movements (from the late-1970s till today).<sup>65</sup> Although these two movements overlap in some doctrinal and liturgical practices, their distinct spiritual focus and emphases account for the dichotomy. More attention and clarifications are given to this dichotomy in chapter 2 of this thesis. The Nigeria Neo-Pentecostal denominations include Winners’ Chapel (Living Faith Church), Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG),

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<sup>62</sup> The focus of this paper is not to present Pentecostals arguments on the sign gifts of the Holy Spirit. Some of the sign gifts include prophecy, speaking in tongues, interpretations of tongues, healing, and the working of miracles (see 1 Cor 12). See Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, Contour of Christian Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 18; Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit: Activating God’s Power in Your Life* (Waco, TX: Word Book, 1978); Grudem, *Systematic Theology*.

<sup>63</sup> Take, for example, Chris Oyakhilome, the President of Christ Embassy (a.k.a. Believers’ LoveWorld), who in his teaching on speaking in tongues maintained that “there are miracles you cannot receive from God until you are able to speak in tongue. He added, human prayer in human language cannot go far enough. Because, human languages are corrupted, and will not appeal to the holy God.” See Chris Oyakhilome, “The Benefits of Speaking in Spiritual Tongues,” *Online Teaching* accessed April 28, 2020 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MhhXazxrM8>.

<sup>64</sup> Chris Oyakhilome, *None of These Diseases* (Lagos, Nigeria: LoverWorld Publication, 2001), 63-4.

<sup>65</sup> Gary S. Maxey and Peter Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church* (Lagos, Nigeria: WATS, 2017), 27.

Mountain of Fire Ministry (MFM), Christ Embassy, Dunamis Church International, and others.

## **Prosperity**

Eunice Abogunrin describes “prosperity” as

a state of being whole, complete, fitting or being in a state of no lacks. Other words to describe prosperity include: wealth, wellness, wellbeing, luck, richness, luxury, fruitfulness, strength, fortune, promotion, favor, abundance, accomplishment, comfort, peace, welfare, blessing, plenty, upliftment, enjoyment, greatness, milk and honey, victory, security, health, power, sufficiency, progress, freedom, thriving and ease. Prosperity is a state, where a man/woman is flourishing.<sup>66</sup>

These are the terms used day to day to state or describe an undisturbed condition of good living or well-being that is free from cases antithetical to prosperity, such as poverty, sickness/illness, disappointment, pain, bitterness, weakness, danger, downfall, trouble, suffering, persecution, failure, hunger, lack, loss, adversity, sadness, barrenness, agony, fear, insecurity, anxiety, loneliness, distress, defeat, and death.<sup>67</sup> Many of NNP churches hold onto this view of prosperity. This research endeavor directs attention to the influence of material prosperity on the evangelistic campaigns of the NNPs.

## **Evaluation**

According to Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus, the word ‘evaluation’ is defined as fixing “the value of or to determine the significance, to fix the worth of something usually by careful appraisal and study.”<sup>68</sup> One of the goals of this thesis is to elucidate the value and worth of the gospel that NNPs present in Nigerian Christendom and the world at large.

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<sup>66</sup> Eunice Abogunrin, “Understanding What the Prosperity and Wealth Gospel Is All about” (lecture delivered at ECWA USA International Conference, Chicago, July 21, 2018).

<sup>67</sup> Abogunrin, “What the Prosperity and Wealth Gospel Is All about.”

<sup>68</sup> Elizabeth J. Jewell, ed., *The Pocket Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus, second Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), s.v. “evaluation” (p. 271); See also, *New International Webster’s Pocket Dictionary of the English Language*, rev. ed. (Australia: Trident Press International, 2001), s.v. “evaluation” (p. 195).



## Practice

According to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, the term “practice” has to do with “a way of doing something that is the usual or expected way in a particular organization or situation: it is the common, current, standard way of doing things in a particular work or religious setting.”<sup>69</sup> This research undertaking does not attempt to examine the ways of doing evangelism among NNPs but to investigate the common, current, and standard messages they habitually proclaim in their evangelistic practices. Hence, this project focuses on the *messages*—not the *methods*—of evangelism among NNPs.

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<sup>69</sup> A. S. Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 9th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), s.v. “practice” (p. 1204).

## CHAPTER 2

### A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE BIBLICAL IMPACT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN WITNESSING

#### **The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament**

Sinclair B. Ferguson tries to demythologize the mystery that surrounds the person of the Holy Spirit. In his effort to disprove the position that the Holy Spirit is distant and impersonal, he refers extensively to both the Old and New Testaments to buttress his view. Ferguson affirms, among other things, the immanence of the Holy Spirit and that the acts of the Holy Spirit transcend the New Testament even though it is evident that the Holy Spirit became more exemplified in the New Testament.<sup>1</sup> According to Ferguson, the Holy Spirit featured enormously in the Old Testament as well. Many passages of the Old Testament contain prophetic declarations that found fulfillment in the New Testament. The presence of the Holy Spirit at creation is an undisputable one. In line with this assertion, Ferguson remarks, “Scripture hints that God’s Spirit has been engaged in all of his works from the beginning.”<sup>2</sup> Right from the book of Genesis, the inevitable presence of the Holy Spirit has been at work. The entire Scriptures begin with “In the Beginning God . . . and the Spirit of God . . . and God said [the Word] . . .” (Gen 1:1-3). At this point, it is easy to see the mission of God the Father in creation.<sup>3</sup> But beyond any iota of doubt, the role of the Spirit in the mission of God is not hidden; the

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<sup>1</sup> Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit, Contour of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 17-18.

<sup>2</sup> Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 18.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Green writes, “The Hebrews had a perfectly good word for the human spirit, *nephesh*, but they did not use that word for God’s Holy Spirit [as seen in Gen 1:2]. Instead they used very strong word, *ruach*. It denotes the breath, the wind, the Spirit of God.” See Michael Green, *Thirty Years That Change the World: A Fresh Look at the Book of Acts* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 247.

Spirit of God renews the face of the earth. The Spirit was co-creator with the Father and the Son (see John 1:1). To this point, Ferguson calls him the “eternal Spirit” who has been before the creation of the world.<sup>4</sup>

The phrase “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness” (Gen 1:26) has poised several arguments among biblical scholars.<sup>5</sup> Tunde Aremu maintains that the idea of “let us” is a direct call and appeal to some heavenly beings who were likely present with God at creation. These beings primarily could have been inclusive of the Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>6</sup> To this point, Geoffrey Thomas states emphatically that “the Spirit of God was present in and above creation.”<sup>7</sup> To lend credence to his assertion, he adds that “by the Holy Spirit, Jehovah spoke the universe into existence. By the Spirit, God brought into creation the light, order, and fullness that now surrounds us.”<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the psalmist expressed the role of the Holy Spirit at creation saying, “When you send your Spirit, they are created” (Ps 104:30).<sup>9</sup> Hence, the Father never works in isolation from the Son and the Spirit—they are one.

In the Old Testament, God the Father is always seen in action with regard to his relationship to, or dealings with, Israel, kings, nations, and scores of individuals. Nevertheless, the Spirit of God empowers individuals, groups of people, prophets, and

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<sup>4</sup> Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 18.

<sup>5</sup> Some of these scholars include Tunde Aremu and Emmanuel O. Malomo, and Millard Erickson. See Tunde Aremu & Emmanuel O. Malomo, *Christian Theology in Africa Context* (Ilorin, Nigeria: Amazing Grace Print-Media, 2016), 46-9; Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 494f.

<sup>6</sup> Tunde Aremu and Emmanuel O. Malomo, *Christian Theology in Africa Context*, 48.

<sup>7</sup> Geoffrey Thomas, *The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011), 16.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas, *The Holy Spirit*, 16.

<sup>9</sup> Although, broadly speaking, God’s *rûah*, is represented, first as God’s power in the creation of the cosmos (Gen 1:2; Ps 33:6); second, as God’s sustaining power immanent in all life (Gen. 6:17; 7:15; Job 33:4; Ps 104:29–30); third as the invisible activity of God in power through and among his covenant people, whether in dramatic irruptions or more sustained endowments; and lastly as his presence in many types of revelation, charismatic wisdom and invasive speech. See, Desmond T. Alexander, and B. S Rosner, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

some others for the tasks that God assigned them to perform.<sup>10</sup> For instance, the Spirit of God came upon Gideon to fight the Midianites (Judg 6:7); the Spirit usually descended on Samson in the form of “on and off” (Judg 14:6; 15:14); the Spirit came upon King Saul to cause him to prophesy—confirming his calling and to empowering him to fight against the Ammonites (1 Sam 10:6-11; 11:6). In the Pentateuch as well, the Spirit came upon the seventy appointed elders of Israel, and they prophesied (Num 11:25f.).

Therefore, it is very clear that throughout the Old Testament, God did not give anyone a mission to accomplish without empowering the person with his Spirit for the assignment. However, though the Holy Spirit was seen at work in the Old Testament,<sup>11</sup> the New Testament makes the Spirit’s impact in God’s agenda clearer. George W. Peters writes, “It is evident from the pages of the Old Testament and the Gospels that there never was a time when the Holy Spirit was not present in the history of mankind . . . His omnipresence is well attested. He indeed, is God who is here.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, from the era of Old Testament, prior to the birth of the New Testament, the indispensable role of the Holy Spirit in God’s mission and the life of individuals whom God ever gave specific assignments has been clearly seen.

### **The Strategic Roles of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Witnessing of Christ**

According to R. Albert Mohler Jr., “There are many similarities between the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts.”<sup>13</sup> For instance, both books focus on how Jesus

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<sup>10</sup> “The Spirit is not only God’s creative power, but his self-disclosing word, which breaks in on particular people in Old Testament times, particularly on prophets, on kings, and on special men anointed for a particular mission.” See Green, *Thirty Years That Change the World*, 247.

<sup>11</sup> Although, in the Old Testament, there were three disadvantages to the operation of the Holy Spirit. First, the Spirit of the Lord was limited to certain people. Second, the Spirit was fitful in his manifestation; he could be withdrawn. He was withdrawn from Samson and Saul, when they gave themselves over to disobedience. Third, the Holy Spirit was disclosed as sub-personal power. See Green, *Thirty Years That Change the World*, 248.

<sup>12</sup> George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 300.

<sup>13</sup> R. Albert Mohler Jr., *Acts 1-12 for You* (n.p.: Good Book, 2019), 7.

fulfills the old covenant and ushers in the new covenant. The two books draw attention to the person and work of Jesus. Both books draw the reader's attention to the church—the people of God who are identified not by circumcision but by faith in Christ Jesus. Both the Gospel of Luke and Acts reveal the sovereign power and purpose of God.<sup>14</sup> But in addition, both books point attention to the place of the Holy Spirit. As a matter of fact, Luke does not wait until he writes the book of Acts before introducing readers to the third person of Trinity, the Holy Spirit, who is vital for new covenant life. Rather, Luke's Gospel opens up by revealing the working power of the Holy Spirit. For example, Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35); when Mary, who was already pregnant with Jesus, stepped into the house of Elizabeth, Elizabeth was filled with the Spirit, and her baby (John the Baptist) leaped for joy in her womb (1:41-45); Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied (1:67); Simeon, at the dedication of Jesus in the temple, was filled of the Spirit (2:25-27). At this point, it seems Luke begins to reveal what the new covenant life will look like—a life in the Spirit.<sup>15</sup>

The primary mission of Christ is the redemption of humanity from the power of Satan, sin, and eternal damnation. Though he is God, during his days on earth in the flesh, Christ needed to be empowered for the task God the Father had given him.<sup>16</sup> In line with this fact, it is very glaring in the Gospels that the Lord Jesus Christ never began any major missiological endeavor until he was empowered by the Holy Spirit at the event of his baptism in the Jordan river by John the Baptist. As Luke records, “Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came . . . from heaven; You are my Son whom I love . . .” (Luke 3:21-22). Immediately after this phenomenon, the ministry of Jesus took

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<sup>14</sup> Mohler, *Acts 1-12 for You*, 7-9.

<sup>15</sup> Zac Poonen, *Through the Bible: A Message for Today from Every Book of the Bible* (Bangalore, India: CFC Production, 2016), 590-1.

<sup>16</sup> Poonen, *Through the Bible*, 590.

a new powerful dimension. The record of Luke about the aftermath Christ's baptism provides greater clarity. Luke writes,

Jesus full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted . . . Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread . . . 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me' . . . And the power [i.e., Spirit] of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick . . . 'How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all under the oppression of the devil . . .' (Luke 4:1, 14, 18; 5:17; Acts 10:38).

There are also two important mentions of the Spirit in Mark 1. Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit and was driven by the Spirit's power. After Jesus had been clothed with Spirit, his witnessing became effective and impactful anywhere he went.<sup>17</sup> Hence, it can be deductively affirmed that throughout the ministry of Christ on earth, the Holy Spirit is always seen working unanimously with Christ. The Lord never operates without the Spirit.

### **The Holy Spirit and Evangelism in the Book of Acts**

Evangelism is the consummation of the mission of the triune God. The book of Acts, which some scholars equally refer to as the "acts of the Holy Spirit through the apostles,"<sup>18</sup> brings the Trinitarian dimension of missions into the limelight. As mentioned earlier, the Old Testament clearly reveals the dominating mission of God the Father, the mission of the Son is glaringly seen in the Gospels, and the book of Acts (really, from Acts to Revelation) reveals the missiological acts of the Holy Spirit through the apostles and other believers.

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<sup>17</sup> Mark in his record of the gospel say, "Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove . . . At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness . . ." (1:10-12). See, Poonen, *Through the Bible*, 570-71.

<sup>18</sup> For instance, Herbert Kane emphasizes that "the book of Acts really needs to be titled as the Acts of the Holy Spirit (through the apostles)." See J. Herbert Kane, *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 125.

## The Book of Acts

Herbert Kane draws rapt attention to the writings of Luke.<sup>19</sup> The principal way Luke attempts to articulate his theology is by writing two books. The second book, Acts, obviously occupies a strategic position in the New Testament canon. It bridges the Gospels and the epistles, which are biographical and hortatory, respectively. The book of Acts, with the Gospels, is a major historical book of the New Testament, and without it, only little will be known about the churches to which the epistles were written.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, Christians would have been left in the dark concerning the spread of gospel from Jerusalem to Rome, and to the rest of the world. Thus, the book of Acts is popularly regarded as a missionary book because it presents the universality of the gospel's dimensions.<sup>21</sup>

Luke was very careful to point out the direct connection between his Gospel and the book of Acts. The Gospel takes readers up to the very threshold of the gospel to the Gentiles, whereas the book of Acts tells the story in detail.<sup>22</sup> As David Bosch writes, "A mission to the Gentiles is mentioned explicitly only once in the Gospel of Luke 24:47; and that in its final periscope. The Gentile mission (in Acts) would be the task of the church [believers in Christ], not of the historical Jesus."<sup>23</sup> Luke's Gospel ends and the

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<sup>19</sup> See Herbert Kane, *Understanding of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), 35f; Mohler, *Acts 1-12 for You*.

<sup>20</sup> Kane, *Understanding of Christian Missions*, 38. The book of Acts is the chronicle of the spreading flame of the Holy Spirit. It traces the work of the Holy Spirit through the birth, infancy, and adolescence of the Church. R. Kent Hughes maintains that the title of this book could well be 'The Acts of the Holy Spirit' or 'The Acts of the Risen Christ Through the Holy Spirit Working Through the Church. See R. Kent Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1996), 13.

<sup>21</sup> A. M. Harman, "Mission in the Thought of Jesus," *Evangelical Quarterly* (July-September 1965): 140.

<sup>22</sup> The two volumes written by Luke present a systemic correlation, even though they expose their respective emphases. The first volume, Luke (and the Gospels all together), trace the Jesus the trajectory of Jesus ministry centripetally moving toward Jerusalem. While Acts presents the centrifugal progressive movement of Jesus ministry away from Jerusalem to the entire world. For details, Dennis E. Johnson, *The Message of Acts in the History of Redemption* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1997), 13-4.

<sup>23</sup> David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: A Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 1991), 88.

book of Acts begins with the same event—the ascension. In the Gospel, Luke was concerned with what Jesus began to do and teach when he was on earth in person. But the book of Acts recounts what the risen Christ continued to do and teach through his apostles, whom he had disciplined and trained for the purpose of world evangelism by the enablement of the Holy Spirit.<sup>24</sup> As a matter of fact, “Luke’s special interest in the Holy Spirit is indicated by fifty-seven occurrences of the noun *Pneuma* (Spirit) in Acts alone.”<sup>25</sup>

### **Exegesis of Acts 1:8**

A. M. Harman maintains Luke builds the message of the entire book of Acts around its main or key verse: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).<sup>26</sup>

**You will receive power.** After the resurrection of Jesus, prior to his ascension, his disciples became inquisitive about when God’s kingdom and total dominion would be inaugurated on earth. As part of his response to them, Jesus told them to be ready for a power that is greater than the political power that seems to be the object of their ambition.

F. F. Bruce writes,

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<sup>24</sup> The Gospel of Luke is seen as prequel to the book of Acts; and the book of Acts is a sequel to the Gospel of Luke. Hence, both books function together as two volumes. The Luke’s sequel presents the account of the earthly activity of the historical Jesus. Whereas, the sequel (Acts), provides the account of the work of the resurrected Jesus through his apostles and other early believers. See, Alan J. Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus: Luke’s Account of God’s Unfolding Plan* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 23-24.

<sup>25</sup> David G. Peterson, “The Theology of the Holy Spirit,” in *The Pillar New Testament Commentary*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 60.

<sup>26</sup> Harman, *Mission in the Thought of Jesus*, *The Evangelical Quarterly*, 141. According to William J. Larkin Jr., Acts 1:8 sets out clearly what the church is to be doing until Jesus returns. Through a command promise, Jesus tell his disciples of the resources, content and scope of their primary task. The essential resource is God the Holy Spirit, who will come on them at Pentecost as he did on Mary at the incarnation. Hence, by this Spirit’s baptism, they will receive the supranatural ability to work miracles and preach effectively. Their witness will be bold and will produce conviction leading to positive or negative decisions. See, William J. Larkin Jr., *The IVP New Testament Commentaries Series: Acts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 41.



When the Holy Spirit came upon them, Jesus assured them, they would be vested with heavenly power—the power by which, in the event, their mighty works were accomplished and their preaching made effective. As Jesus had been anointed at his baptism with the Holy Spirit and power, so his followers were now to be similarly anointed and enabled to carry on his work.<sup>27</sup>

According to Darrel L. Block, “The Spirit is tied to power (*δύναμιν*), which refers here to being empowered to speak boldly by testifying to the message of God’s work through Jesus.”<sup>28</sup> In the same point of view, the word *δύναμιν* is used in several places in Acts with reference to miracles (2:22; 3:12; 4:7; 8:13; 10:38; 19:11). But its primary usage in 1:8 is essentially related to the task of being Christ’s witnesses and having the power to speak boldly.<sup>29</sup> The word translated ‘power’ here is not identical with the word ‘power’ in the preceding verse. In verse 7, it is *ἐξουσία*, ‘authority’; in verse 8, it is *δύναμιν*. Hence, the literal interpretation should connote that if people receive the Holy Spirit as a personal, indwelling sanctifier and abiding comforter, the Spirit will supply them with all the dynamite needed to blow all sin out of their lives and to qualify them to blow up the devil’s kingdom wherever they go witnessing effectively for Christ. Furthermore, Spirit-empowered individuals will enjoy an everlasting victory in their lives.<sup>30</sup> Albert Barnes writes, “The word power here refers to the help or aid which the Holy Spirit would grant; the power of . . . preaching the gospel with effect; of enduring great trials.”<sup>31</sup> From this notion, one can understand that the power of the Spirit grants believers victory over sin before they are qualified for effective service unto God. “According to Hughes, “The

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<sup>27</sup> F. F. Bruce, ed., *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Book of Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 36.

<sup>28</sup> Darrell L. Bock, ed., *A Theology of Luke and Acts: Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 63.

<sup>29</sup> Peterson, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary*, 110.

<sup>30</sup> Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *A Handbook on The Acts of the Apostles* (New York: United Bible Society, 1972), 18.

<sup>31</sup> Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament Explanatory and Practical: Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1949), 5.

power of the Holy Spirit is the supreme qualification and assurance of Christ's witnesses."<sup>32</sup> John Gill interprets this power to mean

the power of the Holy Ghost, strength from him to preach the Gospel, and work miracles in confirmation of it [when and where God deems it fit], and courage and greatness of mind, amidst all reproaches and persecutions, to face and oppose their enemies, profess the name of Christ, abide by his truths and ordinances, make their way through all opposition and difficulties, and spread the Gospel all over the world; for intend of enjoying worldly ease, honor, wealth, and riches, they were looking for, our Lord gives them to understand that they must expect labor, service, afflictions, and trials, which would require power and strength, and which they should have.<sup>33</sup>

As seen in the entire book of Acts, there is no doubt that the power of the Holy Spirit helps Jesus's followers in their task as witnesses of God's mighty acts in and through Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8, 22).<sup>34</sup>

**When the Holy Spirit comes upon you.** This statement was futuristic for the early apostles and referred to the dramatic event they were to experience on the day of Pentecost—when “they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting . . . And all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:1–2, 4). This filling made these ordinary people perform extraordinary things because the Spirit of God was at work in their lives. Hence, the ministry of the Holy Spirit is not a luxury; it is an absolute necessity. The source of this power is not in anyone; nor does it come from mortal human beings. The Spirit of God is the source of this power. The Holy Spirit did come from on high “and sat upon them in the form of cloven tongues, and of fire; upon which they were filled with knowledge and zeal, with strength and courage, and with all gifts and abilities

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<sup>32</sup> Hughes, *Acts*, 19.

<sup>33</sup> John Gill, *An Exposition of the New Testament; In Which Sense of the Sacred is Taken* (Ireland: Bonmahon Industrial Printing School, 1954), 800.

<sup>34</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts: Zondervan Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 78.

necessary for their work.”<sup>35</sup> The coming of the Spirit from on high signifies that the Spirit comes from God—far beyond the horizons of the fallen world. This historical event that happened on the day of Pentecost changed the course of history because the third person of the Trinity came to earth to tabernacle within those who believe in Christ Jesus.<sup>36</sup>

**You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem.** The work that the apostles are called to do is the work of witnessing.<sup>37</sup> This theme is prominent in the apostolic preaching throughout the book of Acts. As Bruce writes,

An Old Testament prophet had called the people of Israel to be God’s witnesses in the world (Isa. 43:10; 44:8); the task which Israel had not fulfilled was taken on by Jesus, the perfect Servant of the Lord, and shared by him with his disciples. The close relation between God’s call to Israel, “you are my witnesses,” and the risen Lord’s commission to his apostles, “you will be my witnesses,” can be appreciated the more if we consider the implications of Paul’s quotation of Isa 49:6 and Acts 13:27.<sup>38</sup>

In line with this statement, the first instructions of Jesus to the twelve disciples he chose at the beginning in the book of Mark were “come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men” (Mark 1:17 KJV). Christ’s last instructions to his followers as he was leaving the earth were that they should go and make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:19-20), go into all the world and preach the gospel (Mark 16:15-16), go and bear witness (Acts 1:8).<sup>39</sup> Hence, “Christ thus began and ended his ministry with the command

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<sup>35</sup> John Gill, *An Exposition of the New Testament*, 801.

<sup>36</sup> At Pentecost, the reviving winds of the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles with incredible spiritual life and power. In a future day this will achieve final fulfilment in the Messianic Age. The apostles now had God’s life-giving Spirit in a more intimate and powerful way than they had ever known—than anyone had ever known.” See Hughes, *Acts*, 31.

<sup>37</sup> Believers are called to be witnesses for Christ. This is the recurring message of Acts. The word appears no less than thirty-nine times. To be a witness for Christ is “to bring a message that is a marvel of simplicity: Jesus Christ is God come in flesh; he died to pay for our sins; he was resurrected; now he is exalted to Heaven; he calls us to believe in him and so receive forgiveness of sins. This is good news. There is nothing to join, no system to climb—just a person to receive and, in him eternal life.” See Hughes, *Acts*, 15-16.

<sup>38</sup> Bruce, *The Book of Acts of the Apostles*, 36.

<sup>39</sup> Ryan Shaw once writes, “The Great Commission is recorded in each of the four Gospels; Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16: 14-18; Luke 24:46-49; and John 20:21-23. Jesus’ words in the commission are then repeated in Acts 1:8, confirming a primary purpose for the giving of the Holy Spirit: making local

to be witnesses and fishers of men.”<sup>40</sup> The term “witness” is a key word in the book of Acts and is used twenty-nine times as either a verb or a noun. A witness is somebody who tells what he or she has seen and heard. As used in this sense, more than someone with a mere subjective and personal impression, a witness helps to establish facts objectively through verifiable observation.<sup>41</sup> Barnes writes, “The original word here is μάρτυρες [*martures*] martyrs. From this word the name martyr has been given to those who suffered in times of persecution. The reason why this name was given to them was that they bore witness to the life, instructions, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, even in the midst of persecution and death.”<sup>42</sup> It is commonly supposed that nearly all of the apostles bore witness to the truth of the gospel of Christ as martyrs.<sup>43</sup> Although, the word “martyr” does not necessarily mean that those to whom this statement was addressed would be put to death in bearing witness to the Lord Jesus. Instead, they were everywhere to testify to what they knew of him with readiness to die for the gospel.<sup>44</sup> The fact that their appointment was designed this way, and that they actually bore such testimony, is abundantly confirmed in the book of Acts (1:22; 5:32; 10:39, 42; 22:15). The apostles were appointed for this purpose. And to prepare them for this mission, they had to be with the Lord for more than three years. They had seen his manner of life, miracles, meekness, and sufferings. They had listened to his instructions. They had

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and global witnesses of Jesus.” See Ryan Shaw, *Spiritual Equipment for Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2014), 15.

<sup>40</sup> D. James Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1970), 2.

<sup>41</sup> Bock, ed., *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, 64.

<sup>42</sup> Barnes, *Acts of the Apostles*, 6.

<sup>43</sup> David Platt, *Follow Me: A Call to Die, a Call to Live* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2013), 2-3. See also Ruth Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 25; Charles Fielding, *Preach and Heal: A Biblical Model for Missions* (Richmond, VA: International Mission Board, 2008), 33-24.

<sup>44</sup> “To be a witness (martyrs) is to speak from personal knowledge of facts and their significance. The apostles, as eyewitnesses of the saving events, were witnesses in a unique sense. But all those who will believe and appropriate the truth of their testimony also qualify as witnesses.” See, Larkin Jr., *The IVP New Testament Commentaries Series: Acts*, 41-2.

conversed and eaten with him as a friend. They had seen Jesus after he was risen and were about to see him ascend to heaven. They were thus qualified to bear witness to these things in all parts of the earth. In every respect, therefore, they were qualified to be impartial and competent witnesses.<sup>45</sup>

**And in all Judea and Samaria.** Judea was the part of the land of Israel that was distinct from Samaria and Galilee. It was from beyond Jordan, where churches were to be planted, as afterward they were (Acts 9:31). Judea was the southern division of the Holy Land, and it included Jerusalem as the capital. Samaria is the place where Christ had previously forbid his disciples from going. But now, their commission is enlarged, and they are sent there.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, Philip traveled to Samaria when persecution was raised against the church at Jerusalem, and he preached Christ with great success, to the conversion of many (see Acts 8).

**And to the ends of the earth.** According to Barnes,

The word ‘earth’ (or ‘land’) is sometimes taken to denote only the land of Palestine. But its usage here does not seem to be a necessity for limiting it thus. If Christ had intended that, he would have mentioned Galilee since it was the only remaining division of the country. But as he had expressly directed his disciples to preach the gospel to all nations, the expression here should be considered as including the Gentile, as well as Jewish, lands.<sup>47</sup>

The evidence that the disciples obeyed Christ’s directive is found in subsequent parts of the book of Acts and in the history of the church afterward. Thus, here, Jesus replied to the disciples’ curiosity about the restoration of the kingdom (Acts 1:1-5). Though he did not tell them the time when it was to be done, nor did he affirm that he would restore the

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<sup>45</sup> Barnes, *Acts of the Apostles*, 6.

<sup>46</sup> Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Revive Us Again: A Biblical Principles for Revival Today* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2001), 207-8. In Matt 10:5-6, “These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.” But now, the gospel needs to cross the geographical boundaries to other nations through the same apostles of Christ.

<sup>47</sup> Barnes, *Acts of the Apostles*, 6.

kingdom to Israel, he gave them an answer that implied that their work should advance much farther than the land of Israel and that they would have much to do in promoting it.<sup>48</sup> Acts 1:8 stands as the key that unlocks the door of the book of Acts and the gates of Christian history, as there seems to be the passing of baton between the Son and the Spirit regarding the divine mission on earth. On this verse, Mohler writes,

This verse is one of the most important in the book of Acts. First, it shows us that the power of the Holy Spirit gives to God's people is the power to witness to Christ. Second, this verse also functions as a second "Great Commission" (see Matthew 28: 18-20). Jesus describes the gospel moving out through concentric circles from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria and finally to the entire world. Finally, this verse functions as a preview of the entire book of Acts, which will track the movement of the apostles as they travel from Jerusalem to the outer reaches of the Roman Empire.<sup>49</sup>

Acts 1:8 provides the table of contents for the book of Acts. In reading through Acts, it becomes clear that "the book divides into three clearly defined parts and traces the expansion of Christianity (missions) in concentric circles, beginning with Jerusalem (1-7); progressing to Judea and Samaria (8-12); and extending ultimately to the ends of the earth (13-28)."<sup>50</sup> The text represents Christ's agenda for the duration of history until he returns. It is the personal mandate of every believer in Christ to become filled with the Holy Spirit and participate in this task of world evangelization. To this, Arturo G. Azurdia III writes, "Stated most simply, the principal theme of the book of Acts is this: Spirit empowered mission—the universal expansion of Christianity effected by the potency of the Holy Spirit under the direction of the resurrected Lord."<sup>51</sup> Hence, the promise of the Holy Spirit, as seen in Acts 1:8, was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost.

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<sup>48</sup> Barnes, *Acts of the Apostles*, 6.

<sup>49</sup> Mohler, *Acts 1-12 for You*, 13.

<sup>50</sup> Harman, "Mission in the Thought of Jesus," 51.

<sup>51</sup> Arturo G. Azurdia III, *Spirit Empowered Mission: Aligning the Church's Mission with the Mission of Jesus* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2016), 26.

## The Promise of the Holy Spirit and the Pentecost

Knowing the importance of the inevitable power of the Holy Spirit in evangelism and in daily victorious Christian living, Jesus mandated that his disciples should tarry in Jerusalem for the endowment of the Spirit (who is the promise of the Father) before venturing to fulfill the Great Commission (see Matt 28:19-20; Luke 24:49; John 16:5-11). Therefore, before all other things, the Holy Spirit is the primary and indispensable companion for believers' effective witnessing.<sup>52</sup> Significant to the coming of the Holy Spirit was the day of Pentecost. Following the promise of the Holy Spirit by Christ, the disciples remained in Jerusalem, praying and waiting for the promise as they were commanded. On the tenth day after the ascension of Christ, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples with power and with accompanying signs (Acts 2:1ff.). Consequently, the word 'Pentecost' has almost become a universal slogan in Christianity. Churches are named after it, and many Christians clamor for the Pentecost experience.

Moreover, the word 'Pentecost' itself, due to myopic understanding, has heaped up walls of division among several church denominations. The most unfortunate part of it all is that the main purpose of the Pentecost, 'the power for witnessing,'<sup>53</sup> seems to have lost its place amid the exegetical and doctrinal struggles and debates.<sup>54</sup> Of first importance, Pentecost marked the novel descent of God the Spirit into the world so that he may indwell believers,<sup>55</sup> just as the incarnation of Son, as seen in the Gospels (John

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<sup>52</sup> Darrell L. Guder, *Be My Witness: The Church's Mission, Message, and Messengers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 195.

<sup>53</sup> Michael W. Goheen, *Introducing Christian Mission Today: Scripture, History and Issues* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 62. According to Azurdia III, "At all times and in all places, there is a frightening conspiracy to undermine the primary mission of the church of Jesus Christ." This mission is basically reaching the lost world with the gospel. See Azurdia III, *Spirit Empowered Mission*, 1.

<sup>54</sup> Roland Allen, in his work on Pentecost writes, "But in tithing the mint and rue of 'Acts' we have passed over mercy and the love of God. The great, fundamental, unmistakable teaching of the book has been lost . . . it is the revelation of the Holy Spirit as a missionary Spirit that the 'Acts' stands alone in the New Testament." See Roland Allen, *Pentecost and the World* (London: Oxford University Press, 1917), 39-41.

<sup>55</sup> For further reading, see Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 299-304. Peters's explanation on Pentecost captions it all.

1:1 ff.), marked his new mode of presence among humankind. Seeing Christian mission as the mission of God that began with Christ and was continued by the Holy Spirit working through the disciples, Herbert Kane says, “The most important single event in the Acts of the apostles is the coming of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>56</sup> This event, in turn, explains all other occurrences or phenomena of the Holy Spirit in Acts. Still on the Pentecost, as Robert H. Glover says, “He [the Holy Spirit] came as the divine commander-in-chief of the forces and campaign . . . His coming imported the divine character to every aspect of the enterprise.”<sup>57</sup> Hence, the Great Commission could only be done through the power of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 1:8), and from this point onward, the disciples were clothed with the Spirit’s power as of the order of Christ—their Lord and Master (see John 20:21).

The event of the Pentecost reveals the link between Christology and Pneumatology. The death and resurrection of Christ cannot be best told without the enablement of the Holy Spirit who was to come and to testify not about himself but, instead, to reveal the deeper things about Christ to believers as well as to reveal Christ to the world through the witnessing of believers (see John 14:26; 16:8-14). The Holy Spirit has come to apply the work of salvation initiated by the Father and executed by the Son. Hence, the coming of the Holy Spirit is salvific in nature. According to Timothy C. Tennent,

Luke portrays the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost as another kind of divine invasion, as an extension of the Incarnation through the abiding and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not merely an impersonal force or a *donum superadditum* (i.e., spiritual add-on). Rather, the Holy Spirit is the authoritative, empowering presence of the living God, another self-revealing extension of his person and vitality into history. God’s action in salvation history continue to unfold in the world.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Kane, *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective*, 125.

<sup>57</sup> Robert H. Glover, *The Bible Basis of Missions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), 63.

<sup>58</sup> Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 411.



In the same way, John A. Studebaker Jr. writes, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the world today depicts an ongoing revelation that God does not just exercise imperial authority over the world but also demonstrates his executive authority to act in the world.<sup>59</sup> On the day of Pentecost, the descent of the Holy Spirit in a violent wind and a tongue-like fire brings to remembrance two of the central images of God's presence in the Old Testament. Yahweh appeared to Moses in "flames of fire" at the burning bush (Exod 3:2); the pillar of fire protected and guided the Israelites in their wilderness journey (Exod 13:21-22); Yahweh descended on Mount Sinai in fire and the Law to Moses (Exod 19:18). The wind is reminiscent of the breath of God that brings life at creation (Gen 2:7; Ps 104:30) and manifests the presence of God to the prophets of old (1 Kgs 19:11-12; Ezek 1:4; Nah 1:3).<sup>60</sup> According to Peters, "Pentecost however is not merely historical. It is rather a historical event with abiding, dynamic, existential consequences. The Holy Spirit came authoritatively, dispatched by the Father and the Son. He came to abide and to concretize the purpose of the Triune God in this world."<sup>61</sup> What then is the significance of the Holy Spirit's coming upon the disciples to empower their witnessing? The answer to this question leads to an exploration of how the Holy Spirit would revolutionize the world through the early believers as seen throughout Acts.

### **The Necessity of Power of the Holy Spirit for Evangelism**

Bruce remarks that in the Gospel of Luke, Luke's first volume, Luke's description of "all that Jesus began to both to do and teach, until the day he was taken up . . . until the day when, by the Holy Spirit, he commissioned the apostles whom he had chosen, and charged them to proclaim the gospel [Acts 1:1-2] exactly summarizes the

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<sup>59</sup> John A. Studebaker Jr., *The Lord is the Spirit: The Authority of the Holy Spirit in Contemporary Theology and Church Practice* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2008), 7-8.

<sup>60</sup> Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 412.

<sup>61</sup> Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 229.

scope of Luke's Gospel."<sup>62</sup> Peter Wagner writes, "the Gospel of Luke tells what Jesus did, and Acts tells what He expects His followers to do both then and now."<sup>63</sup> This fact vividly portrays the book of Acts as an evangelistic one. According to Wagner, "Building the Church of Christ, as described by Jesus and implemented by His followers in the book of Acts, involves the key elements of both missiology and power ministries."<sup>64</sup> Wagner's point of view here seems to capture well the emphasis of Jesus: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

From the point of his ascension onward, Jesus meant for the gospel to begin flowing beyond cultural and geographical boundaries. To this point, Paul Pierson writes,

These words symbolized the breaking of an almost infinite number of barriers in order that men and women everywhere might hear and respond to the Good News. Just as God in Christ had broken through barriers which separated eternity from time, divinity from humanity, holiness from sin, so His people were broken through geographical, racial, linguistic, religious, cultural and social barriers in order that people of every race and tongue might receive the Good News.<sup>65</sup>

This missiological mandate could not and cannot be implemented by human power alone. Despite the teachings and the expertise on evangelism that the disciples had learned from Jesus in the three years of working and walking with him, Jesus had told them to "stay in the city [i.e., Jerusalem] until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). In short, the disciples were not yet fully equipped to face the task ahead of them. Sometimes, it is easy to get caught up in techniques, methodologies, and resources, especially when they have yielded positive results in the past. The supernatural power of God is highly needed to fulfill God's purpose concerning gospel proclamation.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 30.

<sup>63</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *Acts of the Holy Spirit* (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 1982), 17.

<sup>64</sup> Wagner, *Acts of the Holy Spirit*, 18.

<sup>65</sup> Paul E. Pierson, *Themes from Acts* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1982), 11.

<sup>66</sup> Wagner, *Acts of the Holy Spirit*, 50.

During the baptism of Jesus Christ (Luke 3:21-22), Luke's record unveils the significant impact the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus had in his witnessing task. For example, reading further, Luke says that Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness (4:1). Then, Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit (4:14). Right at the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus announced that the scope of his missional task was to preach the gospel to the poor, heal the brokenhearted, preach deliverance to captives, preach recovery of sight to the blind, give liberty to those who are oppressed, and preach the year of the Lord's favor (4:18-19). Each of his duties required strength and power to execute. This actuality is simply because, Satan, the thief and the prince of this world, ever since he usurped power from Adam, has set his battle stage to "steal and kill and destroy"; but Jesus has come that men and women may have life and have it in fullness (John 10:10). For this reason, "the Son of God appeared to destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3:6).

Luke adds that Jesus himself was clothed with power<sup>67</sup> by writing about "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him" (Acts 10:38). The exalted Christ pours out on those he sends the same Spirit who empowered him to carry out his mission.<sup>68</sup> If there are still people under the bondage of the devil that need to be set free today, then believers need this power today. No sooner had Jesus begun to preach about the "kingdom" than he began to point his disciples' attention to the reality of spiritual warfare.<sup>69</sup> To begin with, after his comment on the least in the "kingdom" being greater than John the Baptist, Jesus says, "From the days of

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<sup>67</sup> Poonen, *Through the Bible*, 590.

<sup>68</sup> Goheen, *Introducing Christian Mission Today*, 63.

<sup>69</sup> Johannes Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 95. See also, Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Biblical Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 176-78.

John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force” (Matt 11:11-12 ESV).

On the first mission trip Jesus sent his disciples, he “gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every diseases and sickness. When he sent out the seventy, Jesus equally said, ‘I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy . . .’” (Luke 10:19). Jesus also spoke about the imminent invasion of the kingdom Satan by the kingdom of God: “I will build my church, and the gates of hades will not overcome it or be able to withstands its assault” (Matt 16:18). With this awareness, Jesus was establishing the pattern of things to come. His people would be recruited, mobilized, and empowered to move with force against Satan and on behalf of the kingdom of God.<sup>70</sup> There seems to be a cosmic shift in the wielding of power as soon as Jesus completed his mission on earth. Jesus declared, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matt 28:18). After these words, Jesus left the assignment of expanding his kingdom in the hands of people whom the Holy Spirit had empowered for the task. By using their delegated power and authority, they were to declare and manifest the kingdom of God by making disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.<sup>71</sup>

### **The Three Sources of Power for Witnessing**

The believers are not the manufacturers of the power needed to witness effectively to the gospel of Christ. First, the Holy Spirit himself is the power-giver, and there is no other mortal man or woman who has this power in him- or herself. So, Christians today should never seek power but, instead, should seek the fullness of the

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<sup>70</sup> Wagner, *Acts of the Holy Spirit*, 20.

<sup>71</sup> Wagner, *Acts of the Holy Spirit*, 19-20.

Holy Spirit himself. When they have him in fullness, they will have all the power they needed to do anything that God wants them to do.<sup>72</sup> Believers, therefore, have nothing to do other than to get sanctified and filled thoroughly with the Holy Spirit, to abide in him, to obey him, and to be truthful to him.

Second, the gospel itself is the power of God. In the cross, the massiveness of God's power is displayed for all to see. The gospel reveals a greater power than even the power of creation; it is the power of new creation, redeeming people from sin and regenerating life from death.<sup>73</sup> Hence, "the gospel not only comes in power (1 Thess. 1:5) but is the power of God and leads to salvation all who believe (Rom. 1:16-17). Paul regards the gospel as sacred trust (1 Tim. 1:11). Thus he is under divine compulsion to proclaim it (1 Cor. 9:16) . . . with boldness (Eph. 6:19)."<sup>74</sup> An inductive study of the historical account of Luke as seen in the book of Acts reveals clearly that signs and wonders make many people open to consider the claim and the supremacy of Jesus over other gods and religions than they would otherwise be without them. But the fact remains that signs and wonders, by themselves, have no power to save anyone; only the message of the gospel can save.

In the gospel lies the inherent power of God that brings transformation and regeneration, and people are born again not because they witnessed or experienced

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<sup>72</sup> According to John V Taylor, "The chief actor in the historic mission of the Church is the Holy Spirit. He is the director of the whole enterprise. The mission consists of things that he is doing in the world. In a special way it consists of the light that he is focusing upon Jesus Christ." Taylor observes the nonchalant attitude of the church to the place of the Holy Spirit by further adding, "This fact so patent to Christians in the first century, is largely forgotten in our own. So we lost our nerves and sense of direction and have turned the divine initiative into human enterprise. 'It all depends on me' is an attitude that is bedeviling both the practice and the theology of our mission in these days. See John V Taylor, *The Go-Between God: The Holy Spirit and Christian Mission* (Fortress, 1973), 3.

<sup>73</sup> J. D. Greear, *Gospel: Recovering the Power that Made Christianity Revolutionary* (Nashville: B & H, 2011), 102.

<sup>74</sup> I. Howard Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, D. J. Wiseman, eds., *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), 426.

miracles but because they heard the persuasive gospel message of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and then put their faith in him as their Savior and Lord. The apostle Paul presents the gospel as the incomparable power of God that brings salvation to those who believe. For instance, to the believers in Rome, talking about the power in the gospel, Paul says, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom 1:16). To the Corinthians, Paul exclaims, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor 1:18).

As John Wimber and Kevin Springer write, “The Bible does not teach that evangelism apart from signs and wonders is invalid or that the addition of signs and wonders somehow changes the gospel message. The heart and soul of evangelism is proclamation of the gospel.”<sup>75</sup> The gospel is effective, efficient, and sufficient without signs and wonders. The signs and wonders are not the gospel, and they are not enough to save without the gospel. However, the gospel is often accompanied by signs and wonders as it breaks into novel locales as God deems fit. An effective presentation of the gospel always come with power; this power brings transformation and the miracle of repentance to the unbelievers. J. D. Greear summarizes this power in the gospel as follows:

The sun is 9,900 degrees Fahrenheit on the surface and 27 million degrees at its core. Tsunami waves rise up to 100 feet high and travel at over 80 miles an hour, destroying everything in their path. A recently discovered star is reported to streak through the heavens at 1.5 million miles per hour. We know of volcanoes that spew lava to 17 miles into the atmosphere and whose eruptions can be heard more than 3,000 miles away. One human DNA strand, invisible to the human eye, contains enough information to fill one thousand 500-page books. None of those is called the power of God.<sup>76</sup>

Jesus victorious work of putting away sin forever and rising triumphant over

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<sup>75</sup> John Wimber and Kevin Springer, *Power Evangelism* (Bloomington, MN: Chosen Books, 2009), 78. Considering the context of Nigeria, I find some of the works of Wagner, Wimber and Springer very relevant and contextual to the situation. Hence, I make much use of some of their works (which I deem fit to be biblical) on the place of the Holy Spirit in evangelism.

<sup>76</sup> J. D. Greear, *Gospel: Recovering the Power that Made Christianity Revolutionary* (Nashville: B & H, 2011), 102-3.

the grave is call ‘the power of God.’ It is the power that disarmed, defeated, dethroned, and will destroy Satan and all the cohorts of darkness.<sup>77</sup> Making a spectacle display of them is the power of God. The power that translates regenerated individuals from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light is the power of God. It is this power that brings sinner who were once dead in their sin to lives of righteousness. The gospel does not only tell about the power of God; the message of the gospel is itself the power of God, and through this power, believers become God’s children (John 1:12). The same power delivers from the horror of hell forever and makes everyone who believes a partaker of eternal life.

Third, there is power in the name of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul confirms the power and authority in the name of Jesus when he says that “God has exalted Christ to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knees should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:9-11). As believers go about witnessing, they are proclaiming this very name, and even those who reject him today will one day admit that Jesus Christ is Lord (Rev 5:13). Just like other apostles, the apostle Paul exemplifies an effective life of witnessing through the enablement of the Holy Spirit.<sup>78</sup> A brief spotlight on the apostle Paul’s life of evangelism will be helpful at this point.

### **The Place of the Holy Spirit in the Ministry of the Apostle Paul as Seen in Acts**

By the grace of God, Saul of Tarsus, once the chief of sinners and an archenemy of the gospel of Jesus Christ, became Paul after his conversion. He was an

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<sup>77</sup> The Apostle Paul clearly says, “having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross” (Col 2:14-15).

<sup>78</sup> Green, *Thirty Years That Change the World*, 264.

unusual person; he rose up in any crowd, not because of his physical stature but because of his surpassing endowment of intellectual, moral, and spiritual qualities.<sup>79</sup> Kane, in his remarkable word about Paul, admits that Paul “ranks with the great personalities of the Old Testament: Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, Isaiah, and Daniel.”<sup>80</sup> It may not be an exaggeration to say that Paul did for Christianity what Moses did for Judaism. As Kane goes on to say, “Qualities that were not found in others were seen in Paul; he had the mind of a scholar, the heart of an evangelist, the discipline of a soldier, the devotion of a lover, the vision of a seer, the zeal of a reformer, and the passion of a prophet.”<sup>81</sup> The apostle Peter, popularly called “the prince of the apostles,”<sup>82</sup> was the dominant character found in Luke’s narration of Acts 1-12. However, Luke mentioned many others, and, especially, he singled out Paul and gave him prominence in the book of Acts. Luke’s main concern was the expansion of the gospel under Paul through passionate evangelism. George T. Purves says it this way: “It was through Paul that Christianity was established in the chief cities of the empire, and thus obtained the significance it had . . . in Paul’s epistles, the Christian system of belief was completely unfolded, so that under him Christianity evolved its contents as well as extended its area.”<sup>83</sup>

The mission strategy of Paul has been much debated among scholars.<sup>84</sup> But with an in-depth observation, one can understand that the strategy of Paul followed not a deliberate, well-formulated, and duly-executed plans of action resting upon human effort or experience. Rather, Paul’s strategy was a flexible one, developed under the guidance

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<sup>79</sup> Kane, *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective*, 72.

<sup>80</sup> Kane, *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective*, 72.

<sup>81</sup> Kane, *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective*, 72.

<sup>82</sup> George T. Purves, *Christianity in the Apostolic Age* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975), 41.

<sup>83</sup> Purves, *Christianity in the Apostolic Age*, 41.

<sup>84</sup> See Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods of St. Paul: A Study of the Church in the Four Provinces* (Mansfield, CT: Martino, 2011), 1ff; James Stalker, *The Life of St. Paul* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1912), 63-65; Wright, *The Mission of God*, 519, 522.



of the Holy Spirit and subject to his leading.<sup>85</sup> It was during the time of prayer and fasting that the Holy Spirit directed the church in Antioch to consecrate Barnabas and Paul for the work to which he had called them. Thus, the two men were sent forth after they were prayed for (Acts 13:1-3). Commenting on this moment, Kane reasons that the problem today is that people live in an anthropocentric age. People imagine that nothing of consequence can be accomplished in the Lord's work without a good deal of ecclesiastical machinery (e.g., committees, conferences, workshops, seminars), whereas the early Christians depended less on human wisdom and expertise and more on divine initiative and guidance.<sup>86</sup> The early church seems to begin with men in the upper room agonizing. But today, if care is not taking, the church may be ending with men in the shopper room organizing. To avoid this error, believers must be continually reminded of their need to depend on the Holy Spirit always.

J. D. Douglas maintains the position, that "the Gospel spread out in apparently haphazard way as men obeyed the leading of the Spirit and went through doors he (Holy Spirit) opened."<sup>87</sup> Hence, Paul's passionate involvement in evangelism was by the power of the Spirit at work in him. Having received his divine call as an apostle to the Gentiles, Paul embarked on rigorous missionary journeys in order to spread the gospel. James Stalker summarizes these journeys and the places covered therein as follows: first

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<sup>85</sup> Kane, *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective*, 73. See also Allen, *Missionary Methods of St. Paul*, 16-17; Ernest C. Reisinger, *Today's Evangelism: Its Message and Methods* (Philipsburg, NJ: Craig Press, 1982), 85-87. As seen in Acts, the Spirit and Church belong together, but it is noteworthy that the Spirit always takes the lead. The church can only live by evangelizing, and by following the paths that the Spirit indicates. It was not the church leaders who decided on an evangelistic campaign. It was Paul, an ex-Pharisee, converted through opposing them, who was part of the main agents in that outreach under the prompting and the power of the sovereign Spirit of God. See Green, *Thirty Years That Change the World*, 254.

<sup>86</sup> Kane, *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective*, 73.

<sup>87</sup> J. D. Douglas, *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: World Wide Missions* (Minneapolis: World Wide, 1975), 174. Roland Allen, seem to support this position when he writes, "It is quite impossible to maintain that St. Paul deliberately planned his journeys beforehand, selected certain strategic points at which to establish his churches and then actually carried out his designs." See Allen, *Missionary Methods of St. Paul*, 15.

missionary Journey (the mainland of Asia, Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe); second missionary journey (Paul crossed to Europe, Greece, Macedonia, Achaia, Athens, and Corinth); third missionary journey (Ephesus provinces).<sup>88</sup> These are the missiological involvements of Paul through the endowment of power by the Holy Spirit.

### **The Strategic Roles of the Holy Spirit in Evangelism**

When the Lord Jesus Christ was going to be with his Father, he gave his disciples a mandate to reach the world with the gospel. However, he was not presumptuous, and believers should not be either; believers cannot afford to jump the gun. He said, “wait for the promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4). Embarking on evangelism without the power of the Holy Spirit is like get involved in a fruitless mission. Part of the reasons why there are no productive outcomes among some of the modern-day evangelistic outreaches may be linked to Christians not being spiritually equipped enough.<sup>89</sup> There is a danger of having zeal without knowledge. Believers need to be endowed with the Holy Spirit before they can be effective witnesses. This truth always leaves Christians without the option of whether to be filled with the Holy Spirit as they present the gospel; it is an absolute must to be filled with the Holy Spirit constantly.

From the day of Pentecost onward, dynamism took over missions through the apostles’ specifically and all of the early believers generally. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of mission and is portrayed in Scripture as overseeing missions. In this regard, “From the book of Acts we note that the Holy Spirit is the initiator, motivator and superintendent of world missions. All major steps of expansion were divinely initiated and divinely inspired. The Holy Spirit was the Supreme Strategist.”<sup>90</sup> At this juncture, it is wise to

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<sup>88</sup> Stalker, *The Life of St. Paul*, 65.

<sup>89</sup> Poonen, *Through the Bible*, 591.

<sup>90</sup> Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 229.

itemize the role of the Holy Spirit in missions as seen in the entire New Testament era through the apostles and the rest of believers. All that the Holy Spirit does in the book of the Acts (i.e., in the early church) cannot be exhausted in this thesis, but the Spirit's role in regard to the effective spreading of the gospel needs to be identified. It is important to know the roles the Holy Spirit plays in the life and ministry of the early church vis-à-vis the prominent place of the Spirit in the life and experience of the church from Pentecost until now. The roles of the Holy Spirit as discussed from the baseline with which to evaluate Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals' understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in evangelism.

**The Holy Spirit bears witness through believers.** One of the prominent roles of the Holy Spirit is to bear witness about Christ.<sup>91</sup> As Jesus said, “But when the helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness” (John 14:26-27). Hence, the Holy Spirit bears witness about Christ to believers, and the Spirit also bears witness through the believers to unbelievers.

**Power for witnessing.** It ought to be made clear that the gospel Christians are called to proclaim is primarily about Jesus Christ, the begotten son of God, not really about the Holy Spirit. The good news is that Jesus Christ was crucified for our sins and raised from the dead for our justification (Rom 4:25). Similar to the definition of the gospel given in chapter one above, Bruce Ware summarizes the gospel as follows:

Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared . . . (1 Cor 15:3-5a). According to Paul, “if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom 10:9). The gospel, then, is the good news about Jesus Christ—his sinless life, his substitutionary and atoning death, and his victorious resurrection

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<sup>91</sup> Samuel Escobar, *The New Global Mission: The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 124.

to newness of life—and that by faith in him, we may be saved.<sup>92</sup>

As simple as this message of the gospel appears, no one should present it with presumption. The Spirit must empower the proclamation. His empowerment accounts for the reason that Jesus commanded the disciples not to begin proclaiming the gospel until they were endowed with power; the Spirit would empower them for the task of witnessing. Ware expresses that “the gospel of Jesus would go forth as the Spirit of Jesus would empower the proclamation of Jesus.”<sup>93</sup> Along the same lines, David Platt writes, “While every Christian wants to experience the power of the Holy Spirit, we often forget that the Spirit’s power is given for the purpose of being his [Christ] witnesses. Experiencing God, which is the longing of every true believer, happens when we are being his witnesses and making disciples.”<sup>94</sup> The purpose of the Spirit coming upon the disciples was to empower them to bear witness about Christ in Jerusalem and beyond (Acts 1:8). The Spirit indeed gives power to believers so that they can testify effectively to the gospel. Later in Acts, Luke writes, “With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all” (Acts 4:33). The Holy Spirit indeed empowers the church for global evangelism.

**Boldness for witnessing.** Prior the day of Pentecost, the disciples were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Peter denied knowing Jesus three times, but the same Peter and John confronted the Sanhedrin face to face, saying: “Judge for yourselves whether it is right to obey you rather than God” (Acts 4:18f.). The Sanhedrin could no longer stop them from preaching the gospel. The communal prayer of the early believers centers on

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<sup>92</sup> Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 113.

<sup>93</sup> Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, 113.

<sup>94</sup> Platt, *Follow Me*, xvi.

boldness to preach the gospel<sup>95</sup>: “Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness . . . After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly” (Acts 4:29-31).

**Regeneration of lost souls.** No missionary, evangelist, or preacher of the gospel, no matter how eloquent he or she may be, has the power to convert sinners. The work of conviction and regeneration is done in the mission field only by the Holy Spirit (John 16:8). Billy Graham, in his life-transforming book on the Holy Spirit, maintains that “in regard to the world, the Spirit’s work is twofold. First, He has come to reprove it of sin, righteousness, and judgement . . . His second work in the world is to hinder the growth of lawlessness, that is, to engage in the ministry of preservation . . . (2 Thessalonians 2:7).”<sup>96</sup> The Spirit inspired Peter’s message so much that the people listening to him were pricked to the hearts and repented (Acts 2:36f.). Our major task is to present the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit and leave the result(s) to God. Harold Cook emphasized this truth by saying, “Membership in the church of Christ is by faith, it is by the operation of the Holy Spirit in the human heart, bringing about man’s regeneration, or the ‘new birth’ . . . It is the Holy Spirit who must incline the heart of man to accept the message.”<sup>97</sup> More to this, Kane said, “God the Father purposed and designed the plane of salvation; God the Son procured and assumed the plan of salvation; God the Holy Spirit executes and administers the plan of salvation.”<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Zane Pratt et al., *Introduction to Global Missions* (Nashville: B & H, 2014), 98.

<sup>96</sup> Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit: Activating God’s Power in Your Life* (Waco, TX: Word, 1978), 32-33.

<sup>97</sup> Harold R. Cook, *An Introduction to Christian Missions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 222.

<sup>98</sup> Kane, *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective*, 303.

**The Holy Spirit works miracles during witnessing.** The Holy Spirit performed many miraculous signs and wonders through the hands of the apostles (Acts 5:12). The Spirit, both in the past and still in the present, confirms the message of the gospel with miraculous manifestations. The book of Acts is filled with signs and wonders wrought by believers. It does not matter what view one holds today; cessationist or continuationist, the truth is, miracles still happen in mission field, and within the body of Christ, today through the Spirit of God and as God chooses.<sup>99</sup> The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of miracles, and he will continue to back up the proclamation of the gospel with power, signs, and wonders. Reflecting on the movement of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts, Tennent writes,

The Holy Spirit extends the inbreaking of the New Creation through the powerful manifestation of signs and wonders and the holiness of life . . . The manifestation of signs and wonders was not limited to the apostles but also was evidenced in the ministry of Stephen (6:8) and Philip (8:6, 13). The signs and wonders were understood to accompany the preaching of the Word to provide divine confirmation of God's presence working through the church, bringing unity of word and deeds.<sup>100</sup>

Nevertheless, caution must be taken because of the multiplication of fake miracles and fake workers of miracles in Christendom today. Besides, missionaries need not be troubled about whether they have witnessed any physical or visible miracles in their lifetimes. The Holy Spirit works as he wishes and as he deems fit. God knows best where and when to permit miracles for his own glory.<sup>101</sup> Much more importantly, the conversion of a sinner from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light is the greatest miracle in the whole universe.

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<sup>99</sup> Greear, *Gospel*, 162, 169. See also Reinhard Bonnke, *Evangelism by Fire: Igniting Your Passion for the Lost* (Frankfort, Germany: Full Flame, 2003), viii-x.

<sup>100</sup> Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 413-14.

<sup>101</sup> The normativity of miracles for today, as witnessed in the early days of the church, has come under several arguments as aforementioned. Nevertheless, "When the Holy Spirit comes upon followers of Jesus Christ, the most unlikely people become the fountains of power. This spiritual power is always available, and he displays it according to his sovereign plan. God imparts his power when and how he wants to." See Hughes, *Acts*, 19.

**The Holy Spirit commissions people for witnessing.** When men were needed for the work of missions, one of the criteria for selection was that they be Spirit-filled (Acts 6:3). The twelve disciples were ordinary laymen of whom the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin said, “These people are unschooled and unlearned” (Acts 4:13 paraphrased). However, later in Acts, the apostles commissioned Paul and Barnabas for missions by the leading of the Holy Spirit,<sup>102</sup> as Luke writes, “Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them’” (Acts 13:1-2). A. J. Gordon opined that “the Holy Spirit calls out missionary witnesses; and when he calls, his chosen ones will hear, even though a dead church and secular clergy have no notification of their appointment.”<sup>103</sup> Perhaps, one of the reasons why there is so much tension today in churches and missions is that men and women are, in some places, chosen for God’s works based on their academic qualifications, financial capacities, positions in the society, and the like. They are not chosen based on the criterion of “being filled with the Holy Spirit.”

**Guidance in missions.** On the guiding role of the Spirit, Kane says that “the Holy Spirit is the executive Director [of Mission] here on earth.”<sup>104</sup> The Spirit directs believers and missionaries to places where he sees the needs for the fully ready harvest. He redirected Paul to Macedonia contrary to where Paul was heading. Luke the historian has this in his report: When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing

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<sup>102</sup> Pratt et al., *Introduction to Global Missions*, 100-1.

<sup>103</sup> A. J. Gordon, *The Holy Spirit in Missions* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian, 1968), 62.

<sup>104</sup> Kane, *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective*, 131.

and begging him, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. (Acts 16:7-10).<sup>105</sup>

When missionaries are controlled by flesh, emotion, and empty zeal, they easily fall into the error of going into wrong places at the wrong time, where the fruit is not ripe for harvest. This kind of activity always leads to rejection, discouragement, failure, and a departure from the mission field.

The Spirit resolves tensions and conflicts among the witnessing team. The ethnic divisions and tensions in Acts 6 were subsided by the help of the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of unity who unites Christ’s body and mission-workers. The Scriptures affirm the joint decision of the apostles when they said, “Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:3 NIV). The apostles Paul and Barnabas, who were co-workers once, had such a sharp disagreement on one of their mission trips. But instead of this conflict impeding the spread of the gospel, it only served as an impetus and catalyst that sped up the advancement of the gospel to various places under the Roman empire.<sup>106</sup> No wonder that Oswald J Sander maintains, “Spiritual leadership requires Spirit-filled people. Other qualities are important; to be Spirit-filled is indispensable.”<sup>107</sup> Of course, Paul and Barnabas eventually reunited and re-strategized (1 Cor 9:6). Again, the issue of cultural issues and divisions surfaced in Acts 15.<sup>108</sup> However, with the help of the Holy Spirit, the problem was

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<sup>105</sup> Paul and his friends were kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. And then, one night, God guided Paul and his colleagues into a vital new direction through the dream of the man of Macedonia, calling for help. The entire European orientation of the gospel sprang from that incident. The church in Ethiopia was founded as a result of the Spirit nudging Philip to draw alongside a strange man who was reading the scriptures alone in his chariot as he traveled on desert road. See Green, *Thirty Years That Change the World*, 265.

<sup>106</sup> Danny McCain, *Tough Tests for Top Leaders: God’s Strategy for Preparing Africans to lead Global Christianity* (Jos, Nigeria: Moore Books, 2005), 53-5.

<sup>107</sup> Oswald J. Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (India: Oasis International, 1967), 79.

<sup>108</sup> Barje S. Maigadi, *Divisive Ethnicity in the Church in Africa* (Kaduna, Nigeria: Baraka



resolved amicably. J. E. Adams once writes,

When we not only plan, but also submit our plans to the Spirit for His blue-penciling, we do well. We must remember that all the scriptures say about the necessity for good leadership was inspired by the Holy Spirit Himself. Leadership, planning, and management are not merely tolerated or permitted, but required and encouraged by the Holy Spirit. To put it tersely, biblical Administration is spiritual.<sup>109</sup>

Hence, the apostles' resolution ended with these words: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements . . ." (Acts 15:28 NIV).

**The Spirit gives spiritual gifts for the edification of Christ's body.** One of the ways the Spirit strengthens missions is by giving spiritual gifts to the church for the purpose of edification (1 Cor 12:7-11). It is not an overstatement to suggest that there can barely be any success in the church's witnessing when these spiritual endowments are absent. Peters, again on his keen observation on the day of Pentecost, opined that "the Holy Spirit came to qualify those whom God calls out for his ministry by bestowing special gifts (Charismata) upon them."<sup>110</sup>

**The Spirit gives passion, compassion, and a burden for evangelism.** The burden and passion to evangelize comes from the Spirit. In Acts 6, the apostles resolved to choose men who would be in charge of the table (welfare), but they said of themselves, "We will turn the responsibility over to them and will give ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word" (Acts 6: 3b-4). The phrase "ministry of the word" is the spreading of the good news and the teaching of the Word of God. Christians cannot be filled with the Holy Spirit and not also carry a burden in their hearts for, and be

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Press, 2006), 206.

<sup>109</sup> J. E. Adams, *Shepherding the God's Flock* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 317.

<sup>110</sup> Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 299.

passionate about, lost souls.<sup>111</sup> The apostle Paul was so burdened for the salvation of his fellow Israelites. He expressed his passionate desire for them to be saved when he said, “Brothers and sisters, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge” (Rom 10:1-2). Right from the beginning of the letter to the Romans, Paul made his burden for the gospel known: “I am a debtor to the gospel; I am eager to preach the gospel; I am not ashamed of the gospel” (Rom 1:14-16 paraphrased).

After the outpouring of the power of the Holy Spirit upon the early believers, they spread out to reach almost every area within the Roman empire,<sup>112</sup> in an age when there was no social media as means of communication. Again, the reason for such widespread missions is that all the early Christians saw themselves as witnesses; there was no idea of ‘let the generals fight the war.’ Frankly speaking, laypeople are the key to the evangelization of the world<sup>113</sup> if they would simply allow the Holy Spirit to use them. Luke expresses it this way: “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:4 KJV). Today, James Kennedy still observes that “for the vast majority of Christian church members the idea has firmly taken root in their minds that it is primarily the task of the minister to fight the battles for Christ—especially for the souls of men. In the minds of most, the work of evangelism, is the work of professionally trained men.”<sup>114</sup>

**Protection in the face of danger.** The evangelistic mandate is the most difficult of all tasks. Jesus told his disciples that they would be like sheep in the midst of

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<sup>111</sup> One of the reasons for the spiritual gifts as Green emphasizes is for the purpose of showing compassion for those who are in need both physical and spiritually. See Green, *Thirty Years That Change the World*, 264.

<sup>112</sup> Pratt et al., *Introduction to Global Missions*, 101.

<sup>113</sup> Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, 3

<sup>114</sup> Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, 3.

the wolves (see Matt 10:16ff.). Stephen Neil says it best: “Christian missionary work is the most difficult thing in the world. It is surprising that it should ever have been attempted.”<sup>115</sup> However, on the day of Pentecost, the disciples received the love, passion zeal, and missionary Spirit, not minding the odds. They all became bold and ever-ready to lay down their lives for their conviction about the gospel. The Lord promises to be with believers from the beginning to the end. Until the believers’ assignments and purposes are fulfilled on earth, God does not allow death to claim their lives.<sup>116</sup> Peter, Paul, and others were saved several times from death until they fulfilled their evangelistic mandate.

**Victory during power encounters comes through the Spirit.** The gospel which many people or teams of people take to different places seems to tend much more toward charity donations. The fact remains that Charity donation is quite different from gospel proclamation.<sup>117</sup> For instance, participating in mercy ministries may help to commend the gospel. Again, displaying God’s compassion and kindness reveal fruit bearing life of a Christian. Nevertheless, all these actions are good, but they are not evangelism.<sup>118</sup> The presentation of the true gospel makes missionaries vulnerable to the

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<sup>115</sup> Stephen Neil, *Call to Mission* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 23.

<sup>116</sup> Poonen, *Through the Bible*, 981.

<sup>117</sup> For further reading, John Stott argues well on the balance of social works and evangelism. See John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2008), 41-3. As maintains that among the most prominent of the current expressions of conspiracy that undermine the proclamation of the gospel is the renaissance of the call to social justice—the social gospel. This include the launching of programs for the technical training of the unemployed, the formation of ‘green team’ to raise consciousness regarding the environment, the commitment to end the problem of malnutrition among the impoverished in the society, the challenge of human trafficking, AIDS, poverty, homeless and the likes. No doubt, the gospel is holistic in its implication, but when the main message of the crucified Christ is not the primary proclamation, then, the church is missing target of evangelism. We have not obeyed the calling to evangelize until we talk specifically about the person and work of Jesus Christ and the necessity to believe in him. See Azurdia III, *Spirit Empowered Mission*, 17-18.

<sup>118</sup> Mark Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 75. Charles Fielding puts it this way: “All of the social services in the world will never be able to stem the tide of suffering on this earth. Every life that us saved through these expensive services will still end up dying and, without the Gospel, will enter into hell.” See Fielding, *Preach and Heal*, 8.

attack of the cohorts of darkness. Frontier missionaries are, on daily basis, in a face to face battle with Satan, the prince of this world, and his agents. Victory, however, comes through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The apostle Peter was said to be full of the Holy Spirit, and he rebuked Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8). Also full of the Holy Spirit, the apostle Paul rebuked a Jewish sorcerer and a false prophet named Bar-Jesus (or Elymas). The Scriptures say of this incident,

Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, “You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? Now the hand of the Lord is against you . . .” When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord. (Acts 13:9-12)

The most significant aspect of this recorded incident was that the proconsul saw the supremacy of the power in the name of Jesus and believed.

**The Holy Spirit produces result in evangelism.** At times, Christians can be tempted to see results from a human point of view. But, the yardstick for measuring success always falls short of God’s standard. That missionary “A” has ten converts and missionary “B” has two converts does not mean that the former is more hardworking and more acceptable before God than the latter. The Holy Spirit crowns all mission’s efforts with success, and he alone knows the measure and worth of each person’s work.<sup>119</sup> Again, no missionary, preacher, evangelist, or believer has within him- or herself the inherent power to bring about the regeneration of lost souls. The work of regeneration is done by the Holy Spirit alone.<sup>120</sup> This reality is why Christians should not get discouraged when they do not win a convert after they have presented the gospel effectively. As previously mentioned, evangelism is presenting the gospel in the power of

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<sup>119</sup> Ernest C. Reisinger writes that at the end of all gospel conversation (instantly or latter), “Salvation is one result, and damnation is another result.” Reisinger, *Today’s Evangelism*, 11-13.

<sup>120</sup> Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 185-86.

the Holy Spirit and leaving the results for God.<sup>121</sup> The only thing God demands from believers is faithfulness in their missional activities. Only God knows what he uses to measure success in evangelistic endeavors. It is best to leave the results up to him.

**Progress in the face of persecution.** As already noted, the Greek word *martureo* means “to witness.” From this word comes the term “martyr.” The word martyr also refers to a witness who is ready to die for the message to which he or she testifies. For instance, during the trial for his life, Peter made it known to his persecutor that “Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:11-12). This Galilean fisherman who once denied knowing Jesus three times now found courage through the power of the Holy Spirit to make this bold declaration even when on trial. Peter before the Pentecost failed to find the fortitude to make public his commitment to Christ (Matt 26:69–74). Post-Pentecost Peter stood for his Lord so boldly and sacrificially that he paid for his faith with his life.<sup>122</sup> According to the fourth-century church historian Eusebius of Caesarea, the apostle Peter was forced to watch his wife’s martyrdom, then he was crucified upside down, for he had requested that he might suffer in this way.<sup>123</sup>

The evangelistic task, right from the start of the church, has been characterized by severe persecutions. The Jerusalem church was scattered by persecution (Acts 7-8); yet, the persecution only aided in spreading the gospel wider and farther. Under the Roman empire and its emperors, the church was said to have experienced ten consecutive periods of acute persecution so that it was generally believed that “the blood of the

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<sup>121</sup> Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 41.

<sup>122</sup> See Hughes, *Acts*, 42.

<sup>123</sup> Kirsopp Lake, *Eusebius: Ecclesiastical History in Two Volumes I* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949), 269.

martyrs is the seed of the gospel.”<sup>124</sup> To date, the persecution against Christianity is on the increase. Yet, the gospel keeps advancing to different parts of the world, even down to the most remote places on earth. In line with the biblical names and descriptions of the Holy Spirit, such as teacher, comforter, and counselor (see John 16), the Spirit indeed is the consoling factor in the face of difficulties. Thus, amid oppositions, brutal persecutions, obstacles, oppressions, rejections, destructive criticisms, the sword, and martyrdom, the Holy Spirit helps the saints to persevere.

**Victory over sin comes through the Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit enables believers to live victorious lives over sin (Rom 6:14). As Tennent avers, “The same Spirit who transforms the unbelieving nations of the world is the one who transforms our hearts, teaching us to say ‘no’ to sin and to embrace the righteousness of Jesus Christ.”<sup>125</sup> The Holy Spirit does not just empower believers for witnessing, serving, and evangelism alone; he transforms both Christians’ inner lives and their external witnessing.

**Prayers and intercession.** A friend once said that training and scholastic ability cannot replace the role of fervent and effective prayers in evangelism. As a matter of fact, one of the contrasts in the Christian witnessing today compared to the days of early believers can clearly be seen in the way contemporary Christians value prayer. For instance, when early believers prayed for days, and Peter stood up to preach for about few minutes, then they witnessed thousands saved in a day (Acts 2:41). Bounds reminds us that today, believers pray for a few minutes, preach for several days, and see no one saved.<sup>126</sup> This phenomenon does not mean that God does not answer short prayers, but it

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<sup>124</sup> Neil, *Call to Mission*, 24. This statement, “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the gospel” was famously coined by Tertullian. See Alvin Reid, *Introduction to Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 53.

<sup>125</sup> Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 414.

<sup>126</sup> Bounds, *Power through Prayer*, 19.

does mean that God wants Christians today to be intentional in their prayers and to pray with fervency. The apostle James clearly says that “the fervent and effective prayer of the righteous is powerful (Jas 5:16a KJV). Another prayer meeting was held by early believers in Acts 4. At the end of their prayer, as Luke writes,

they raised their voices together in prayer to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, . . . grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. (Acts 4:24, 29-31)

Hence, the Holy Spirit enables believers to intercede for lost souls effectively. To sum it up, John Stott aptly writes, “I wonder if anything is more needed for Christian mission in the modern age than this healthy fusion of humility and humanity in our reliance on the power of Holy Spirit.”<sup>127</sup> As a reminder again, the emphasis of the Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals on the place of the Holy Spirit in evangelism fails to pay passionate attention to the aforementioned roles above, then, the Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals need to re-evaluate their teachings on the Holy Spirit.

**The fundamental error on the Holy Spirit in the history of the church.** As late as AD 380, the persistent ambiguity concerning the person and nature of the Holy Spirit led to the second ecumenical council in Constantinople. In 381, the council’s deliberations on the Holy Spirit ended up with the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, which, in its third article, declares, “We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and the Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father, who spoke by the prophets.”<sup>128</sup> Tennent adds,

Even though the deity of the Holy Spirit was resolved by A.D. 381, discussions about the exact nature and relations of the Trinity continued for almost century. All of this had a profound effect on the theological discourse of the Western tradition concerning the Holy Spirit. Because, the ecumenical discussions about the Holy Spirit were focused primarily on the deity of the Holy Spirit and His relationship

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<sup>127</sup> Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 191.

<sup>128</sup> Quoted in Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 416.

within the Trinity, there was a serious neglect of a full development of His work.<sup>129</sup>

William Menzies follows the same line of reasoning when he points to an error about the Holy Spirit that remained largely unchanged throughout medieval scholasticism: “The ancient church from the second century through the ninth century was almost totally preoccupied with questions pertaining to the identity of Jesus Christ, so that what was said of the Holy Spirit was largely an appendage to theology, and was limited largely to ontology, the Being of God within his inter-trinitarian relationship.”<sup>130</sup>

When the Protestants came on the scene, as Martin Luther spearheaded the Reformation, they were primarily concerned with the authority of the Scripture, ecclesiology, and Christology. The post-Reformation era focused on systematizing the Reformers’ theological positions. According to Tennent, “as was the case during the patristic period, this meant that a full development of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was delayed and several vital aspects of the person and work of the Holy Spirit were neglected in post-Reformation Protestant theology in the West.”<sup>131</sup> The effect of this negligence still plays major role in the divisions in Christendom today. Tennent maintains that “over time, several major theological traditions developed that either denied completely or extremely limited the active role of the Holy Spirit in miracles, divine healing, demonic deliverance, prophecy, tongues speaking, and other elements that later would become central features of the Pentecostal doctrine of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>132</sup> The variance in the argumentations of Reformed theology and the later nineteenth-century dispensationalists on the exercise of the gifts of the Holy Spirit vividly reveals this blind spot of Pneumatology.

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<sup>129</sup> Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 416-17.

<sup>130</sup> William W. Menzies, “The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology,” in *Perspectives on Evangelical Theology*, ed. Kenneth Kantzer and Stanley Gundry (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 67.

<sup>131</sup> Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 417.

<sup>132</sup> Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 417.



A close observation reveals that most of the traditional Western teaching of Pneumatology seems to provide an adequate understanding of the place of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity and of his role in soteriology. But some key elements about the Holy Spirit, as seen in the book of Acts, “including the baptism of the Holy Spirit, divine healing, speaking in tongues, the role of the Holy Spirit in the mission of the church and so forth,”<sup>133</sup> have received little attention in the Reformed tradition and subsequent systematic theologies of the West.<sup>134</sup> Alister McGrath once wrote, “The Holy Spirit has long been the cinderella of the Trinity. The other two sisters may have gone to the theological ball; the Holy Spirit got left behind every time.”<sup>135</sup> C. Samuel Storms notes that the church has not always been polite to the Holy Spirit; but, today, “a shift has occurred and that the third person of the Trinity is now receiving his proper due. Today a prayerful cry is being heard throughout the church: Come, Holy Spirit!”<sup>136</sup> The late twentieth century opened up a fresh page on Trinity coupled with the rise of Pentecostalism, both of which stirred up keen interest in the work of the Holy Spirit. It is not possible to delve into all the aforementioned issues though; hence, the central focus of this thesis is on the role of the Holy Spirit for an effective witness of the gospel. However, to delve deeper into the practical roles of the Holy Spirit, there is a need to briefly point attention to the three waves of the working of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>133</sup> Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 419.

<sup>134</sup> Tennent points obvious attention to how the systematic theology books and lectures of theologians such as Louis Berkhof, Henry C. Thiessen, and the Princeton theologians have done thorough justice to the personality of the Holy Spirit and his place within Trinity, but they direct no vivid attention to the works of the Spirit, especially on the area of world evangelism (i.e., missions). Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 418-19.

<sup>135</sup> Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 1st ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 240.

<sup>136</sup> C. Samuel Storm, “The Third Wave,” in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views*, ed. Wayne A. Grudem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 175.

### Three Waves of the Holy Spirit

Different schools of thought have come into the limelight as touching the purpose of the supernatural gifts of the Spirit. As Tennent suggest, “Some argue that the apostolic miracles served to grant authority to the ministers in the church, whereas other claim they were given only to attest to His Word.”<sup>137</sup> There is also no unified position on why and when the supernatural gifts stopped. To some, the operation of these gifts ended when the canon of the Scripture was completed, whereas to others, these gifts ceased when all the apostles died. Some maintain that these gifts were still in operation until the persecution of Christians officially end and the Roman government officially granted Christianity full legal status. Some argue that even though the operation of these gifts is no longer normative to today church, God can still decide to manifest them whenever he deems appropriate. However, for some decades, the Holy Spirit has been moving in miraculous ways beyond the imagination of many Bible scholars as believers engage in active witnessing. There have been three distinctive waves of the Spirit from late nineteenth century until now. The first wave is the Pentecostal movement, characterized by the powerful ministry of the Holy Spirit in the realm of miraculous manifestations that some Christians found to be abnormal or unusual. “Prominent among the miraculous works were what have been called the baptism in the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, healing the sick, and casting out demons.”<sup>138</sup> In this regard, and different from the second and third waves of the Holy Spirit, Pentecostals argue for a second work of grace after conversion, which they term “baptism of the Holy Spirit,” a work subsequent to regeneration (new birth) and evidenced by speaking in tongues. Concerning the first wave, Wagner writes,

The majority of the Christians were not prepared for this outpouring of the Holy

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<sup>137</sup> Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 418.

<sup>138</sup> Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit: Encountering the Power of Signs and Wonders Today* (n.p.: Servant, 1988), 16.

Spirit. For one thing, they had no theology for handling it. For many, the miraculous signs and wonders that we read about in the New Testament were restricted to that period of history . . . Because there was no theological grid for understanding what the Holy Spirit was doing through the Pentecostals, movement, evangelicals did the only thing they knew how: They declared Pentecostals heretics.<sup>139</sup>

Although the Pentecostals have their own share of errors, not everything they do and believe constitutes heresy.

The “Charismatic movement” is the second wave of the Holy Spirit. As a fulfillment of the dream of Pentecostals, the Charismatic movement broke out in the twentieth century from among the mainline denominations.<sup>140</sup> Though second-wave proponents look into the Scriptures with evangelical lenses, they also validate the relevancy of the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit for Christianity today.

Charismatics believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues; but they never see the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a second work of grace subsequent to salvation, nor do they maintain that speaking in tongues is evidence for such a work.

The third wave of the Holy Spirit comes from among evangelicals who, for one reason or another, have chosen not to be identified with either the Pentecostal or the Charismatic movements. This last group simply retains the name ‘Third Wavers.’<sup>141</sup> Emerging in the 1980s, Third Wave proponents believe that the gifts (including the sign gifts) of the Holy Spirit are very relevant for today church and are needed for effective witnessing.<sup>142</sup> They never see speaking in tongues as a must gift for all believers, but they maintain that the Holy Spirit gives gifts as he wills. Some of the champions of the Third

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<sup>139</sup> Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit*, 16.

<sup>140</sup> Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit*, 17. Such denominations include the Roman Catholic Church as well as Protestant churches (e.g., Episcopal, Lutheran, Presbyterian, United Methodist).

<sup>141</sup> Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1995), 281-82.

<sup>142</sup> For more, see C. Peter Wagner, *How to Have a Healing Ministry in Any Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1988), 15-17. The argument of this thesis maintains the fact that God may choose to interfere in the ways he wants as men and women take the gospel to the unreached parts of the world. However, the normativism of sign gifts as they exactly were in the days of the early believers lacks substantial biblical supports and proofs.

Wave include C. Peter Wagner, Charles H. Kraft, John Wimber, Dick Bernal and others.<sup>143</sup> It must be stressed, though, that the aim of this thesis is not to prove that one wave is better than another. But when each of the waves is examined with an opened mind, a lot can be gleaned to help for the effective presentation of the gospel. Wagner sheds more light when he writes,

all three [are] committed to one Body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God and Father of all (see Eph, 4:4-6). All hold a high view of the authority of Scripture and believe in the urgency of world evangelization. All are convinced that the power of God described in the Gospels and Acts is in effects as God's kingdom is manifested around the world today. The similarities are much greater than the differences. But there are important differences, for each group feels that God has chosen to minister through them in a particular way.<sup>144</sup>

When Jesus promised to send “another Comforter” (i.e., the Holy Spirit) to the believers, his ultimate goal was not to create a division in his body, the church. Unfortunately, one of the most misconstrued teachings today in Christendom is the teaching on the Holy Spirit. Today, the body of Christ is divided into various factions based on the various positions concerning the person, work, and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Regarding the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, there seems to be three prominent positions. The first is the “cessationist” position, which maintains that the signs and miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit are for the early apostles and, therefore, ceased upon the completion of the New Testament. The cessationist position comes in different forms. Some today deny subjective forms of the Holy Spirit guiding or leading individuals to make certain decisions or to interpret particular passages of the Scripture. On the other hand, there are some partial cessationists who deny the exercise of some revelational gifts (such as prophecy, speaking in tongues, and the interpretation of tongues) but are not opposed to praying for the sick and the possibility that the Holy Spirit still leads people to

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<sup>143</sup> See more in Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, 283-85; Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit*, 16f.

<sup>144</sup> Wagner, *How to Have a Healing Ministry in Any Church*, 18.

make certain decisions.<sup>145</sup>

The second position is the “continuationist” view, which maintains that all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as well as the miraculous power portrayed in the New Testament, are meant for today. They are also called non-cessationists. This position emphatically says that the signs gifts of the twentieth century are simply the sign gifts of the first century. The signs gifts are everywhere, say the adherents; they have continued unabated from day one until today. The third position is the “open-but-cautious”<sup>146</sup> view, which argues for the possibility that miracles can and do still happen today according to how God purposes things to be by his own sovereign will. However, this position is primarily concerned with how to curtail the potential abuse of biblical truth.<sup>147</sup>

To go into further details regarding these positions will detract from the main aim of this thesis. However, summing up the effects of all these various positions, especially as they influence the Western theological point of view, Tennent writes, “But regardless of which of these schemes are followed, the point is that theological reflection in the West gradually became dominated by a range of theological systems that denied that the full exercise of the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit was a normative, much less essential, part of the church’s ongoing life and witness in the world.”<sup>148</sup> At this point, it is good to mention that contrary to the beliefs above,

Pentecostals [and the NNP] believe that the full range of the gifts and the miraculous manifestations of the Spirit present in the New Testament are available for believers today. Pentecostals reject any notion that Acts is merely descriptive and no longer applicable to believers today. They reject the idea that the gifts of the

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<sup>145</sup> Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 418.

<sup>146</sup> For more on cessation, continuationist, and open-but-cautious, read Richard B. Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost: New Teaching on the Gift of the Holy Spirit* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 109; Thomas Schreiner, *Spiritual Gifts: What They Are and Why They Matter* (Nashville: B & H, 2018), 165.

<sup>147</sup> Robert L. Saucy, “An Open but Cautious View,” in Grudem, *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?*, 97-103.

<sup>148</sup> Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 418.

Holy Spirit are either limited to the first century or passed away with the apostles.<sup>149</sup>

In a practical terms, several Western missionaries in the past have explained away as superstitions some of the spiritual realities for which their theological background does not provide adequate answers.<sup>150</sup> Seasoned anthropologist and missionary Paul Hiebert sheds more light onto the plight of the “excluded middle” when he analyzes how Western missionaries with a Christianized version of a two-tiered universe often fail to see the spiritual battle with which local people wrestle.<sup>151</sup> As Wimber and Springer summarize,

The “excluded middle” includes the influence of angels and demons on everyday life, the Holy Spirit’s intervention in divine healing, signs and wonders, and spiritual gifts. Non-Western worldviews make room for all kinds of supernatural intervention in everyday life, so the idea that a Christian God can heal is easy for them to accept. But we Wester Christians, by excluding this middle zone, usually make little or no room for what in Scripture is considered normal: the regular activity of both God and Satan in human life.<sup>152</sup>

Oftentimes, when people close their hearts to the reality of the supernatural realm, they quickly fall into the dangers of “selectivism” and “reductionism” in their biblical hermeneutics.<sup>153</sup> “There are two ways,” Wimber and Spring suggest, “a hard heart affects our worldview. A hard heart may inclined us toward a worldview that excludes the supernatural, or it may prevent us from altering a faulty worldview to include the supernatural.”<sup>154</sup> The fact remains that every worldview has its own “blind spots,” which are usually the areas of life that people often do not take into consideration

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<sup>149</sup> Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 422.

<sup>150</sup> Wimber and Springer, *Power Evangelism*, 74.

<sup>151</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994), 189f.

<sup>152</sup> Wimber and Springer, *Power Evangelism*, 133.

<sup>153</sup> In biblical hermeneutics, “selectivism” involves picking certain portions of the Scripture and omitting other parts. “Reductionism” involves a biblical interpretation approach that fails to do total justice to the holistic interpretation of a particular passage of Scripture.

<sup>154</sup> Wimber and Springer, *Power Evangelism*, 145.

or that they assume do not work. Blind spots frequently have devastating repercussions in any given society, especially when people with blind spots enter another culture. It would be wise to mention that “many Western Christians neatly package their lives into two categories, ‘natural’ and ‘supernatural,’ with the latter quite removed from their everyday lives. Unusual or unexplainable experiences are attributed to ‘chance’ or ‘coincidence.’”<sup>155</sup> This secularized kind of mindset does not completely align with all that the Scriptures reveal concerning the mystical relationship between the material and the spiritual worlds.

Despite its own theological flaws, the fact remains that the stupendous growth of Pentecostalism (and neo-Pentecostalism) all over the world has had a dramatic impact on the understanding of the Pneumatology and global evangelization. Besides, contrary to the conventional evangelical point of view, “increasingly, missions practice around the world understands the book of Acts not only as an accurate *description* of the Holy Spirit’s work through the early churches, but also as a *prescription* paradigm that should guide the church’s practice today [especially as relates to evangelism].”<sup>156</sup> Right from the start of the twentieth century, Pentecostals have awakened the global church of Christ to the normative roles of the Holy Spirit in evangelism. To this point, Samuel Escobar contends, “Evangelical Protestantism emphasized the ‘continuity in truth by the Word,’ whereas, Pentecostalism has emphasized the ‘continuity in life by the Spirit.’”<sup>157</sup> No doubt, the combination of these is needed for an effective and efficient witnessing.

### **Establishing the Areas of Agreement and Disagreement**

The argument of this thesis on the role of the Holy Spirit in evangelism agrees

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<sup>155</sup> Wimber and Springer, *Power Evangelism*, 138.

<sup>156</sup> Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 428.

<sup>157</sup> Samuel Escobar, “A Missiological Approach to Latin America Protestantism,” *International Review of Mission* 87, no. 345 (April 1998): 172.

with some of the Third Wave and Pentecostal positions on the following areas. First, Pentecostals ask,

Is Jesus Christ the Great I Am? or is He the Great I was? Pentecostals believe that the Holy Spirit continues to make available to the church the full range of Jesus' miraculous ministry, as well as the apostolic signs and wonders . . . Pentecostals understand that if someone is demon possessed, then having the demon cast out in the name of Jesus is still part of the good news and the practical extension of Christ's triumphant victory over the principalities and powers (Col. 2;14-15; Eph. 6:12). In other words, if the Holy Spirit is alive and real, then He must have the power and the means to extend his Dynamic life in the real and concrete ways into the lives of those who are suffering [under satanic influence].<sup>158</sup>

As believers endeavor to take the gospel of Christ to places it has not yet reached, the Holy Spirit is still in the business of attesting to the gospel with signs and wonders as he pleases. The Holy Spirit is actively working today in power.

Second, Pentecostals believe in the imminent return of Jesus Christ. Hence, their activities are marked with aggressive witnessing for Christ in the nations of the world. The distinctiveness of the Pentecostals Pneumatology accounts for their passion and effectiveness in evangelism. According to Pentecostals,

the Holy Spirit is not only a full person of the Godhead, a member of the Trinity; He not only inspired the Holy Scriptures and regenerates us; but He also empowers us for effective evangelism. Pentecostals are convinced that the Holy Spirit confirms the preaching of the gospel and the declaration of the resurrection of Jesus through the giving of sign and wonders, just as He did through those unlearned fisherman and tax collectors who were His first apostles.<sup>159</sup>

Hence, to restrain or limit the movement of the eternal Spirit of God within a particular time frame may not be accurate when Christians step out of their comfort zones to evangelize. Today, and as earlier mentioned in chapter one, Pentecostals are no doubt at the fore front of "global Christianity." The fact remains, "Pentecostals learned the principle of *sola scriptura* from the reformation but then used it as a basis for celebrating a supernatural, apostolic faith that predated the historical divisiveness of

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<sup>158</sup> Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 422.

<sup>159</sup> Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 422-23.



denominationalism. The result was a new basis for cooperation and collaboration in missions, which facilitated the spread of Christianity around the world.”<sup>160</sup>

However, this thesis disagrees with the Pentecostal position on the pattern of “baptism with the Holy Spirit.”<sup>161</sup> Again, several arguments on the baptism with the Holy Spirit have led to several factions among believers in Christ today. The work of Gregg R. Allison on this issue will prove very useful at this junction to shed more light on this subject and serve as an evangelical position with which this thesis agrees. Allison identifies two major baptisms that believers do participate in at one time or the other in life, namely, water baptism and Spirit baptism. For the two types of baptism, he identifies four elements that are critical to each. Water baptism has (1) the pastor as the baptizer, (2) the new convert as the baptizee, (3) water as the medium, and (4) the purpose of indicating one’s confession of faith, incorporation into the church, membership with Christ, and obedience to the Scriptures. Spirit baptism has (1) Jesus as the baptizer; (2) the new convert as the baptizee, (3) the Holy Spirit as the medium, and (4) the main purpose of adding a new convert to the body of Christ (as reinforced by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 and in several other passages of the Scripture).<sup>162</sup> For this second baptism, Allison maintains that the baptism occurs as sinners believe in Jesus Christ for salvation. To this point, Allison writes,

One of the aspects of God’s work of saving sinful human beings is Jesus Christ’s baptism of new converts with the Holy Spirit, by which they are incorporated into his (Christ’s) body, the church. Such a baptism is (1) initiatory, occurring at the beginning of salvation (along with effective call, regeneration, justification, union with Christ, adoption, and initial sanctification); (2) universal, being a divine work in the life of every Christian; (3) purposeful, incorporating new believers into the

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<sup>160</sup> Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 424. Tennent adds that “the growth of the global church in the wake of the Pentecostal witness was so profound that Henry Van Dusen coined the expression ‘Third Force’ to describe it.”

<sup>161</sup> For instance, the teaching that all must speak in tongues as evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit seems heretical.

<sup>162</sup> Gregg R. Allison, “Baptism with and Filling of the Holy Spirit,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 16, no. 4 (2012): 8.

church of Jesus Christ; and (4) indelible, being a permanent membership in the body of Christ, from which defection is not possible.<sup>163</sup>

It is therefore very clear at this point that no one can belong to the body of Christ without being baptized into this body by the Holy Spirit. Hence, salvation and baptism take place simultaneously; there is no delay after salvation for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which, as some take it, is to be received by the laying of hands.<sup>164</sup> Billy Graham writes,

I am convinced that many of the things some teachers have joined to baptism with the Holy Spirit really belong to the fullness of the Spirit. Thus, the purpose of the baptism with the Holy Spirit is to bring the new Christian into the body of Christ. No interval of time falls between regeneration and baptism with the Spirit. The moment we received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior we received the Holy Spirit. He came to live in our heart.<sup>165</sup>

The apostle Paul says, “And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ” (Rom 8:9c), and, “No one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 12:3). This thesis, therefore, maintains that every believer is baptized into the body of Christ at the point of conversion: “For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles” (1 Cor 12:13). In addition, this thesis disagrees with Pentecostals who see the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a second work of grace which comes subsequent to salvation and is evidenced by some miraculous demonstration (e.g., speaking in tongues).<sup>166</sup>

Just as the apostle Paul clearly says in Ephesians 4:18, Allison’s explanation on the filling with the Holy Spirit is very instructive. According to him, a person may be indwelt by the Spirit of God but may not optimize the inherent blessings of the Spirit

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<sup>163</sup> Allison, “Baptism with and Filling of the Holy Spirit,” 8.

<sup>164</sup> Zacharias Tanee Forum, *You Can Receive the Baptism into the Holy Spirit Now* (Lagos: Conquest Communication Ltd, 2007), 45-64.

<sup>165</sup> Graham, *The Holy Spirit*, 71.

<sup>166</sup> Late Byang Kato, a renowned African theologian once said, “Young Christians today are being urged to seek “a second blessing” or a “second baptism” especially among the Pentecostals. This kind of teaching defies thorough and true biblical interpretations.” See Byang Kato, “The Power of the Holy Spirit,” in *Today’s Challenge* (Jos: Challenge Publication, September/October 1974), 4.

until a later time in life. He goes on to point attention to the examples of people who were already indwelt by the Spirit but were uniquely filled at particular times so that they could perform certain unusual tasks. In the book of Acts, these examples include, Peter (4:8), the Jerusalem church (4:31), Stephen (7:55), Paul (13:9), Barnabas, and others. To be constantly “full of the Holy Spirit” brings every Christian to a state of being effective, fruitful, and productive in life and in fulfilling the Great Commission. Wayne Grudem, in accord with Allison, presents four notable and practical marks or works that the fullness of the Holy Spirit produces in a yielded life: empowerment, purification, revelation, and unification.<sup>167</sup> This thesis argues that the continuous filling of the Holy Spirit is needed for continuous empowerment, and this empowerment is vital for effective evangelism. More remarkably, the baptism of the Holy Spirit takes place at the point of regeneration, but the continuous filling of the Holy Spirit produces power in believers for victorious and effective Christian living.

### **The Holy Spirit and the Thrust of World Evangelism**

Luke uses several strategies to expose the inner unity of his understanding of missions (i.e., the spread of the gospel), one of which is geography. The overall outline of the book of Acts is geographical, from Galilee to Jerusalem to Rome. Furthermore, Luke simply uses geography as a vehicle for conveying missiological meaning; he employs it so as to disclose the relationship between the mission of Jesus and that of the church.<sup>168</sup> Some specific events brought about the rapid movement of the gospel during the apostolic age, including the descent of the Holy Spirit upon believers on the day of Pentecost, the severe persecution meted out on the believers (which led to the scattering

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<sup>167</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 635.

<sup>168</sup> Harman, “Mission in the Thought of Jesus,” 51.

of all believers abroad; see Acts 8), and the conversion of Saul (the once archenemy of the gospel who became a prominent instrument for the gospel). With these events, the apostles embarked on radical evangelism (accompanied by healing, signs, and wonders), church planting, and discipleship making.

### **The Place of the Holy Spirit in the Contemporary Evangelistic Mandate**

The activity of the Holy Spirit in the spread of the gospel (i.e., evangelism) dates back to the time of the apostles and cuts through different eras (or ages) of church history that cannot be explored here in great detail. During the time of the Great Awakening, the American and the British revivals descended directly from the Moravian movement. But, more importantly, the emphasis on itinerant evangelism and the conversion of church members played significant roles. George Whitefield and John Wesley were both key figures during the time of the Great Awakening. This Awakening began with sessions of prayer meetings. John and Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, and Benjamin Ingham (a Moravian evangelist) all joined together in passionate prayer for revival. After a particular encounter during a prayer meeting at Fetter Lane in London, the encounter that to be the neo-Pentecost that launched the great revival of the Awakening period, John Wesley said,

About three in the morning as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of his majesty, we broke out with one voice, *we praise Thee, O God, we acknowledged Thee, to be the Lord.*<sup>169</sup>

Certainly, the place of passionate prayer that comes out of a divine burden is inevitable to witnessing under the power of the Spirit. After this Fetter Lane prayer

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<sup>169</sup> John Wesley, *Wesley's Works*, vol. 1, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 170, quoted in John Mark Terry, *Evangelism: A Concise History* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 100.

meeting, Whitefield's style of preaching changed dramatically:

Before he was filled with the Spirit, he read all his sermons from manuscript; but after his Fetter Lane experience, Whitefield began preaching extemporaneously. He also began to preach outdoors. Whitefield took to the fields to preach because many pastors closed their churches to him and because few churches could contain the crowds that came to hear the *boy preacher*.<sup>170</sup>

The movement of the Holy Spirit was also vividly seen during the Great Revival in New England as God made use of Jonathan Edwards. "Many Christians on both sides of the Atlantic read Edwards's *Narrative* and longed for a similar experience of the Spirit's power."<sup>171</sup> The touch of the Spirit during this Awakening stirred up the fire of world evangelism in the Great Britain and America. "This surging tide of evangelical religion supplied the dynamic which emboldened the protestant churches of America to undertake the enormous task of Christianizing a continent, and led both the British and American churches to join forces in a vast mission to the entire non-Christian world."<sup>172</sup>

In the nineteenth century, revival meetings led by traveling evangelists became a famous evangelistic technique in America. After several hours of wrestling in prayer, Charles G. Finney, one of the leading evangelists, once wrote, "The Holy Spirit descended upon me in manner that seemed to go through me, body and soul. I could feel the impression, like a wave of electricity, going through and through me. Indeed, it seemed to come in waves and waves of liquid love; for I could not express it in any other way."<sup>173</sup> Despite the debatable doctrinal positions of Finney, it is undeniable that the Spirit of God was upon him for powerful witnessing. Mark Terry concludes,

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<sup>170</sup> Arnold A. Dallimore, *George Whitefield* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1970), 67, quoted in Terry, *Evangelism*, 100.

<sup>171</sup> Milton L. Rudnick, *Speaking the Gospel through the Ages* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1984), 129.

<sup>172</sup> Terry, *Evangelism*, 125.

<sup>173</sup> Charles G. Finney, *Memoirs of Rev. Charles G. Finney: Written by Himself* (New York: Fleming Revell, 1903), 34. See also V. Raymond Edman, *Finney Lives on* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1971), 35-36; Terry, *Evangelism*, 141.

Charles G. Finney was the greatest evangelist of his day. He bridged the period from the Second Great Awakening to the modern era. His campaigns became the model for later evangelists. He is justly called “father of modern revivalism.” Scholars estimate that during his ministry five-hundred thousand people made professions of faith in Jesus Christ.<sup>174</sup>

Building upon the works of Finney, Dwight L. Moody elevated the technique of mass evangelism to a greater dimension. “He brought new methods and new enthusiasm to evangelism. Moody understood the urban masses and developed evangelistic methods to reach them.”<sup>175</sup> His approach of using a “union meeting,” which was similar to a “revival meeting,” attracted thousands of people. In fact, scholars estimate that Moody, in his days, reached over one hundred million people with the gospel under the mighty movement of the Spirit of Christ; he was believed to have won over one hundred thousand souls to Christ despite living in an age where there was no radio and television.<sup>176</sup>

The Spirit of God also powerfully used Billy Graham, an elder statesman of American evangelicals, to champion crusades of (mass) evangelism in his day and, thus, to preach the gospel to millions of people.<sup>177</sup> Regardless of several criticisms of mass evangelism, Graham’s accomplishments speak for themselves. According to Graham, “In the midst of the vast problems which face our world Christians are strangely silent and powerless, almost overwhelmed by the tides of secularism. And yet Christians are called to be the light of the world (Matt 5:13).”<sup>178</sup> The need of power evangelism in the contemporary world can never be overemphasized. Hence, “if then, the greatest need of our world is to feel the effects of a spiritual awakening, the greatest need within the

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<sup>174</sup> Terry, *Evangelism*, 146.

<sup>175</sup> Terry, *Evangelism*, 147.

<sup>176</sup> William G. McLoughlin, *Revival, Awakening, and Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 154. See also Terry, *Evangelism*, 155.

<sup>177</sup> Terry, *Evangelism*, 169-70.

<sup>178</sup> Graham, *The Holy Spirit*, 213.

Christian Church throughout the world today is to experience the touch of the Holy Spirit, bringing true ‘revival’ and ‘renewal’ to the lives countless Christians.”<sup>179</sup> Speaking about how to combat the fresh and fierce attacks of the world of darkness upon the present world, Graham goes on to say,

Again, we face a dark times in the history of God’s people. In spite of some of the encouraging signs, the forces of evil seem to be gathering for a colossal assault on the work of God in the world. Satan has unleashed his power in a way perhaps unparalleled in the history of the Christian Church. If there was a time we needed renewal, it is now. In the darkest hour God can still revive His people, and by His Spirit breathe new vigor and power into the body of Christ . . . Our world needs to be touched by Christians who are Spirit-filled, Spirit-led, and Spirit-empowered.<sup>180</sup>

On the other hand, Reinhard Bonnke is a Charismatic evangelist whom God has used in many nations of the world, especially in Africa—to reach millions of souls. As eyewitnesses of his crusades in Nigeria (Africa) observed, Bonnke, in his own unique style, after presenting a short but powerful message of salvation, with thousands responding to the call for salvation, would proceed to pray for the healing of the sick in attendance. He always closed his crusade meetings by praying for people to receive the power of the Holy Spirit, which he opines that everyone needs in order to have a victorious life over sin and to fulfill the evangelistic mandate.<sup>181</sup> Graham was an evangelical evangelist whom God used probably more than any of his contemporaries to reach millions of souls in America and nations of the world. He was never seen speaking in tongues, performing miracles or healing. Yet, he was filled with power of the Holy Spirit. Graham is not superior to Bonnke, just as Bonnke is not inferior to Graham. Both of them remained steadfast in their callings.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Graham, *The Holy Spirit*, 213.

<sup>180</sup> Graham, *The Holy Spirit*, 213-14.

<sup>181</sup> This is the summarized response I got when I interacted with some friends who were opportune to attend some of the crusade and revival programs staged by Bonnke’s Ministry (Christ for All Nations) in Nigeria.

<sup>182</sup> Victor Samson, interview by author, November 7, 2019. Samson added, “As I read through some of the books of these two men, and listened to their several messages, my conclusion remains that

Moreover, from the dawn of the eighteenth century until now, some missions' bodies have given a prominent place to the impact of prayer and the role of the Spirit in missions. As a result, many nations have sent out thousands of missionaries to various unreached nations.<sup>183</sup> Patrick Johnstone further expresses, "Praise God that this vision of prayer has increased . . . In the 1993, we did a global survey of all mission agencies we could identify. We listed over 2,500 protestant agencies and 4,200 national mission headquarters for sending out missionaries from about 200 of the world's 237 countries."<sup>184</sup> It good to use modern technologies, machineries, methodologies, skills, formal education, and great organizations—but never to allow them to take the place of the Holy Spirit in evangelistic activities. E. M. Bounds writes, "What the church needs today is not more machinery or better tools, not new organization or more novel methods, but men whom the Holy Spirit can use—men of prayer."<sup>185</sup>

In their book *Power Evangelism*, Wimber and Springer provide five basic factors that influence the way an average person from the Western world reacts to supernatural occurrences: rationalism, individualism, materialism, relativism, and secularism. Rationalism seeks a rational explanation for all experience and explains away power evangelism. Individualism prioritizes independence and self-reliance, emphasizing one's desire to control everything. Materialism emphasizes that nothing exists except matter—that is, only what can be seen, tested, and proved to be real. Hence, materialism closes the door on the supernatural and assumes that material world is the sole reality. Relativism denies absolute truth, subjecting all truth to personal experience. Finally,

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each one of them identifies and stayed focus to his calling."

<sup>183</sup> Patrick Johnstone, *The Church is Bigger Than You Think* (Ross-Shire, UK: Christians Focus, 1998), 181.

<sup>184</sup> Johnstone, *The Church is Bigger Than You Think*, 153.

<sup>185</sup> E. M. Bounds, *Power through Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2000), 8.



secularism maintains that people live in a material world that is closed off from divine intervention.<sup>186</sup> The resultant effect of this fivefold Western worldview is very significant as it is tagged as the “post-modern era.” Again, “because power evangelism presupposes that God still does intervene in the affairs of men and women, the secularist rejects it a priori.”<sup>187</sup>

The realm of supernatural manifestation in evangelism is not strange to Nigerian Christianity. For example, most African worldviews seem to align better with a biblical point of view when it comes to the realm of the spirit-world and the supernatural.<sup>188</sup> The New Testament, for instance, opens with the reality of spiritual warfare (see Matt 11:12; Luke 9:1; 10:18; John 10:10); but, at the same time, it reveals the supremacy of the power in the gospel—over the principalities of darkness—through the Holy Spirit. The strong caution remains: Christians may succeed in winning people into signs and wonders without winning them into genuine salvation in Christ. This phenomenon is all the more reason why the content of the gospel’s message presented by Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals needs real attention, as this thesis shall explore in the next chapter through a questionnaire.

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<sup>186</sup> Wimber and Springer, *Power Evangelism*, 6-7.

<sup>187</sup> Wimber and Springer, *Power Evangelism*, 7.

<sup>188</sup> Read more in Richard J. Gehman, *African Traditional Religion: In the light of the Bible* (Kaduna: Baraka Press, 2000), 20-34; John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New York: Fredrick A. Praeger, 1969), 1-8; and Byang Kato, *Theological pitfalls in Africa* (Nairobi: Evangel, 1975), 18-19.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE PRACTICE OF EVANGELISM AND THE PLACE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AMONG NIGERIAN NEO-PENTECOSTALS

This chapter examines the practical emphases of Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals as they embark on evangelism. A survey was carried out, targeting members of various church denominations in Nigeria. As mentioned in chapter one (under the methodology), copies of questionnaire were distributed to church founders (that is, independent church owners),<sup>1</sup> pastors, unit leaders, and members in some selected Neo-Pentecostal and evangelical churches for them to respond on the emphases and practical ways the Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals embark on evangelism. The data is presented in this chapter, but a full analysis of the data will follow in chapter four. However, I will first provide some historical background of Nigerian Pentecostals, and how the nomenclature “Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals,” comes about as the central focus of this thesis.

#### **The Emergence of Nigerian Pentecostalism**

Nigerian Pentecostalism has multiple origins.<sup>2</sup> James O. Adeyanju maintains

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<sup>1</sup> Most Nigerian Pentecostal churches are founded and owned by individuals. In these types of churches, the founders are always called GOs or Superintended.

<sup>2</sup> As noted previously, in the twentieth century, the charismatic emphasis and practices in the body of Christ seem to have come in three different waves. Scholars agree that the first of these waves is the “Pentecostal movement” starting at the beginning of the century, and the second, the “Charismatic movement” dating back to 1960. The Third Wave does not replace the other two but flows into the same stream of the Holy Spirit renewal. Some of these scholars include, Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century*, 105-6, 281-2; C. Peter Wagner, *Acts of the Holy Spirit* (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 1982), 14. See also Richard B. Gaffin Jr., “A Cessationist View,” in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views*, ed. Wayne A. Grudem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 25-50. The proponents of the Third Wave are primarily evangelicals who refused to be identified as Pentecostals or Charismatics. For examples, see Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity with Power: Your Worldview and Your Experience of the Supernatural* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1989); Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993); John Wimber and Kevin Springer, *Power Evangelism* (Bloomington, MN: Chosen Books, 2009).

that the emergence of Pentecostalism in the geographical entity now regarded as Nigeria was not immediately occasioned by the expansion of the Pentecostal religious phenomenon that ensued in the U.S.A. Pentecostalism could aptly be described as the third wave of Nigerian Christianity; the two prior waves being the Catholic and the Protestant mission endeavors.<sup>3</sup> In other words, the Catholic and Protestant missionaries and their activities had already taken their due courses, of which the Pentecostalism took advantage of as they took off later.<sup>4</sup> Both the Catholic and Protestant churches resulting from their mission endeavors had registered their presence in the Nigerian space in the 1400s (Catholics) as well as in the 1800s (Protestants).<sup>5</sup>

### **Nigerian Indigenous and Classical Pentecostalism**

Due to its own unique historical origin, the emergence of Pentecostalism in Nigeria has been variously dated by scholars.<sup>6</sup> Although Nigerian classical Pentecostalism was glowing in its prime in the 1970s and 1980s, it may not be historically correct to imagine that the Pentecostal movement began in Nigeria in the 1970s or 1980s as A. A. Ausaji claims,<sup>7</sup> because a primitive or indigenous Pentecostal movement was already present and active before it was later linked with foreign global Pentecostalism.<sup>8</sup> According to Samson O. Ijaola,

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<sup>3</sup> James O. Adeyanju, "A Critical Examination of the Emergence of Pentecostalism and the Diversity of its Practices in Nigeria," (A Paper Presentation to the Faculty of Christian Education, ECWA Theological Seminary, Igbaja, Nigeria, March/April 2018), 2.

<sup>4</sup> Gary S. Maxey, *Capturing the Lost Vision: Can Nigeria's Greatest Revival Live Again?* (Lagos, Nigeria: WATS Publication, 2016), 29-30.

<sup>5</sup> R. H. Kitause and H. C. Achunike, "Religion in Nigeria from 1900-2013," *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* 3, no. 18 (2013): 45-55.

<sup>6</sup> See A. A. Ausaji, "The Pentecostal Transformation of Nigerian Church Life 1," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 5, no. 2 (2002): 189-204.

<sup>7</sup> Ausaji, "Pentecostal Transformation of Nigerian Church Life," 204.

<sup>8</sup> Allan Anderson highlights the fact that the entrance of Pentecostalism into Nigeria brought transformation within the independent churches that gave birth to local forms of Pentecostal churches, called "Spiritual Churches." These churches place much emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit, which manifests in healing, prophecy, and speaking in tongues. See Allan Anderson, *Spread the Fires: The*

Interestingly, the beginning of African Pentecostalism has no link to Western Pentecostalism. It emerged from the missionary churches, first as charismatic movements before they finally gained autocephaly—as an African response to the perceived cold spirituality, and a rebuttal, of the Western spiritual hegemony. Apparently, in the long run it synergized with Western Pentecostalism to gain theological footing and prominence among the Catholic and evangelical dominated churches and to escape the persecuting colonialists in Africa.<sup>9</sup>

In the same way, Gary S. Maxey and Peter Ozodo point out,

The tracing of history behind this in West Africa would require a careful look at emerging models of native Christian leadership in Africa starting with Liberia's William Wade Harris (1860-1929), and including Nigeria's Garrick Sokari Braide (1862-1918) and Joseph Ayo Babalola (1904-1959). All three of these African "prophets" gained massive followings among people who were on the marginal fringes of Christianity and who at best were superficially engaged in the biblical view. They apparently knew relatively little about biblical standard of holiness or about what it meant to be sanctified people.<sup>10</sup>

At this very period of time, the key factor that determined the popularity of these prophets was in their ability to wade off—via power encounters—the imminent forces of evil, not necessarily their exhibition of Christ-like holiness.

The historical root of what may be properly designated classical Pentecostalism in Nigeria could be dated back to the latter part of the twentieth century. A crude form of Pentecostalism, which manifested in healing practices coupled with result-oriented prayers, began during an influenza pandemic in the southern part of Nigeria in 1918. Members of established churches at that time (e.g., Christ Army Church, the Anglican Church) seceded to form spiritual groups called Prayer Societies.<sup>11</sup>

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*Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), 162-3.

<sup>9</sup> Samson O. Ijaola, "Pentecostalism, the Prosperity Gospel, and Poverty in Africa," in *Pentecostalism and Politics in Africa*, ed. Adeshina Afolayan, Olajumoke Yacob-Haliso, and Toyin Falola (Ibadan, Nigeria: Springer International, 2018), 141.

<sup>10</sup> Gary S. Maxey and Peter Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church* (Lagos, Nigeria: WATS Publication, 2017), 169-70. To set the record straight, Ijaola writes,

The earliest Pentecostal movements in Africa can be described as classic African Pentecostal movements known for their conservativeness, and a gospel without an emphasis on prosperity. Some of the pioneers, such as Joseph Ayo Babalola of Christ Apostolic Church, Bayo Sadare of The Precious Stone Church, John Aluko Babatope and Samuel Adegboyega of The Apostolic Church, were known for their conservativeness, whereas Moses Orimolade of Cherubim and Seraphim was known for his asceticism. (Ijaola, "Pentecostalism, the Prosperity Gospel, and Poverty in Africa," 142).

<sup>11</sup> These earliest Charismatic movements were viewed as schismatic groups by the established

Adeyanju writes,

A typical example of such Prayer Societies was the Precious Stone Society members of which became prominent as they ministered healing to influenza victims in 1918. In 1920, Precious Stone Society metamorphosed into Faith Tabernacle Congregation (FTC). FTC was an international Christian religious body; its headquarters was in Philadelphia, USA. Apostle Joseph Ayodele Babalola (1904-1959) soon became a staunch member of FTC, leading the great Oke Ooye, Ilesa Revival in the 1930s. Miraculous signs and wonders expressed through raising of the dead, healing of sick, restoration of blind sights, reactivation of the womb of barren women among others. In their thousands, inquirers thronged the venue of the Revival from different places all over the country and beyond so as to get cured from their psychosomatic problems.<sup>12</sup>

Prophet Moses Orimolade Tunolase (c. 1879-1933) was said to have ministered in a charismatic way in other regions of Nigeria then. The gospel proclamation of Tunolase about the kindness of God, leading sinners to repentance, was marked with ‘supernatural’ occurrences. His efforts resulted in many miraculous happenings.<sup>13</sup> Eventually, with the assistance of Abiodun Akinsowon, the charismatic movement led to the formation of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church movement. To this day, Tunolase is still viewed as the father of Aladura churches in Nigeria.<sup>14</sup> This appellation is because his ministerial campaigns were characterized by signs and wonders that endeared many

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churches. They were derided and given derogatory appellations, such as break-away movements and separatist groups. See B. C. D. Diara and N. G. Onah, “The Phenomenal Growth of Pentecostalism in the Contemporary Nigerian Society: A Challenge to Mainline Churches,” *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 5, no. 6 (April 2014): 395.

<sup>12</sup> Adeyanju, “Emergence of Pentecostalism in Nigeria,” 7. As the Oke Ooye Revival was going on in Nigeria, other similar scenarios foreshadowing what would later be properly designated as Pentecostalism were happening in some Western African countries, such as the revival initiated by the Liberian William Wade Harris (c. 1860-1929). Records indicate that Prophet Harris would walk barefooted and preach Jesus Christ in the streets, churches, and sacred groves of numerous littoral settlements in Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana (then known as Gold Coast), and Sierra Leone. His itinerant career was marked by scintillating healings, exorcisms, and demonstrations of spiritual power to the extent that before his death, an estimate of about 200,000 people had been reached or influenced by his powerful evangelistic endeavors. See Gabriel Leonard Allen, “William Wade Harris: Prophet-Evangelist of West Africa,” *Journal of African Christian Biography* 1, no. 5 (2015): 3-6; Anderson, *Spreading the Fires*, 163-64.

<sup>13</sup> Anderson writes, “Another Anglican member, Moses Orimolade Tunolashe began preaching in about 1915 after partially recovering from a long illness. Crowds came to him for prayer for healing during the influenza epidemic of 1918. His emphases caused him to be known as Baba Aladura (‘prayer father’)—a title used by subsequent leaders of the church that he founded. See Allan Anderson, *Spreading Fires: The Missionary nature of Early Pentecostalism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), 166.

<sup>14</sup> The Nigeria Indigenous Pentecostal movement, which started as “Aladura churches,” has its own stark weakness of being syncretic in its beliefs and practices. Today, this syncretism has been massively inherited by Nigerian Pentecostals and Neo-Pentecostals.

people to him.<sup>15</sup> From the above discussion, even though some indigenous charismatic practices had been on ground, one could safely aver that the Pentecostal movement in its early form began in Nigeria as an offshoot of the relationship between the African Indigenous churches (AICs) and mission churches.

The first classical Pentecostal church to have evolved from the relationship above in Nigeria is The Apostolic Church (TAC). In 1931, TAC began in Nigeria, and the allegiance of FTC (Faith Tabernacle Congregation) members in Nigeria transferred to The Apostolic Church (TAC) as “the decade long relationship between the faith tabernacle America and Nigeria abruptly came to an end [in 1925] when Clarke the leader of faith tabernacle in America was accused of adultery.”<sup>16</sup> This fiasco led to developments that ended the decade-long relationship between the two groups. The Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), the second group of classical Pentecostals, came out of TAC around 1941 due to (1) the insistence of the British leaders of TAC not to indulge in any form of medication in the church and (2) the British Anglican church doctrine of infant baptism.<sup>17</sup> Intermittently, the intrusion of foreign Pentecostal denominations (e.g., the Assemblies of God in 1939, the Foursquare Gospel Church in 1954) complemented homegrown Pentecostal efforts. Such efforts included those of Pa Josiah Abiodun Akindayomi, a former member of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church (C&S),<sup>18</sup> who later founded the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) in 1952. Significant to this

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<sup>15</sup> Samson A. Fatokun, “Women and Leadership in Nigerian Pentecostal Churches,” *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 32, no. 3 (2006): 193-205.

<sup>16</sup> Anderson, *Spreading the Fires*, 166.

<sup>17</sup> Anderson, *Spreading the Fires*, 166.

<sup>18</sup> Akinsowon and Tunolase took the revival to the other parts of Yorubaland on an extended missionary journey, and they challenged witchcraft openly. This brought them into considerable conflict with both traditional and colonial authorities. In 1925, they founded the first Aladura church and gave it the name Eternal Sacred Order of Cherubim and Seraphim Society. There would be several schisms in the Cherubim and Seraphim movement. The Aladura movement was a Pentecostal revival movement of massive proportions, later influenced by western Pentecostalism but usually only due to the invitations of African Church leaders. See Anderson, *Spreading the Fires*, 166-67.

period is the charismatic movement of the Civil War Revival from mid-1960s to early 1970s.<sup>19</sup> Worth mentioning is the fact that both the imported Western and the African classical Pentecostal movements were known to focus largely on end-time teachings, especially the imminent second advent of Jesus Christ, which has often led to soul-searching. Although they believed in the power of the Holy Spirit to combat witchcraft and dark forces, they gave less emphasis to prosperity as a special kind of gospel as it later evolved among Neo-Pentecostals in the 1970s.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Birth of Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals**

There is no doubt that both the Nigerian indigenous and classical Pentecostals began with a good drive of the Holy Spirit as they carried out evangelism and experienced a “historic revival,” until the mid-1970s, when their focus began to drift. Maxey attests to this drift, saying,

By the mid-1970s, there were clear signs that the Civil War Revival was beginning to wane. The dissipation became evident first in the east. The Hour of Freedom Evangelistic Association was rather quickly discontinued after Stephen and Raphael Okafor left for further studies in the United Kingdom. The vacuum was filled to significant degree by the rise of the first neo-Pentecostal churches, and before long there were charges and counter-charges of false doctrine, of moral looseness and of vying for leadership supremacy.<sup>21</sup>

The question now concerns how the old Pentecostal movement morphed into Neo-Pentecostalism. The section on the seduction of Nigerian Pentecostals sheds more light

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<sup>19</sup> The period from 1967 to 1970 was one of the darkest moments in the Nigeria in the modern era. During this time, there was an outbreak of a bloody civil war that almost wiped out certain ethnic groups in the nation. However, God, in his sovereignty, transformed that same period by one the greatest movements of his power in Nigeria. The Pentecostal and Charismatic outpouring that began during this period of war is popularly called the Civil War Revival. The revitalization power of this time was characterized by a call to persistent prayers, holiness, inductive Bible Studies, the awareness of God’s presence, and passionate evangelism. Accompanying these features were phenomena like the baptism of the Holy Spirit, evidenced by speaking in tongues, and manifestations of spiritual gifts (especially healing and prophecy). The spark of revival fire began primarily in high schools and higher institutions, but like wildfire, it soon cut across every segment of the nation. This phenomenon ultimately led to spontaneous evangelism, church planting, and rapid church growth. See Austen Ukachi, *The Best Is Yet to Come: Pentecostal and Charismatic Revivals in Nigeria 1913-1990s* (Lagos, Nigeria: Summit Press, 2013), 22-25.

<sup>20</sup> Ijaola, “Pentecostalism, the Prosperity Gospel, and Poverty in Africa,” 142.

<sup>21</sup> Maxey, *Capturing the Lost Vision*, 211.

on this metamorphosis.

Already, there are some questionable beliefs and practices among Nigerian Pentecostals toward the end of the 1970s, after the Civil War Revival. The indelible impact of Nigerian Pentecostals and the charismatic movements during this revival fire cannot be overemphasized. Even though revival was short lived due to various factors, it cut across several geographical locations from the late 1960s to early part of the 1970s.<sup>22</sup> At that time, three major factors characterized the Nigerian classical Pentecostal movement. First, this movement, as a result of the assumption of the imminent return of Jesus Christ, centered on passionate evangelism. Second, the message of the classical Pentecostals movement during the Civil War Revival centered on salvation, which must be evidenced by genuine repentance and holiness. Third, there was emphatic stress on Holy Spirit baptism evidenced by tongues, signs, and wonders. Through this movement, thousands of churches were planted in different parts of Nigeria as revival spread like wildfire. As a matter of fact, there was no emphasis on material prosperity during this time as members were eagerly awaiting the second coming of Christ.<sup>23</sup> However, a few factors interrupted the longevity of this revival (as explained in the last section of this chapter).

However, In the 1970s, a new wave of Pentecostal revival broke out among campuses students, bolstering more New Pentecostal denominations. Benson Idahosa, Nigeria's most influential Pentecostal preacher, established his Church of God Mission (CGM) in 1972.<sup>24</sup> Ijaola writes, "The earliest link of the prosperity gospel to Nigeria

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<sup>22</sup> See Maxey, *Capturing the Lost Vision*, 45-47.

<sup>23</sup> The DNA of this movement focuses on repentance, new birth, holiness, evangelism, deeper study of the Bible, and devotion to prayers. While miracles definitely happened during the Civil War Revival, they were almost never the central focus. See Maxey, *Capturing the Lost Vision*, 169-71; Maxey and Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 57-58.

<sup>24</sup> This thesis will consider the Pentecostal churches that began from the time of Idahosa (1972) till date as Neo-Pentecostal churches. This is simply because, from this inception, the emphases of these new Pentecostals have shifted from the emphases of the former classical Pentecostal. For instance, only a few, like the Deeper Life Bible Church, are able to stand on the old message of holiness and



dates back to 1971, when Benson Idahosa, a lay preacher in the Assemblies of God attended Christ for All Nations Bible College in Dallas, Texas, through the connection and sponsorship of Gordon Lindsay. . . . The Bible College was a prosperity gospel-based school.”<sup>25</sup> The fact remains that

Idahosa had his first experience of prosperity theology, which aptly “fit his entrepreneurial nature.” Idahosa did not complete his course in the school but, equipped with the tool of the prosperity gospel, returned to Nigeria to spread it in 1971; having dazzled his teachers with the knowledge he acquired within a short stay.<sup>26</sup>

From that time, classical Pentecostalism was defaced by the introduction of a materialistic (prosperity) gospel to form Neo-Pentecostalism. Per Ijaola, “The late Archbishop Benson Idahosa indubitably changed the face of Christianity, and in particular classical Pentecostalism, in Africa.”<sup>27</sup> From a notable report,

Beside his aggressive planting of the Church of God Mission, he ran the first Christian TV evangelism program, known as “Redemption Hour,” in Nigeria, like Oral Robert did in the United States. He also established the All Nations for Christ Bible Institute attended today by most prominent prosperity preachers, including non-Nigerians like Duncan Williams of Action Chapel, Ghana, and Suleiman Umar of Niger; others who have attended the school include 15 students from Ghana, seven from Chad, four from the Ivory Coast, three from Kenya, two from Cameroon, and one each from Sierra Leone and Togo. Those from Nigeria include Ayo Oritshejafor, David Oyedepo, Felix Omobude, Fred Addo, and Chris Oyakhilome. These protégés of Benson Idahosa have followed his footsteps to advance the prosperity gospel beyond the shores of Africa to the global North.<sup>28</sup>

Another Pentecostal denomination, ‘The Grace of God Ministry’ (GGM) began in the eastern part of the country in 1974. Finally, William Funso Kumuyi

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sanctification.

<sup>25</sup> Ijaola, “Pentecostalism, the Prosperity Gospel, and Poverty in Africa,” 147.

<sup>26</sup> Ijaola, “Pentecostalism, the Prosperity Gospel, and Poverty in Africa,” 147. See also Ron MacTavish, “Pentecostal Profits: The Prosperity Gospel in the Global South” (master’s thesis, University of Lethbridge, 2013), 14.

<sup>27</sup> Ijaola, “Pentecostalism, the Prosperity Gospel, and Poverty in Africa,” 147.

<sup>28</sup> Ijaola, “Pentecostalism, the Prosperity Gospel, and Poverty in Africa,” 147. See also Efe Ehioghare and Joseph Olarewaju, “A Theological Evaluation of the Utopian Image of Prosperity Gospel and the African Dilemma,” *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 20, no. 8 (2015): 66-75 (esp. 71).

established Deeper Life Bible Church (DLBC) in 1975. The evolution of the leadership of Enoch A. Adeboye in RCCG, which has a shared nature of both classical and Neo-Pentecostals, in 1980 has since boosted the status of Neo-Pentecostalism in Nigeria such that the denomination may be reckoned one of the fastest-growing denominations in the country.<sup>29</sup> These Pentecostal denominations were later followed by the founding of other New Pentecostal churches, such as Living Faith Church (a.k.a. Winners' Chapel) in 1986 and Mountain of Fire and Miracle Ministries (MFM) in 1989. Today, Neo-Pentecostal churches in Nigeria have increased astronomically; the number is in the hundreds, if not in the thousands.<sup>30</sup>

### **Classification of Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals**

In more general terms, though with slight variations, like the classical Pentecostal, Neo-Pentecostal churches are those who inherently emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit in the life and mission of the church, particularly with reference to phenomenal ecstasy noticeable in prophecy, speaking in tongues, healing, miraculous signs. The explosion of Neo-Pentecostalism in Nigeria and elsewhere attests to this reality, as Achunike observed.<sup>31</sup> It is challenging to accurately classify into groups the numerous Neo-Pentecostal denominations apart from the historical groupings done above because the number of new parishes continues to expand by the day. Borrowing ideas from Adeyanju, and the taxonomy of Ayegboyin and Asonzeh-Ukah on the nomenclature of Pentecostalism, an attempt to classify the Nigeria Neo-Pentecostals would include the following classifications:

1. Neo-Pentecostal churches that are evangelistic in nature. They make soul-winning and

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<sup>29</sup> Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 94, 260-61.

<sup>30</sup> Adeyanju, "Emergence of Pentecostalism in Nigeria," 11.

<sup>31</sup> H. C. Achunike, "The Challenges of Pentecostalism to the Mainline Churches in Nigeria," *Koinonia* 2, no. 2 (December 2004): 21.

sanctification and edification of saints their priority. These include Gospel Faith Mission International (GOFAMINT), Deeper Life Bible Church, and others.

2. Neo-Pentecostal churches strive to handle the Word of God correctly but appear to be more concerned with signs and miracles in their camps and conference centers, with a little bit of seemingly syncretic practices (due to biblical illiteracy). A typical example here is RCCG and Dunamis Church International (founded by Dr Paul Eneche).
3. Neo-Pentecostal churches that present themselves as spiritual warriors in their outlook. These churches give much attention to fiery prayer, deliverance, attack against spiritual enemies etc. A typical example here is MFM.
4. Neo-Pentecostal mega-churches that are using the template of thorough-going prosperity theology to advance their cause. These include Bishop Idahosa's Church of God Mission, Living Faith Church (a.k.a. Winners' Chapel), Chris Oyakhilome's Christ Embassy (a.k.a. Believers' Loveworld), and others.
5. Neo-Pentecostal churches that attract members to themselves as they employ motivational talks. Examples here include Daystar Christian Ministry (owned by Sam Adeyemi), Commonwealth of Zion Assembly (COZA; owned by Abiodun Fatoyinbo), and Rhema Chapel (owned by Rev. George Adegboye), and more.
6. Neo-Pentecostal parishes whose founders are "called" into Christian ministry because of the poor economic condition of Nigeria, and they are therefore given to spiritual extortion and other fraudulent practices in their folds.<sup>32</sup>

Today, there are common beliefs and practices among these Pentecostals that bring about the new nomenclature that this research tags as "Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals."<sup>33</sup> Coupled with some of the belief systems discussed above, the responses I obtained from my research questionnaire will help to shed more light on some of the beliefs and practices of Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Adeyanju, "Emergence of Pentecostalism in Nigeria," 12-14; Deji I. Ayegboyan and Kennedy Asonzeh-Ukah, "Taxonomy of Churches in Africa: The Case of Nigeria," *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 8, no. 1 (2008): 1-15. See also Ezekiel A. Bamigboye, "Pentecostalism and Cross-Cultural Mission in the 21st Century Nigeria," *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 8, no. 1 (2008): 167-70.

<sup>33</sup> As a matter of fact, this thesis seems to categorize no. 2 to 7 from this grouping to be part of the Nigerian Neo-Pentecostal, because, most of these churches began from the mid-1980s till recent. Besides, most of their practices fit in to the descriptions which this thesis identifies as Neo-Pentecostal denominations.

<sup>34</sup> The alternative name being used to describe this new brand is "Nigerian New Pentecostal." See Ayegboyan and Ukah, "Taxonomy of Churches in Africa," 12.

## **Survey's Data Presentation**

To better understand the gospel focus of NNPs, I designed a questionnaire (using Google Forms) and sent it to various individuals in various Neo-Pentecostal church denominations in Nigeria.<sup>35</sup> Initially, I aimed at combining respondents from other church (evangelical) denominations with the Neo-Pentecostal respondents, but since this chapter is dedicated mainly to the Neo-Pentecostals, I limit the respondents to those from Neo-Pentecostal churches alone. At the end though, there are about fifty-eight total respondents all together; 28 participants from evangelical denominations, and 30 participants from Neo-Pentecostals denominations. Hence, the responses of the Neo-Pentecostal participants are extracted out and presented in this chapter so as to know what the Neo-Pentecostal members themselves really say about their approach to evangelism.<sup>36</sup> More so, pie and bar charts are used in the data presentations of respondents' information (where necessary) and their responses.

### **Background Information**

The background questions seek to establish the fact that the respondents are qualified enough to participate in this questionnaire exercise. This undertaking began with obtaining the following pieces of information: age range, educational status, church affiliation, church involvement, nationality, and present country of residence.

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<sup>35</sup> The survey for this thesis is carried out with the permission and approval of The Southern Theological Seminary (SBTS) Research Doctoral Office and the Research Ethics Committee.

<sup>36</sup> For proper documentation, the data of the evangelical respondents is attached at the appendix 1.

## Age Range

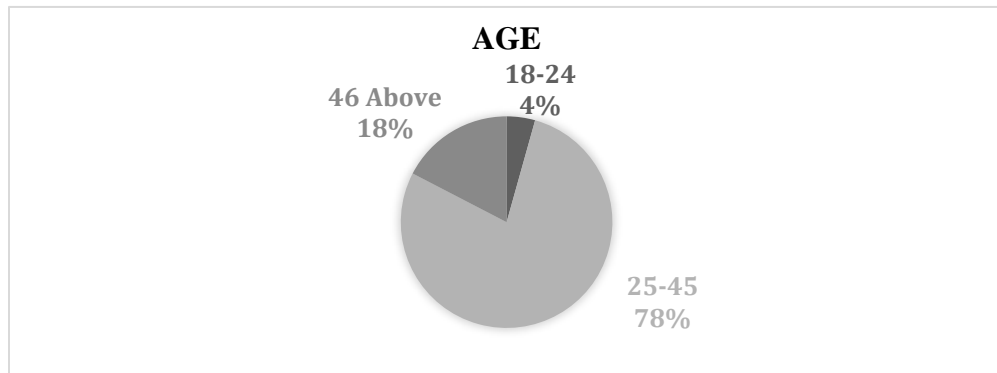


Figure 1. Respondents' age range

Figure 1 above reveals the age range of the survey respondents. Respondents are mature enough to make good judgments pertaining to my research endeavor.

## Academic Qualifications

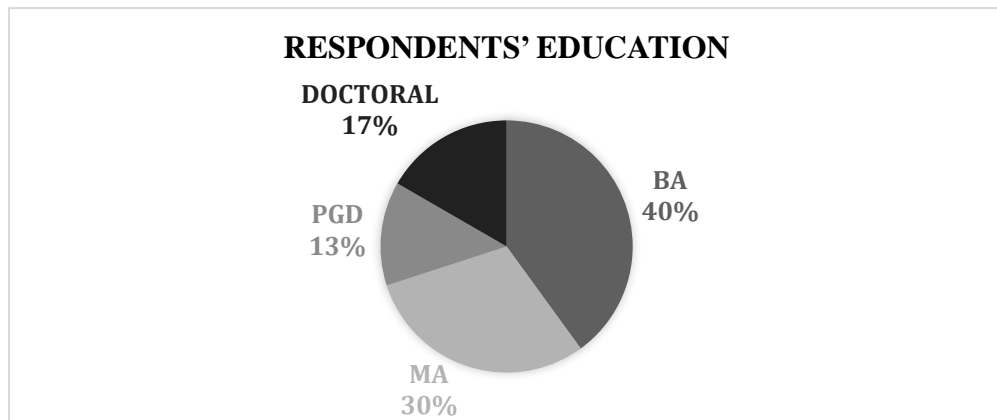


Figure 2. Respondents' academic qualifications<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Note, BA represents respondents with Bachelor of Art degrees; MA for Master of Art; PGD for Post Graduate Diploma; and Doctoral for respondents with doctoral levels of education.

As seen in figure 2 above, respondents cut across different academic levels; hence, they are learned.

### **Church Involvement**

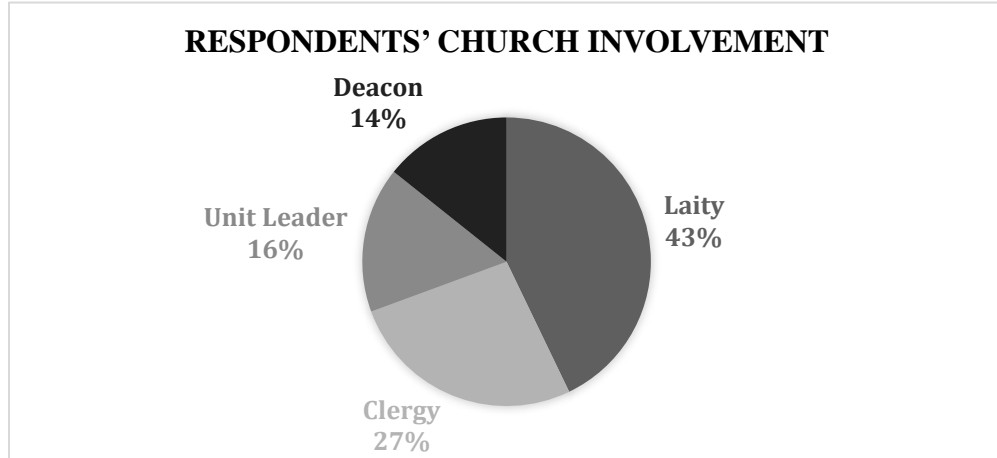


Figure 3. Respondents' church involvement

All respondents are members in good standing in their respective local churches. They range from being pastors, deacons, laities, and unit leaders in their respective churches (see figure 3 above).

## Nationality and Present Country of Residence

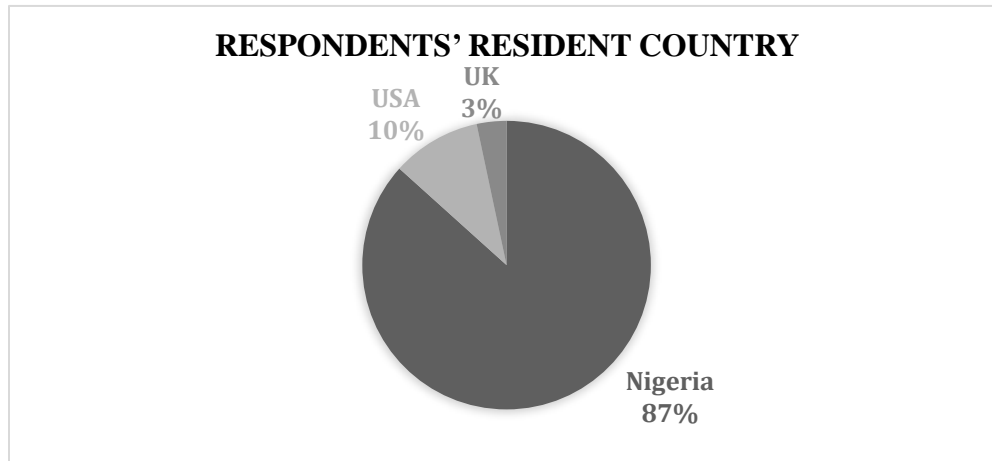


Figure 4. Respondents' nationality and residence country

All respondents are citizens of Nigeria by birth. According to figure 4 above, about 87 percent of the survey respondents are currently living in Nigeria. The remaining 13 percent are Nigerians in diaspora (UK and USA) who relocated to other countries within the past two years or those who have resided in foreign countries for more than two years but still retain strong connections with their home country, Nigeria, which they visit regularly.

### Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals and the Holy Spirit

This section summarizes the practical beliefs of NNPs concerning the Holy Spirit. Respondents rated statements using a five-point Likert scale.<sup>38</sup>

Item 1: "NNPs are groups of Christian bodies that appear to give much emphasis on the Holy Spirit."

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<sup>38</sup> In the Likert scale, 1 = "disagree"; 2 = "strongly disagree"; 3 "not sure"; 4 = "agree"; and 5 = "strongly agree."

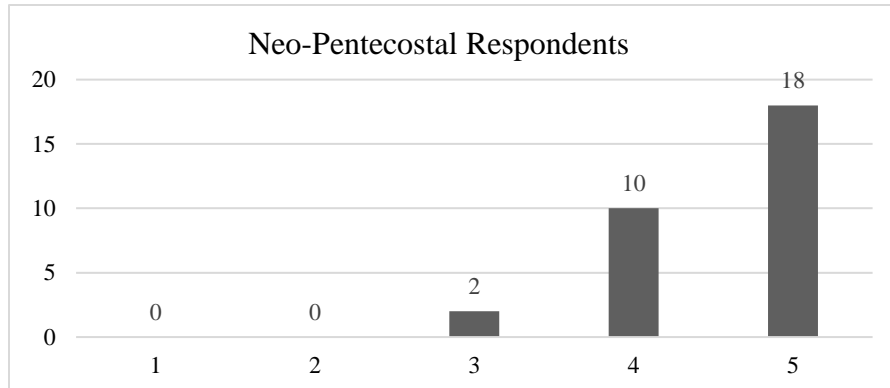


Figure 5. NNPs and the Holy Spirit: Item 1

According to the responses in figure 5 above, about 93.3 percent of Neo-Pentecostal respondents agree that Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals place much emphasis on the Holy Spirit when it comes to their doctrinal dogma and the evangelistic activities.

Item 2: “The Holy Spirit is not really at the center of some of the NNPs ministerial activities as they Claimed.”

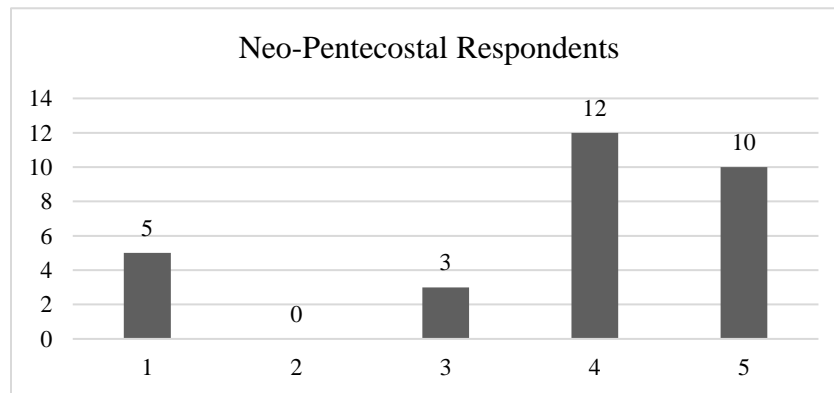


Figure 6. NNPs and the Holy Spirit: Item 2

From the analysis of figure 6 above, 73.3 percent of the Neo-Pentecostal respondents either agree or strongly agree with the point raised here. These results reveal that even though NNPs claim to lay much emphasis on the Holy Spirit (as seen in figure



5) vis-à-vis their outward disposition, but in reality, the Holy Spirit is not truly at the center of some of NNPs’ ministerial activities as they claimed. About 16.7 percent of the respondent disagree with this. More light shall be shed on this reality in chapter four when dealing with the theological issues of NNPs.

Item 3: “Some NNPs develop spirituality claiming the importance of spiritual gifts to their ministries.”

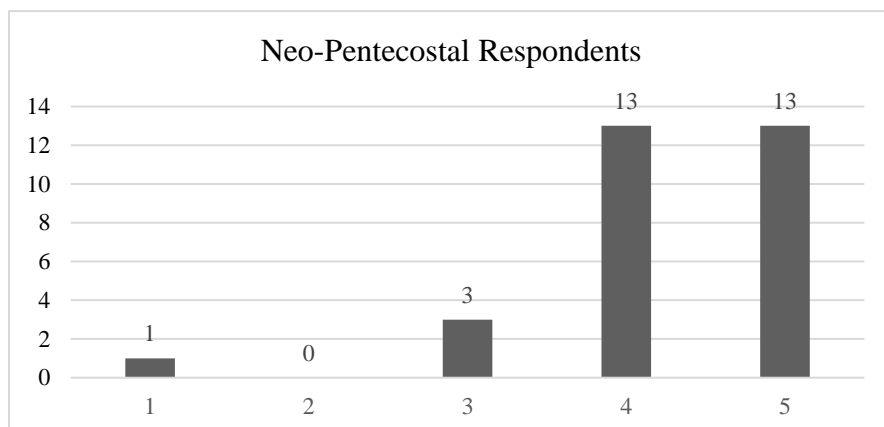


Figure 7: NNPs and the Holy Spirit: Item 3

One of the distinguishing factors of NNPs is the emphasis they place on the relevance of all of the spiritual gifts (see figure 7 above). NNPs maintain that all the gifts exercised at Pentecost and beyond the apostles and other early church believers are still active in, and relevant for, the church today.<sup>39</sup> They do not hold to any form of cessationism. 86.7 percent of the Neo-Pentecostal respondents holds to this fact; while about 10 percent remain in different.

Item 4: “Speaking in tongues is a hallmark of Holy Spirit baptism among most of NNPs.”

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<sup>39</sup> See David O. Oyedepo, *Signs and Wonders Today: A Catalogue of the Amazing Acts of God Among Men* (Lagos, Nigeria: Dominion, 2006), 1-3.

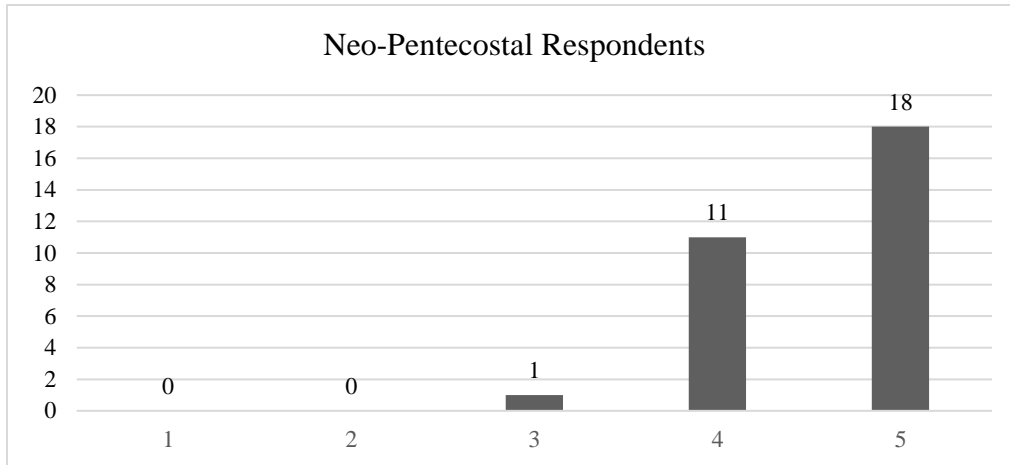


Figure 8. NNPs and the Holy Spirit: Item 4

According to the respondents' assertion on speaking in tongues, 96.7 percent see speaking in tongues as the hallmark of Holy Spirit baptism. Only about 3.3 percent of the Neo-Pentecostals respondents remain indecisive as seen in figure 8 above.

### **Factors Informing the NNPs' Emphasis on the Holy Spirit**

The following factors inform NNPs' emphasis on the Holy Spirit.

Item 1: "Historical antecedents like the early apostolic band in the book of Acts; the religious awakening; and the modern Pentecostals experiences."

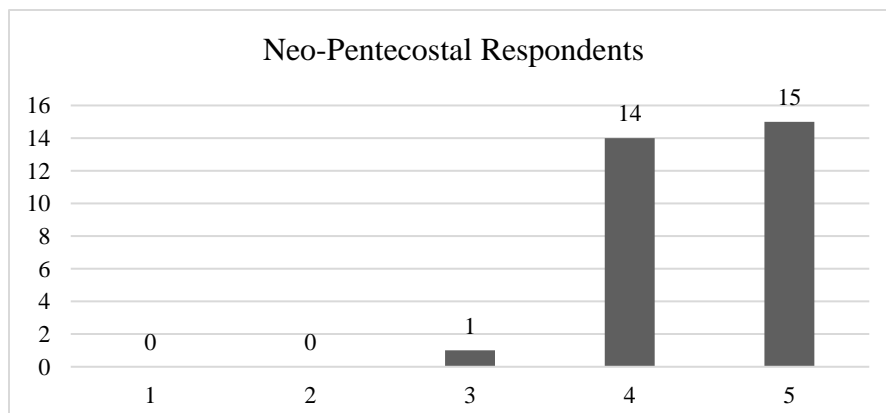


Figure 9. NNPs' emphasis on the Holy Spirit: Item 1

Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals claim to pattern their practices after the beliefs and practices of early Christians, as seen in the book of Acts of Apostles, coupled with the experiences of some of the foremost leaders of the Pentecostal movement (see figure 9 above). About 96.7 percent of the Neo-Pentecostal respondents agree with this.

Item 2: “Another factor is the hunger and thirst for spiritual power.”

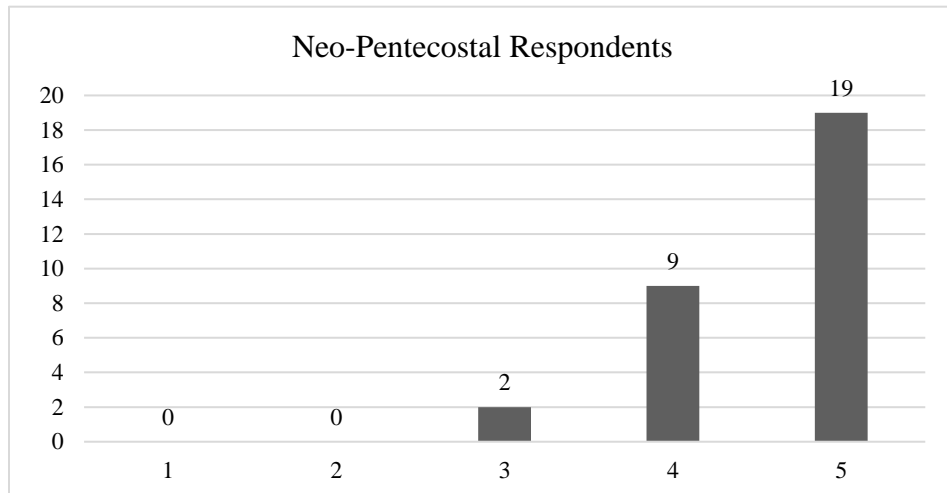


Figure 10. NNPs’ emphasis on the Holy Spirit: Item 2

According to the Neo-Pentecostal respondents in the figure 10 above, 93.3 percent maintains that one of the major factors precipitating NNPs emphasis on the Holy Spirit is a thirst for spiritual power. This means that the more Neo-Pentecostals place more emphasis on the Holy Spirit, the more the spiritual power they believe they will weld. Only 6.7 percent of the respondents could not decide.

Item 3: “Another factor is the Necessity to satisfy the spiritual yearning of members.”

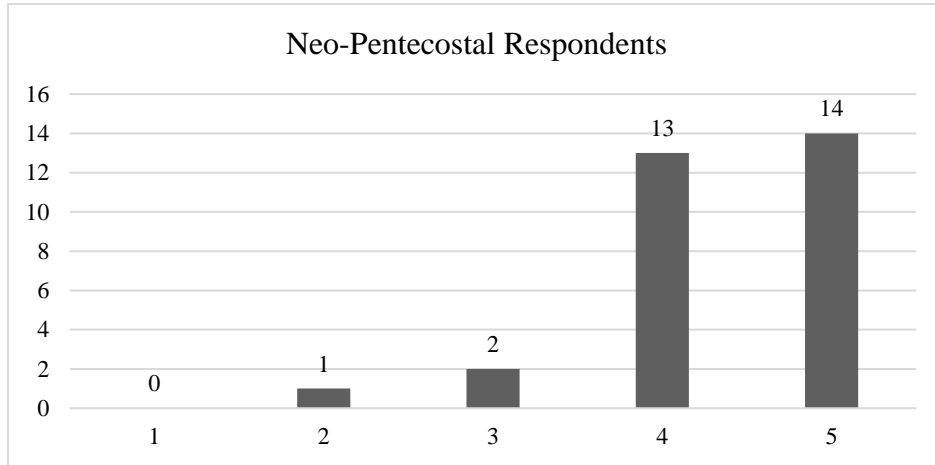


Figure 11. NNPs' emphasis on the Holy Spirit: Item 3

Majority of the Neo-Pentecostal respondents (90 percent) agree that NNPs believe that placing more emphasis on the Holy Spirit will satisfy the spiritual yearning of the members (see figure 11 above). Again, 6.7 percent of the respondents say nothing on this.

Item 4: "Another factor is the desired mandate to perform signs and miracles"

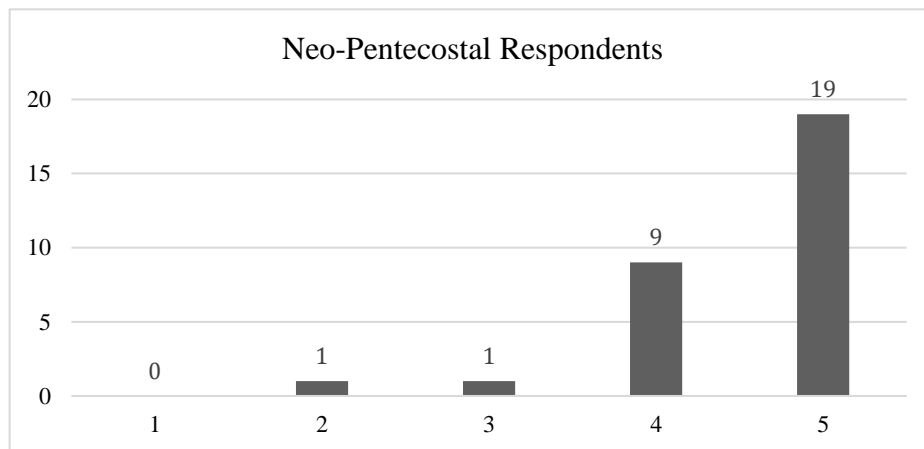


Figure 12. NNPs' emphasis on the Holy Spirit: Item 4

From figure 12 above, about 93.3 percent of the Neo-Pentecostals respondents

maintain that NNPs’ desired mandate to perform signs and miracles increases their emphasis on the Holy Spirit. Only about 3.3 percent of the respondents disagree with this.

Item 5: “Another factor is the realization of the need to be different from other ministers of God.”

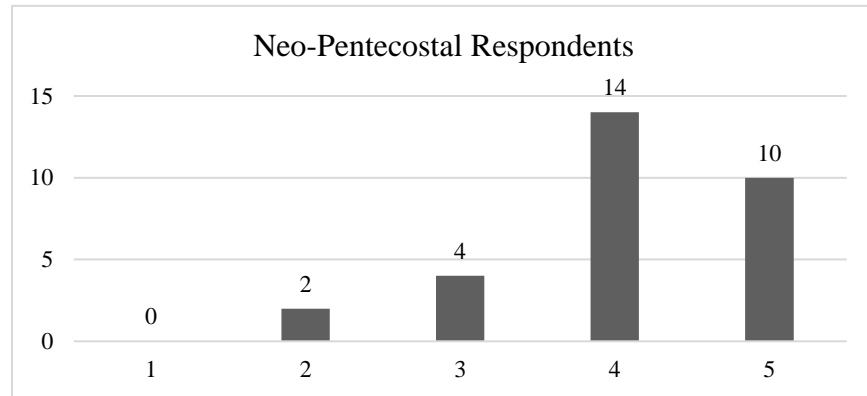


Figure 13. NNPs’ emphasis on the Holy Spirit: Item 5

From the figure above, 80 percent of the Neo-Pentecostal respondents here agree that NNPs emphasize the Spirit in order to differentiate themselves from Christians of other denominations. About 13.3 percent of the respondents are not sure if this is true; while about 6.7 percent of the respondents disagree.

### **Process of Getting Acquainted with the Holy Spirit among the NNPs**

The following methods are the ways that NNPs believe that anyone can get acquainted with the Holy Spirit.

Item 1: “Prayer and fasting”

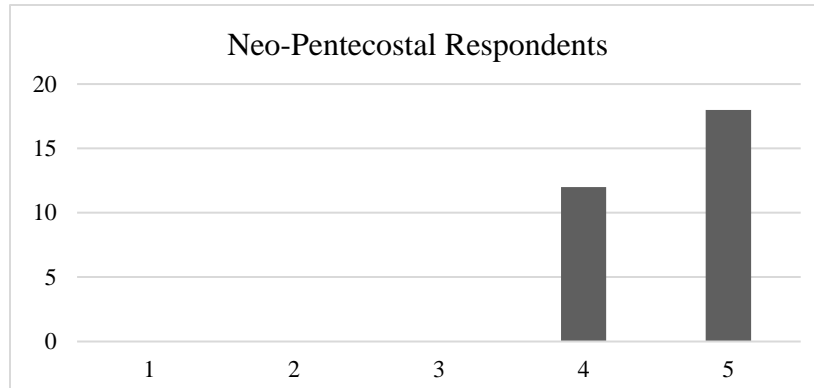


Figure 14. NNPs’ getting acquainted with the Holy Spirit: Item 1

According to figure 14, all (100 percent) of Neo-Pentecostal respondents indicates, prayer and fasting facilitate connectivity to the Holy Spirit among NNPs. This may account for the reason while almost all the Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals have prayer cities or camps.<sup>40</sup>

Item 2: “Reading through the records/biographies of previous successful Pentecostal pastors.”

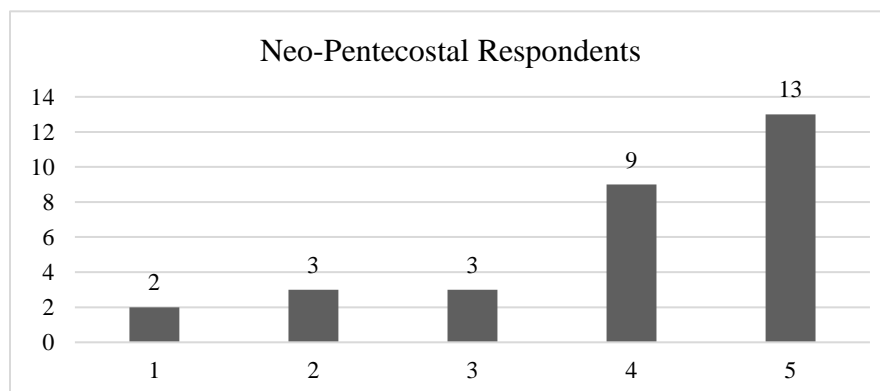


Figure 15. NNPs’ getting acquainted with the Holy Spirit: Item 2

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<sup>40</sup> For instance, the Redeemed Christian Church of God has a prayer camp along Ibadan-Lagos express way that sitting capacity of over 10 million; Mountain of Fire Ministry (MFM) has its own Prayer City; Deeper Life Bible Church has its own prayer Camp; GOFAMINT has prayer Camp and several others.

Going by figure 15, 73.3 percent of the Neo-Pentecostal respondents agree that the NNPs see that the reading of the records and biographies of previous successful Pentecostal leaders can lead to intimacy with the Holy Spirit. About 6.7 percent disagree with this, while 10 percent of the total responses remain unsure.

Item 3: “This Process of Getting Acquainted with the Holy Spirit embraces the tarry meetings.”

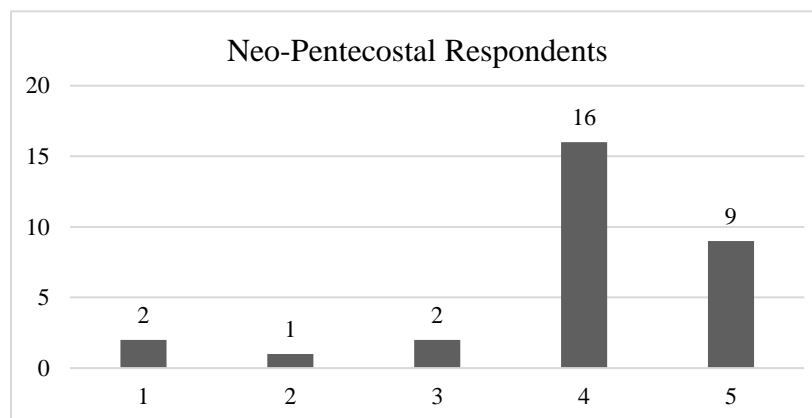


Figure 16. NNPs’ getting acquainted with the Holy Spirit: Item 3

NNPs believe that just as the early apostles waited in the upper after the ascension of Jesus Christ, today, tarry meetings are needed for the enduement of the Holy Spirit. 83.3 percent of the Neo-Pentecostal respondents agree to this; 6.7 percent disagree; about 6.7 percent could not decide (see figure 16 above).

Item 4: “The process of getting acquainted with the Holy Spirit is by emphasizing the necessity of being baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit among members.”

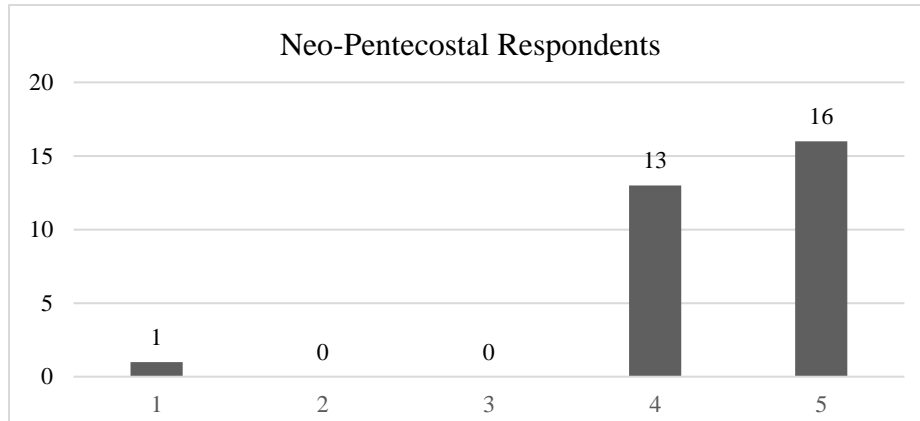


Figure 17. NNPs’ getting acquainted with the Holy Spirit: Item 4

According to figure 17 above, 96.7 percent of the Neo-Pentecostals respondents holds that NNPs believe that emphasizing the necessity of being baptized with the Holy Spirit will eventually lead members to get acquainted with the Holy Spirit. Only about 3.3 percent of the respondents disagree.

### NNPs’ Major Emphases in Evangelism

This section discusses respondents’ ratings of ten major emphases that characterize the gospel presented by NNPs.

Item 1: “Emphasis on signs and wonders.”

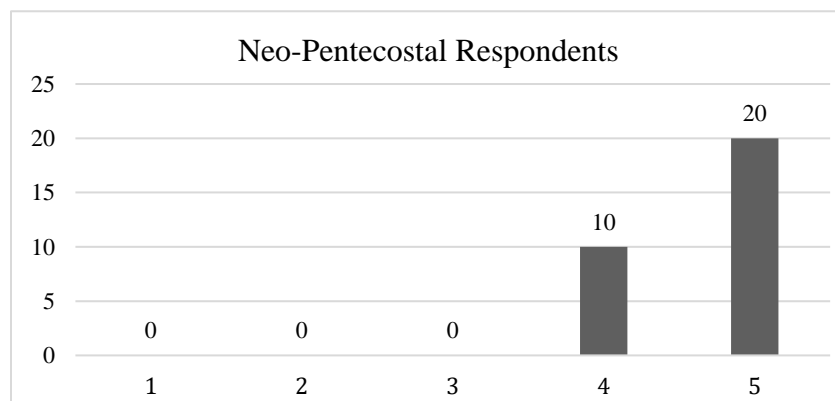


Figure 18. NNPs’ major emphases in evangelism: Item 1



The Neo-Pentecostal respondents all agree that the manner in which NNPs present the gospel makes people believe that signs and wonders are waiting for them once they embrace the gospel (see figure 18 above).

Item 2: “Emphasis on Miracles.”

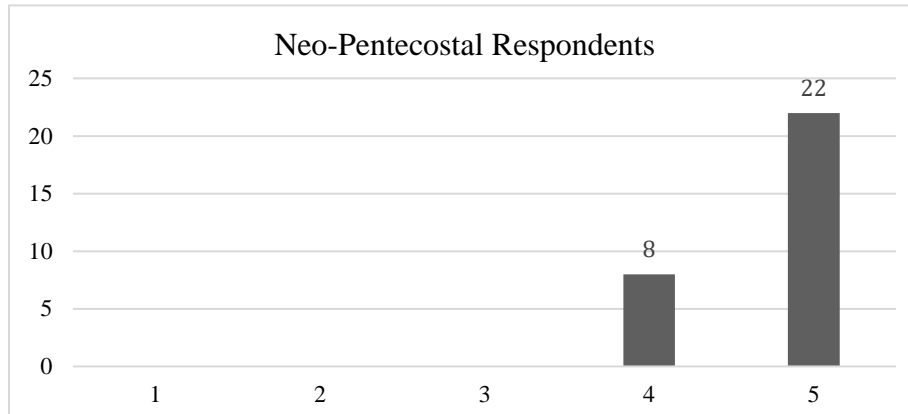


Figure 19. NNPs’ major emphases in evangelism: Item 2

Neo-Pentecostals respondents here agree totally that in the course of presenting the gospel, NNPs convince people that miracles await them once they come to Christ (see figure 19 above).

Item 3: “Emphasis on Healing.”

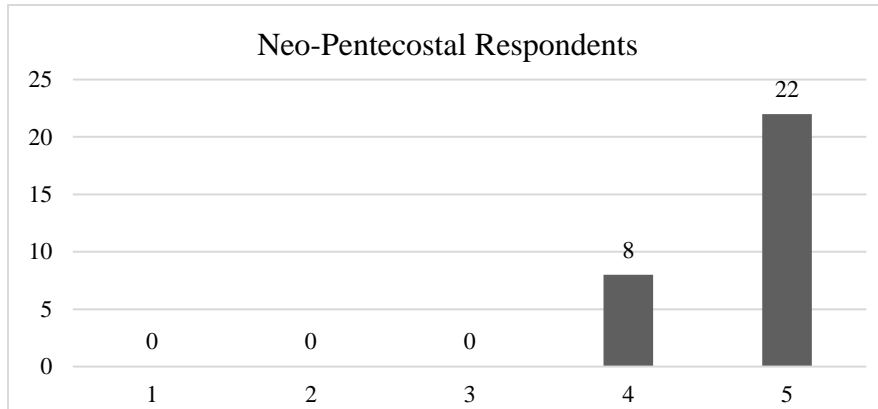


Figure 20. NNPs’ major emphases in evangelism: Item 3

All the Neo-Pentecostal respondents (100 percent) believe that in presenting the gospel, NNPs place great emphasis on physical healings.

Item 4: “Emphasis on Breakthrough.”

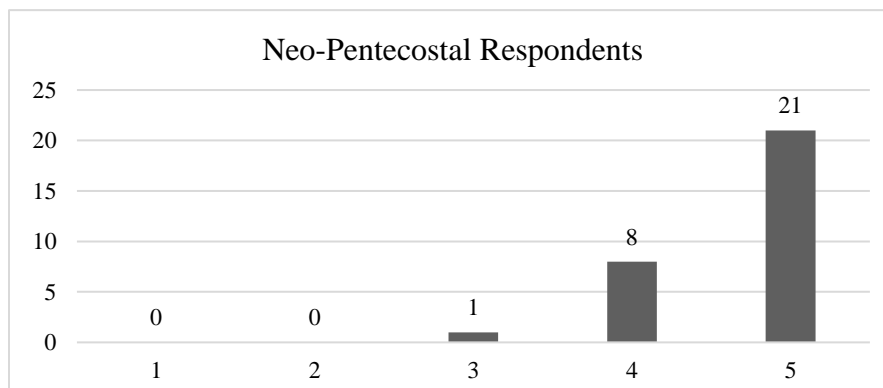


Figure 21. NNPs’ major emphases in evangelism: Item 4

In figure 21 above, 96.7 percent of the Neo-Pentecostal respondents maintain that NNPs emphasize “breakthroughs” during their gospel presentations. Only about 3.3 percent of the respondents are uncertain about this.

Item 5: “Emphasis on Deliverance.”

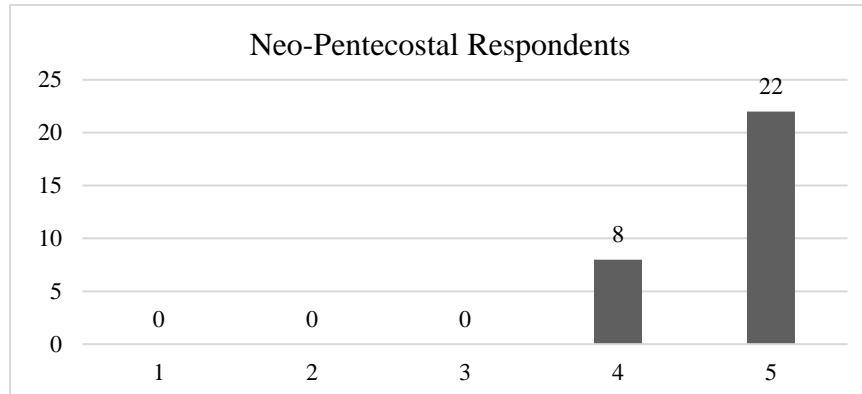


Figure 22. NNPs’ major emphases in evangelism: Item 5

According to figure 22 above, all Neo-Pentecostal respondents (100 percent) agree that NNPs place great emphasis on deliverance in their gospel presentation.

Item 6: “Emphasis on Anointing and power.”

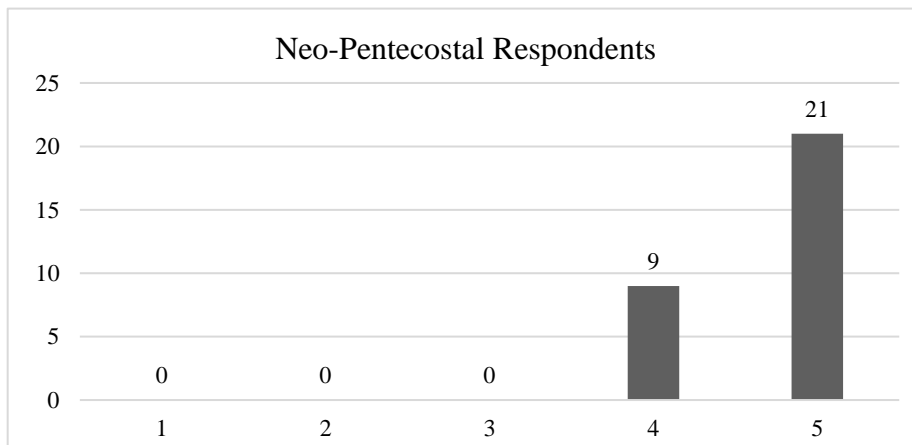


Figure 23. NNPs’ major emphases in evangelism: Item 6

All Neo-Pentecostal respondents (100 percent) agree that NNPs greatly emphasize anointing and power (see figure 23 above).

Item 7: “Emphasis on breaking generational curses.”

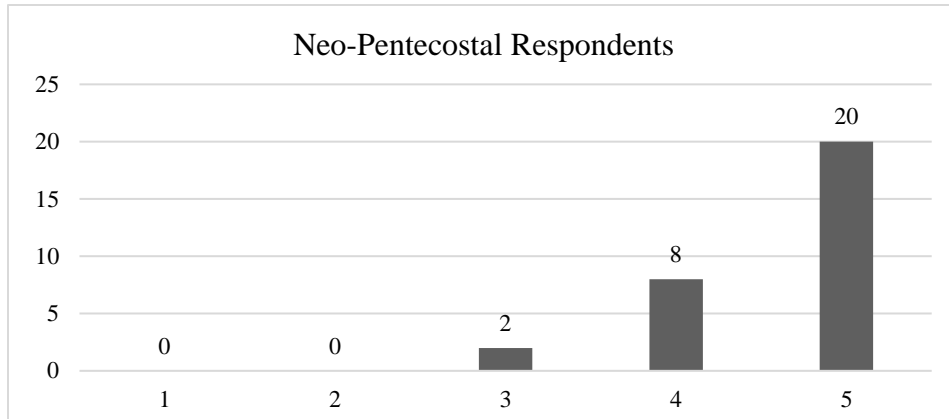


Figure 24. NNPs’ major emphases in evangelism: Item 7

About 93.3 percent of the Neo-Pentecostal respondents maintain that NNPs emphasize breaking generational curses in their gospel presentations (see figure 24 above).

Item 8: “Emphasis on ‘working faith’ (name it and claim it).”

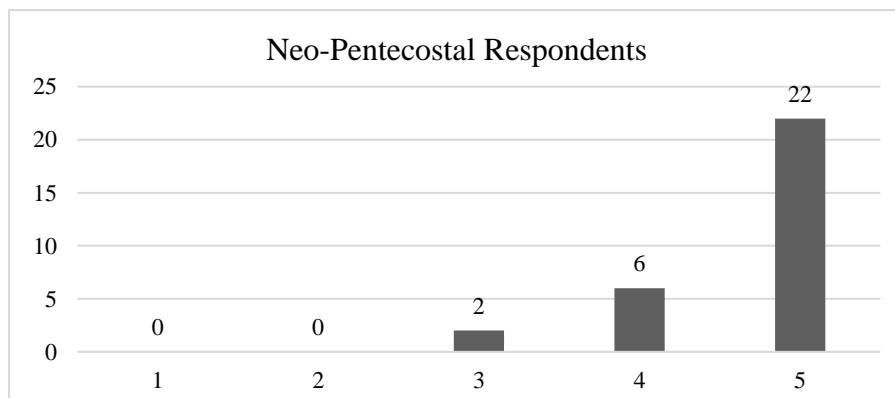


Figure 25. NNPs’ major emphases in evangelism: Item 8

Going by figure 25 above, 93.3 percent of the Neo-Pentecostal respondents maintain that NNPs believe that people can name whatever they want and get it by faith (words of faith) if they accept the gospel.

Item 9: “Emphasis on Material Prosperity.”

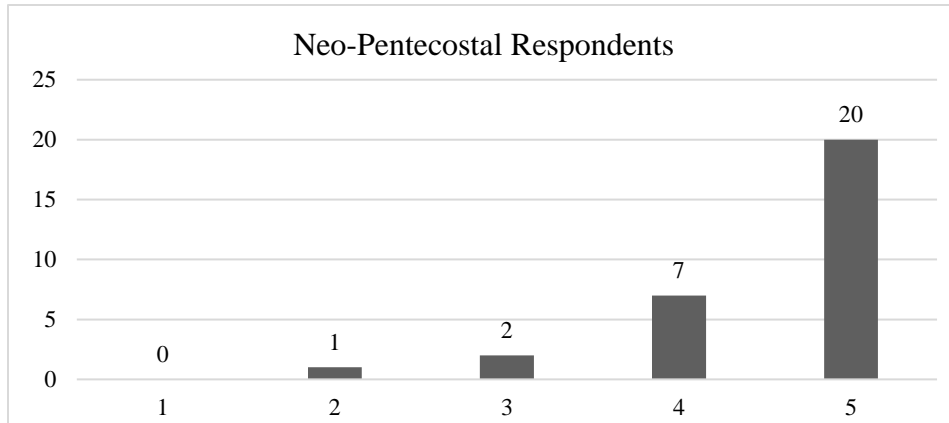


Figure 26. NNPs’ major emphases in evangelism: Item 9

About 90 percent of the Neo-Pentecostal respondents maintain that NNPs present a gospel that assures people of material prosperity if they accept Christ. Only 6.7 percent remain unsure (see figure 26 above).

Item 10: “Emphasis on victory over enemies (physical and spiritual).”

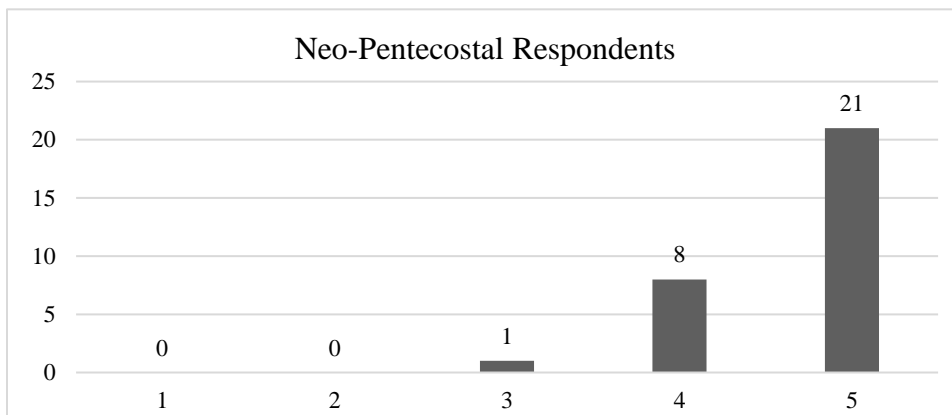


Figure 27. NNPs’ major emphases in evangelism: Item 10

Of the Neo-Pentecostal respondents, 96.7 percent indicate that NNPs assure people of their total victory over physical and spiritual enemies once they embrace the gospel (see figure 27 above).

Item 11: “Most time, the ten emphases above are placed above Message of Salvation and holiness.”

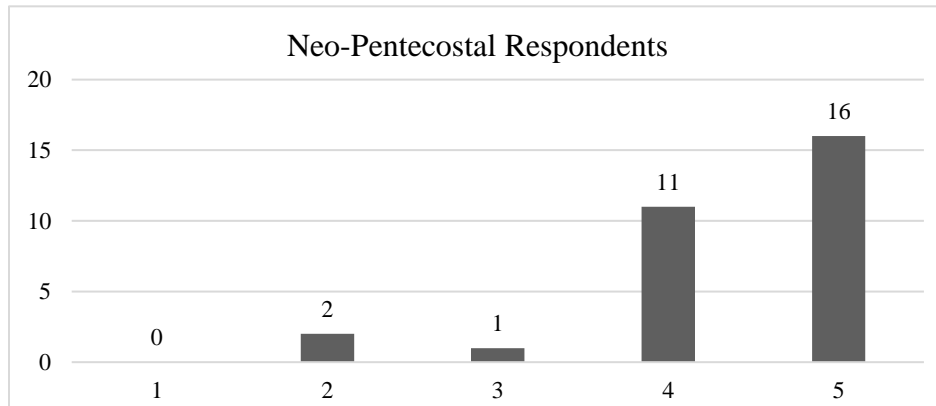


Figure 28. NNPs’ major emphases in evangelism: Item 11

Interestingly, 90 percent of the Neo-Pentecostal respondents indicates that NNPs place these ten emphases (above), above the message of salvation and holiness. About 6.7 percent disagree on this.

### **Possibility of Negative Resultant Effects**

If NNPs’ gospel presentations focus on the ten emphases discussed above at the expense of the genuine message of salvation and holiness, what will be implications of this reality in the lives of the converts and the church at large? To answer this question, this section discusses respondents’ ratings of potential negative effects of NNPs’ emphatic teaching on the Holy Spirit.

Item 1: “Emotionalism.”

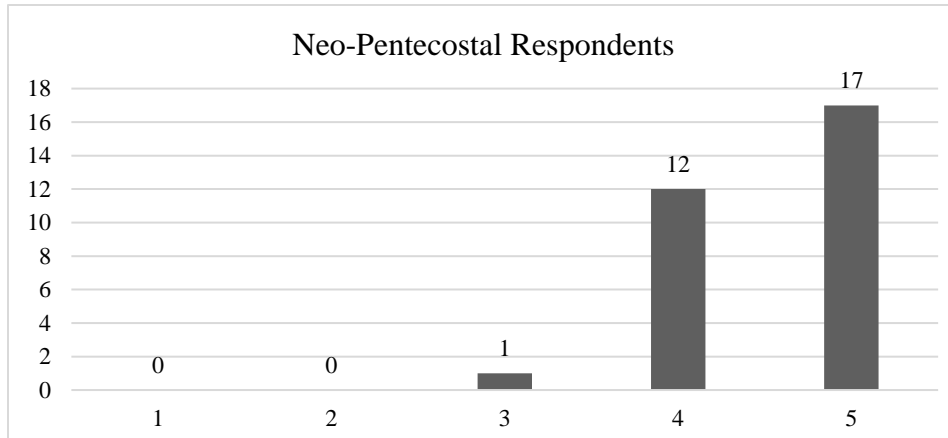


Figure 29. Possibility of negative resultant effects: Item 1

About 96.7 percent of the Neo-Pentecostal respondents agree that winning converts with the approaches above may breed converts who exhibit excessive emotional displays in the church (see figure 29 above).

Item 2: “Personal and selfish aggrandizement.”

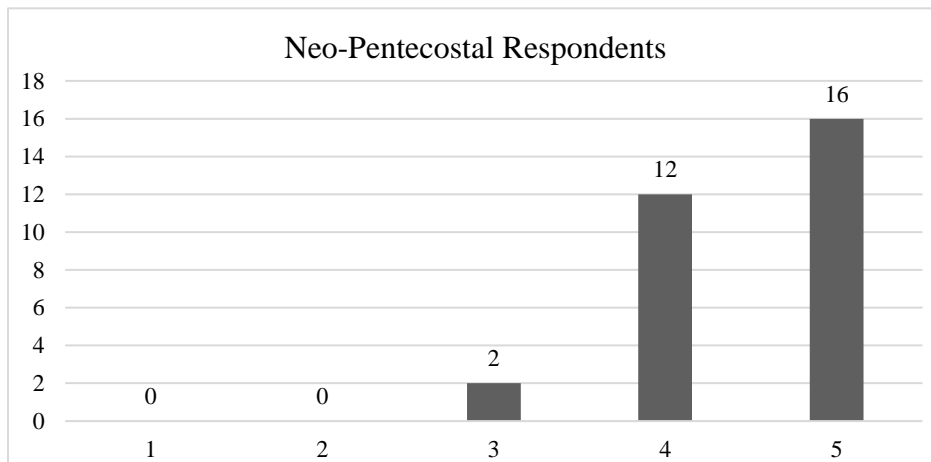


Figure 30. Possibility of negative resultant effects: Item 2

In winning converts with the pattern above, 93.3 percent of the Neo-Pentecostal respondents believe that churches may be full of people with motives

characterized by personal and selfish aggrandizement (see figure 30 above).

Item 3: “Exploitation of the laity through signs and wonders.”

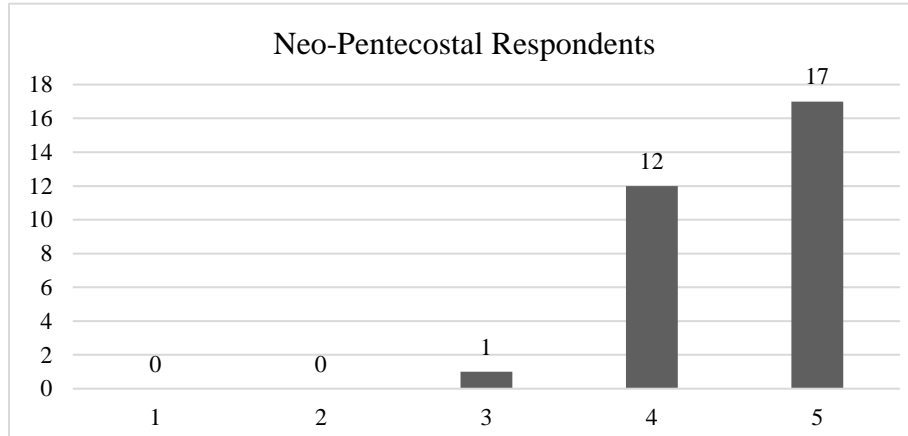


Figure 31. Possibility of negative resultant effects: Item 3

According to figure 31 above, 96.7 percent of all the Neo-Pentecostal respondents maintain that the gimmicks of signs, wonders, and miracles have brought about the exploitation of the laity.

Item 4: “Lack of reverence for, and neglect of the Word of God.”

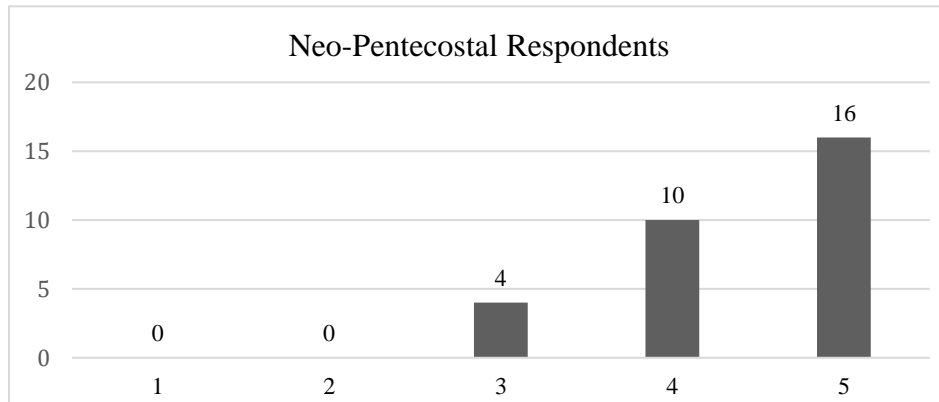


Figure 32. Possibility of negative resultant effects: Item 4



Many of the Neo-Pentecostal respondents (about 86.7 percent) agree that NNPs' emphasis on the ten approaches above in evangelism is already leading to a lack of reverence for, and an inappropriate understanding of, Scripture (see figure 32 above).

Item 5: "Undermining of salvation with too much pursuit and emphasis on physical signs."

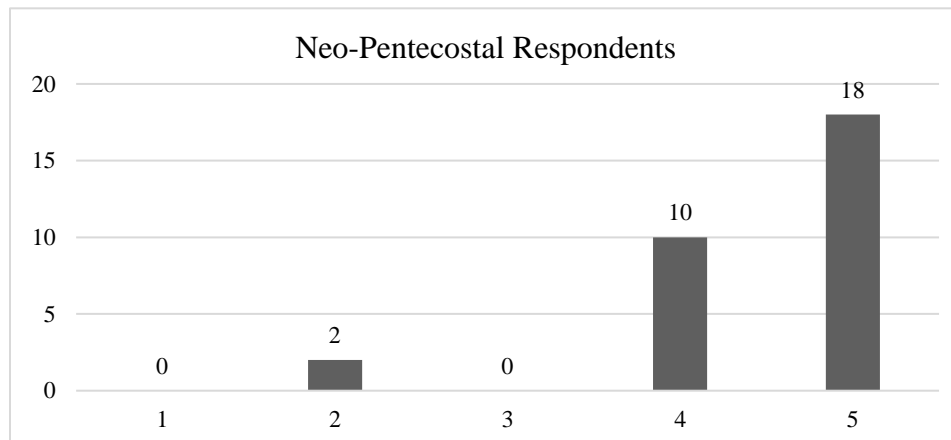


Figure 33. Possibility of negative resultant effects: Item 5

Going by figure 33, 93.3 percent of the Neo-Pentecostal respondents agree that NNPs' emphasis on the ten approaches above in evangelism will lead to more focus being given to physical signs than real spiritual transformation. Only about 6.7 percent of all the respondents strongly disagree.

Item 6: "Syncretism (mixture of Christian beliefs with the practices of African Traditional Religions or other religions).

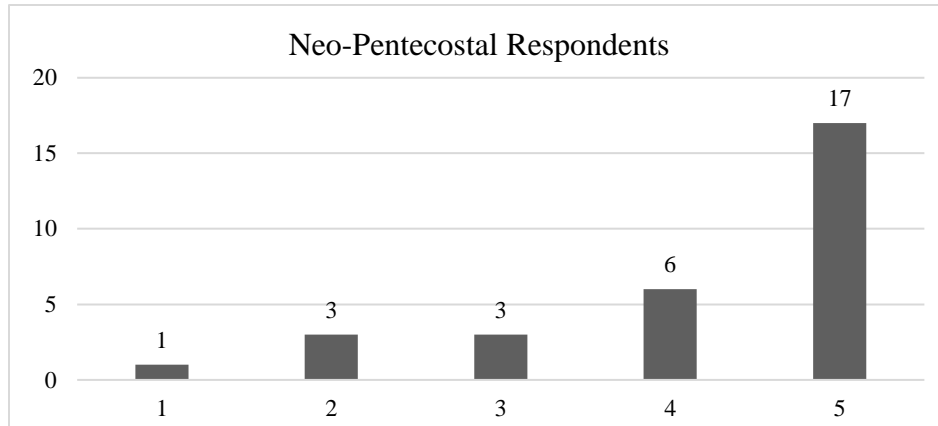


Figure 34. Possibility of negative resultant effects: Item 6

According to figure 34 above, about 76.7 percent of the Neo-Pentecostal respondents maintain that NNPs’ emphasis on the ten approaches above in evangelism will lead to a mixture of Christian beliefs with the practices of African traditional religions or other religions. This is a manifestation of syncretism.

Item 7: “Christian practice that is void of sound biblical truth.”

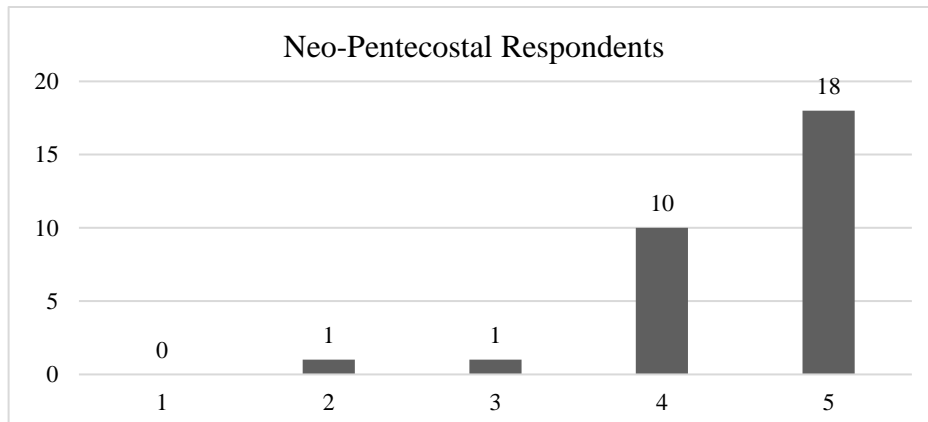


Figure 35. Possibility of negative resultant effects: Item 7

According to figure 38, 93.3 percent of the Neo-Pentecostal respondents believe that NNPs’ emphasis on the ten approaches above in evangelism will result in

Christian practices that are void of sound biblical truth concerning the gospel.

Item 8: “Some NNPs leaders going diabolical to get powers.”

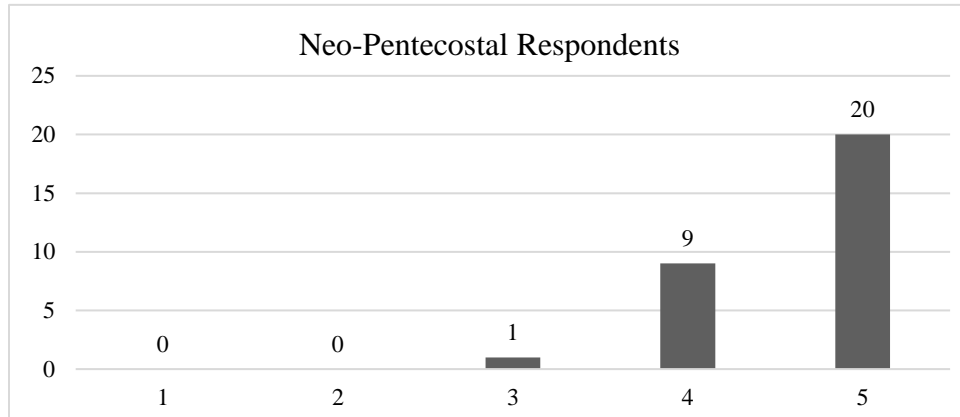


Figure 36. Possibility of negative resultant effects: Item 8

About 96.7 percent of the Neo-Pentecostal respondents here (in figure 36) indicate that many NNP leaders are going diabolical to obtain powers. They do this in order to force miracles, signs, and wonders to happen at any cost.

Item 9: “Increase in quantity of members but not in quality.”

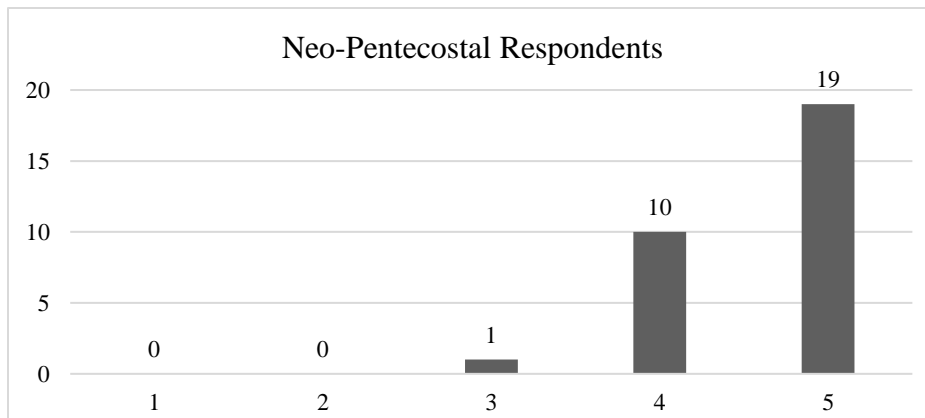


Figure 37. Possibility of negative resultant effects: Item 9

Most respondents (about 96.7 percent) believe that the evangelistic practices of NNPs will breed large numbers of converts, but those converts will be lacking in the quality of Christlikeness (see figure 37 above).

Item 10: “Some Nigerian NNPs leaders have positioned themselves in the place of the Holy Spirit or ‘gods’ to their members. They always want members to get permission from them before taking decisions.”

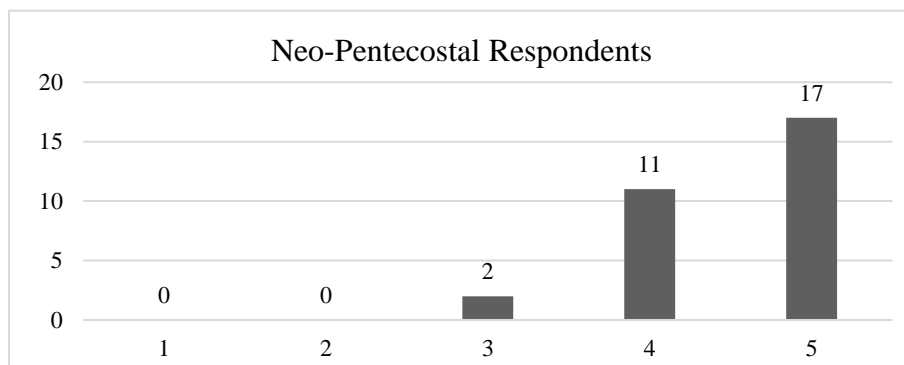


Figure 38. Possibility of negative resultant effects: Item 10

In figure 38 above, 93.3 percent of all the Neo-Pentecostal respondents agree that some Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals leaders lord their power over their members.

Item 11: Most of the miracles among the Neo-Pentecostals today are fake (this does not deny the possibility of real miracles).”

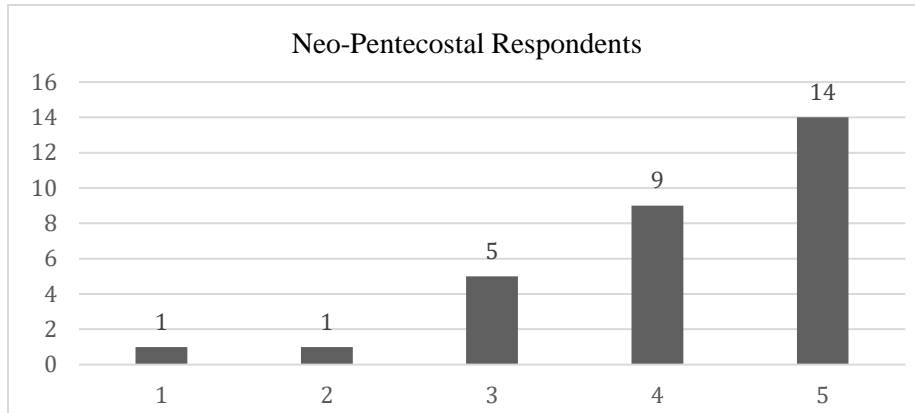


Figure 39. Possibility of negative resultant effects: Item 11

According to figure 39 above, 76.7 percent of the Neo-Pentecostal respondents believe that most of the miracles performed by NNPs today are not real, but they do not exclude the possibility of genuine miracles. But about 16.7 percent neither agree nor disagree.

Item 12: “Is it true that some NNPs leaders are sexually assaulting their members?”

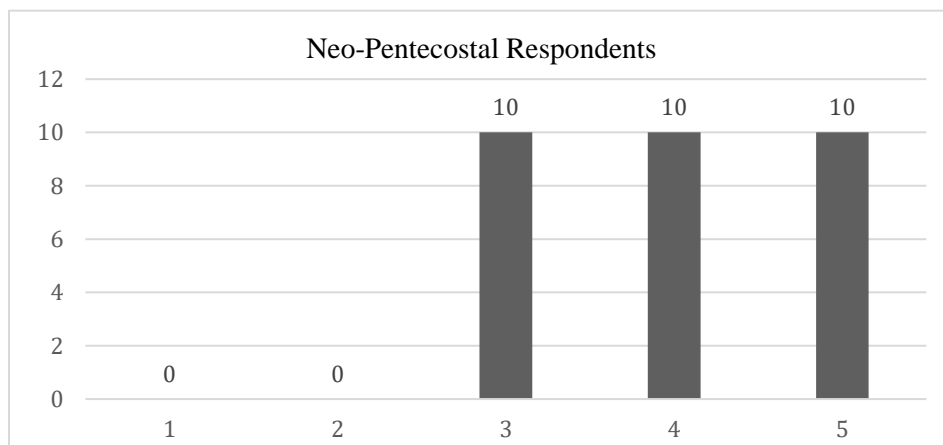


Figure 40. Possibility of negative resultant effects: Item 12

According to figure 40 above, 66.7 percent of the Neo-Pentecostal respondents

agree that some NNP leaders are guilty of sexually assaulting their followers. About 33.3 percent say nothing to oppose or support this assertion. A source of interview reveals that some of the Neo-Pentecostal members do not always want to expose their leaders’ sexual molestations.<sup>41</sup>

Item 13: “Is it true that some NNPs are living large with display of flamboyance?”

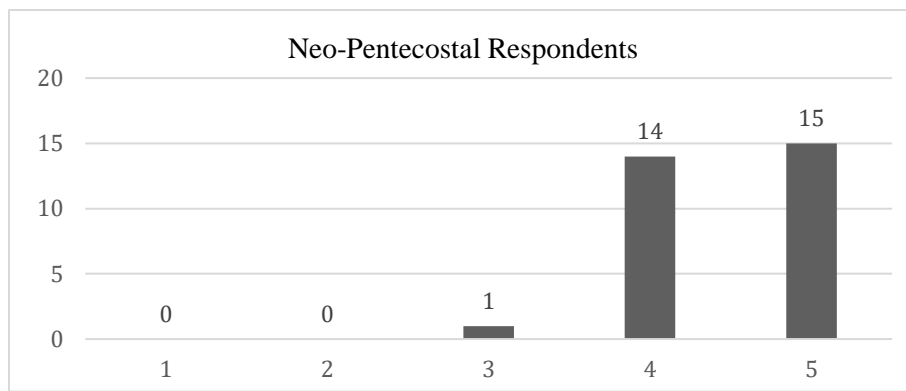


Figure 41. Possibility of negative resultant effects: Item 13

The majority of all the respondents (96.7 percent) attest to the flamboyant living of some NNP leaders (see figure 41 above).

### **Biblical Place of the Holy Spirit in Evangelism**

This section discusses respondents’ ratings of the following items as biblical purposes of power promised by Jesus in Acts 1:8.

Item 1: “The power is meant to promote evangelical task and zeal of the Church.”

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<sup>41</sup> Shalom Ezra, phone interview by the author, Abuja, Nigeria, August 22, 2019.

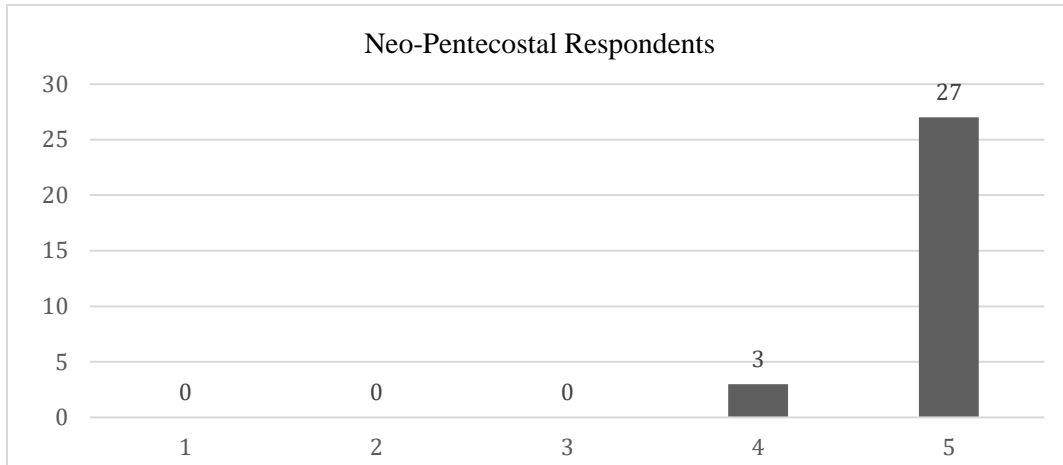


Figure 42. Biblical place of the Holy Spirit in evangelism: Item 1

All the respondents agree that the Holy Spirit promotes the evangelical task as well as zeal in the church (see figure 42 above).

Item 2: “The promised power is to arm believers as they go about witnessing For Christ.”

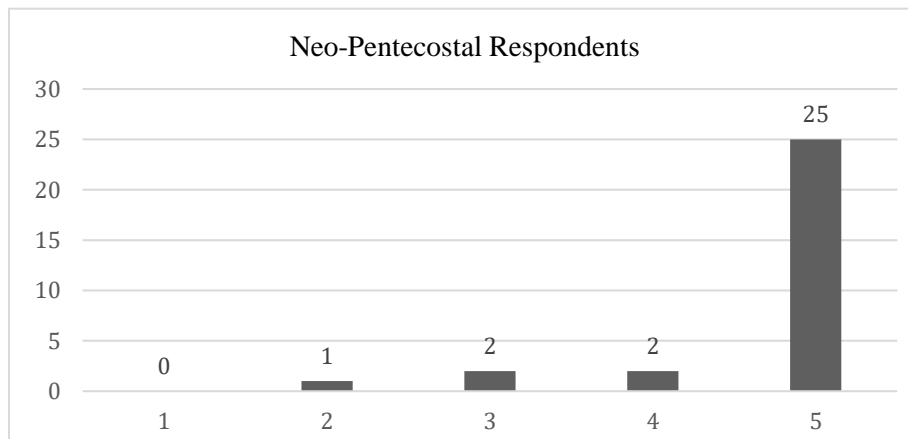


Figure 43. Biblical place of the Holy Spirit in evangelism: Item 2

In figure 43 above, about 90 percent of the Neo-Pentecostals respondents agree that the power promised in Acts 1:8 is meant to arm (or equip) believers as they go about

witnessing for Christ.

Item 3: “The divine power is meant for the Church’s discipleship program in the context of the Great Commission.”

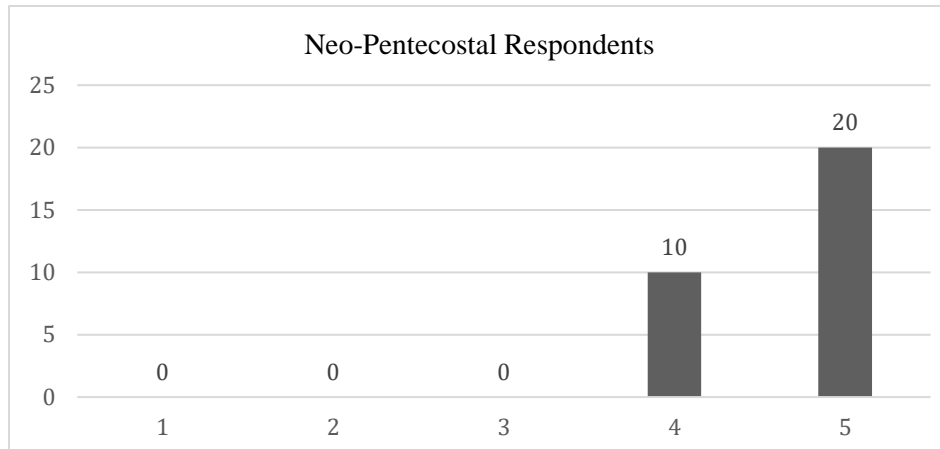


Figure 44. Biblical place of the Holy Spirit in evangelism: Item 3

All the respondents the Neo-Pentecostal respondents agree that this divine power promised in Acts 1:8 is meant for the church’s discipleship program in the context of the Great Commission (see figure 44 above).

Item 4: “The promised power is to enable believers to stand and suffer for the truth at the face of severe persecution.”



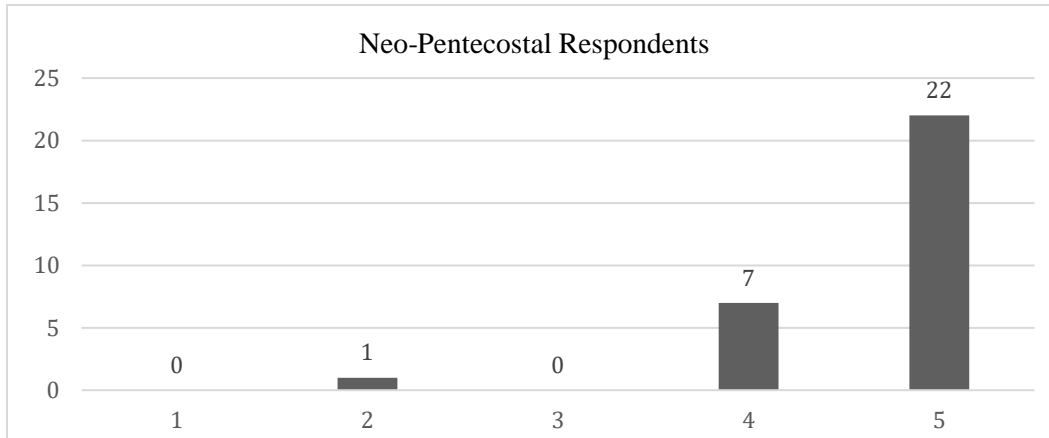


Figure 45. Biblical place of the Holy Spirit in evangelism: Item 4

Of the Neo-Pentecostals respondents, 96.7 percent believe that the coming of the Holy Spirit imbues believers with power to stand and suffer for the truth of the gospel when facing severe persecution (see figure 45 above).

Item 5: “The power is to create a conducive environment for the Church to thrive.”

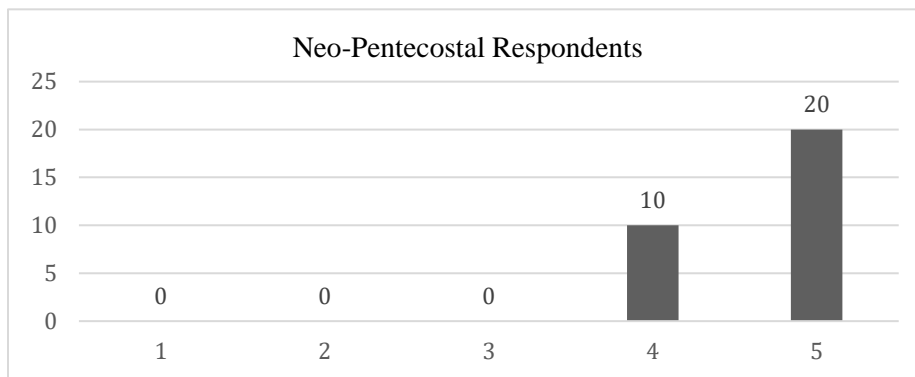


Figure 46. Biblical place of the Holy Spirit in evangelism: Item 5

All the respondents agree that the promised power of the Holy Spirit is intended to create a conducive environment in which the church can thrive (see figure 46 above).

Item 6: “The promised power enables signs and wonders to follow the believers’ evangelistic task; but not for the believers to be seeking after signs and wonders.”

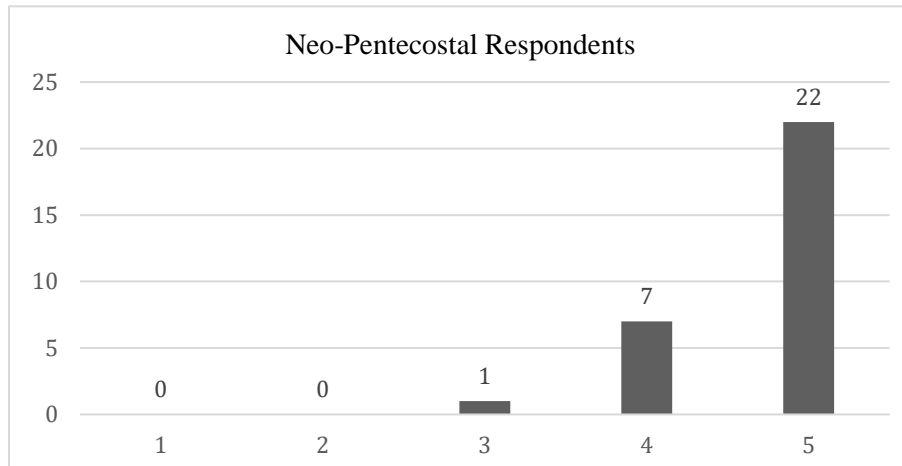


Figure 47. Biblical place of the Holy Spirit in evangelism: Item 6

About 96.7 percent of the Neo-Pentecostal respondents agree with the fact in figure 47 above.

### Other Questions

Item 1: Do you think that the gospel presented by some Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals fails to fall in line with the true gospel of Jesus Christ?

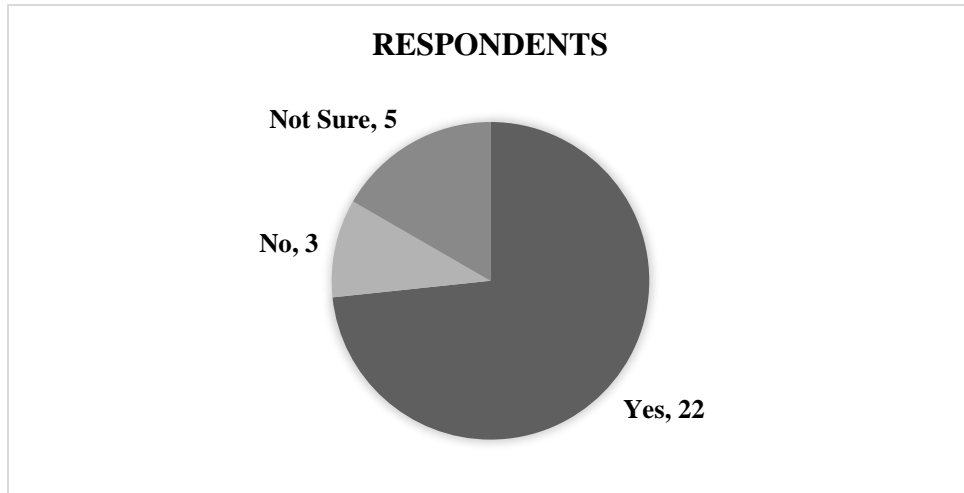


Figure 48. Other questions: Item 1

From figure 48 above, 22 out of the 30 Neo-Pentecostal respondents agree that the gospel presented by some of the Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals fails to fall in line with the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

Item 2: “Do you sense any dangers for the future of Nigerian Christianity in the way the gospel is being presented among the NNPs?”

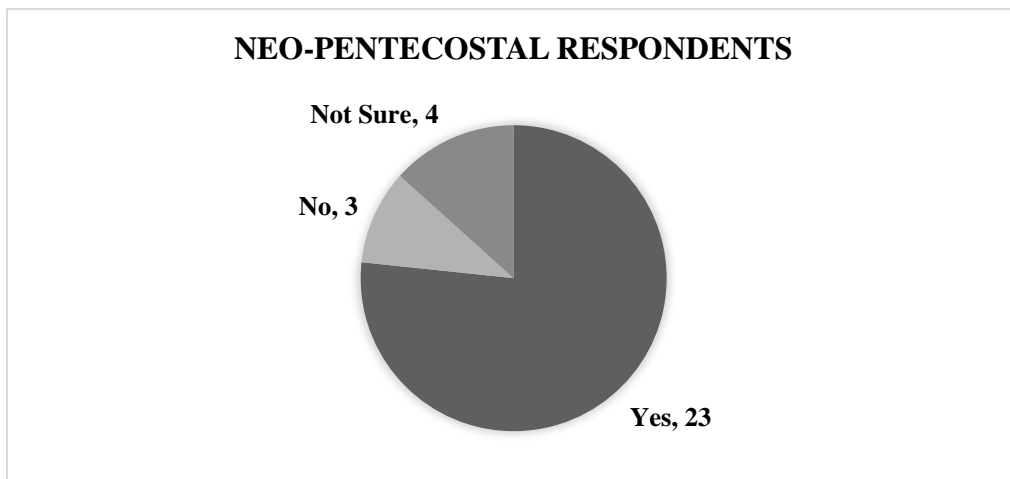


Figure 49. Biblical place of the Holy Spirit in evangelism: Item 2

According to figure 49 above, 23 out of the 30 Neo-Pentecostal respondents believe that the manner in which NNPs present the gospel poses a potential danger for the future of Nigerian Christianity (as earlier mentioned, fuller explanation on this will come up in chapter 4).

### **Observation and Clarification**

According to figure 48 above, 22 out of the 30 Neo-Pentecostal respondents agree that the gospel presented by some Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals fails to fall in line with the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Again, according to figure 49 above, 23 out of the 30 Neo-Pentecostal respondents believe that the manner in which NNPs present the gospel poses a potential danger for the future of Nigerian Christianity. The same thing is noticed with regard to the questions raised from figure 29 to figure 41. With these responses from Neo-Pentecostal respondents themselves, it reasonable to ask, why should these respondents affirm these truths and still remain in those churches? Or better still, how can a follower of NNPs concede these truths and yet keep following these leaders dogmatically? The answers to these questions are not far-fetched. First, most of these followers have fallen into the trap of various forms of deception. For instance, Daniel Sopuru writes,

Contemporary preachers would always crave for the love of their followers. But a closer look into that love shows a self-love, that extorts money from them. “I love you” turns out to be “I love myself and want you.” The unsuspecting followers are tricked into believing that they are loved and they give all they have to maintain that seeming love. The New Generation pastors seduce them by promising them all sorts of material wealth. They obey every instruction of the pastors in order to sustain their love and in order to become materially wealthy. This is self in action in modern Christianity, especially among modern Pentecostals.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Daniel O. Sopuru, *Modern Theology versus Biblical Theology: A Call for Biblical Christianity* (Makurdi, Nigeria: Evangelical Christian Literature and Radio Ministries, 2007), 116-17. Sopuru adds,

It is clear that the new generation theologians in Christianity are filled with self—a mark of un-regeneration. The natural man only thinks of self. This brings me to the conclusion that all who project self, no matter their influence in the Church, are un-regenerated and need to come to Christ to purge them of self. This set of believers with their flamboyance and self-oriented teachings should think about this. Christ, and Christ alone should be our focus NOT self. (117-18)

Second, the ignorance of sound biblical knowledge has led to misinterpretations of several biblical passages. For instance, a former member of one Neo-Pentecostal church says,

Many Neo-Pentecostal members have been made to believe that all the spiritual leaders are God anointed ones regardless of their immoral dispositions. Hence, to them, the scriptures have fore-warned not to touch God's anointed nor do his prophets any harm (Ps 105:15). This scripture is always quoted out of context as tool for defense both by the Neo-Pentecostal leaders and their followers.<sup>43</sup>

Some Neo-Pentecostal members do not like talking about the errors and character flaws of their leaders due to their fear of God's judgment for "touching the anointed." Third, from the cultural-religious point of view, followers do not question the authority of the leaders. It is commonly believed that the judgment of any religious leader is in God's hands alone.<sup>44</sup>

Fourth, Precious Kayode, a member of RCCG, maintains that many mega Neo-Pentecostal churches in Nigeria are always centers for commercial activities. As a matter of fact, several members patronizing these places do so with the target of widening their businesses through targeting more customers.<sup>45</sup> This economic factor is not just limited to business opportunities. The fact remains that NNP denominations provide more job opportunities to youths than other church bodies. Apart from many schools owned by the Living Faith Church, "the church also owns and operates a bakery, bottled water processing plant, petrol station, various restaurants and shopping stores, residential houses, guesthouses, housing estate, and a community and micro-finance bank. As a major economic player, the church provides employment for over 20,000 persons."<sup>46</sup> This

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<sup>43</sup> M. Ademola Adebisi, interview by the author, Louisville, KY, January 25, 2020.

<sup>44</sup> Love Adebisi, interview by the author, Ilorin, Nigeria, April 22, 2020. In chapter 4, more light is shed on the influence of cultural beliefs and practices in religion.

<sup>45</sup> Precious Kayode, interview by the author, Ilorin, Nigeria, February 13, 2020.

<sup>46</sup> Afolarin Olutunde Ojewole and Efe Monday Ehioghae, "Leadership and Power in the Pentecostal Movement: Selected Case Studies," in Afolayan, Yacob-Haliso, and Falola, *Pentecostalism and Politics in Africa*, 326. See also Enoch A. Adeboye, *As Pure as Light* (Lagos, Nigeria:

reality forms part of the reason why worshippers are glued to these churches.

Fifth, Shalom Ezra, who confesses that he has attended about four different Neo-Pentecostal churches in the past, observes that most of the modern Pentecostal churches in Nigeria provide an atmosphere of freedom that allows youths to come with all forms of dresses and ill-mannered attitudes that many Nigerian Orthodox and evangelical churches tag as “immoral dresses and sinful immoral acts respectively.”<sup>47</sup> Neo-Pentecostals preach that people can come the way they are, but evangelicals say that while Jesus allows sinners to come the way they are, if sinners have genuinely received the gospel, then they cannot remain the way they were.<sup>48</sup> Hence, the conflict between what is seen as legalism or freedom of worship opens the door for some NNPs to seduce and entice large number of followers.

To crown it all, Mike Oye, a Nigerian classical Pentecostal leader, says,

The main reason why many of the Nigerian Neo-Pentecostal leaders are still having followers is simply because the followers are men and women with itching eyes (2 Tim 4:3) who want approval to their worldliness. The Neo-Pentecostal leaders are the sellers, and their followers are the buyers. The target of these sellers is to meet the demand of their buyers.<sup>49</sup>

Hence, the real problem is with these opportunistic followers; the onus is on the followers, not the preachers. However, this does not negate the fact that these false teachers and preachers will one day have to give an account before God.<sup>50</sup>

### **The Seduction of Nigerian Pentecostals**

The impact of the Civil War Revival will eternally remain relevant to Nigerian Christianity. However, concerning the factors that influenced Nigerian Pentecostal fervor,

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CRM Book Ministry, 1999), 329.

<sup>47</sup> Shalom Ezra, interview by the author, Ilorin, Nigeria, March 22, 2020.

<sup>48</sup> Ezra, interview.

<sup>49</sup> Mike Oye, interview by the author, Ibadan, Nigeria, April 22, 2020.

<sup>50</sup> Oye, interview.

the delay of Christ's return formed the first factor that dwindled the passionate commitment of classical Pentecostal churches. Church members who hoped that Christ would return any moment began to lose hope in the latter part of the twentieth century. Second, after the prosperity experienced in Nigeria in the 1970s, a social and economic crisis began to assail the country in the 1980s. Unfortunately, the church had not done enough to provide the moral guidance needed to uplift and safeguard its members.<sup>51</sup> With the socio-economic chaos, something began to change drastically with Nigerian Christianity in the mid-1980s when some Nigerian Pentecostal leaders began to form an alliance with some Pentecostals leaders in the West. This alliance was formed by the Nigerian leaders' physically visiting, and adopting some of the writings of, foreign Pentecostal preachers. The alliance formed the third factor concerning the seduction of Nigerian Pentecostalism. As Maxey and Ozodo write,

By the late '70s neo-Pentecostal churches as a whole were abandoning the gains of the Civil War Revival, especially as they struggled with the rising socio-economic challenges before them. At the same time, they were beginning to import and drink the spiked Kool-Aid of the American Health and Wealth Gospel. It was to prove a fatal move as these newly minted churches sold a precious birthright of revival orientation for a mess of self-focused pottage.<sup>52</sup>

The close alliance between Nigerian and Western Pentecostal leaders resulted in a sudden change of bearing for Nigerian Pentecostal churches. Ijaola observes,

Just as classical Pentecostalism was a renewal movement that emerged from the Protestant Holiness movement, with an emphasis on prayer and the Holy Spirit's power and gifts, neo-Pentecostalism is a movement that replenishes the classical Pentecostal beliefs with an optimism derived from faith that defines prosperity as a part of the redemption package for Christians. Therefore, the prosperity gospel hails from a long history of Pentecostalism. Its roots in the Western Pentecostal prosperity gospel movement is incontrovertible. From North America to Africa, the prosperity gospel preachers are attracting throngs of people from the mainline churches and are churching the unchurched. However, this movement has been heavily criticized by both classical Pentecostals and some mainline churches for

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<sup>51</sup> Maxey and Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 51.

<sup>52</sup> Maxey and Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 51-52.

what is conceived as its material inclination.<sup>53</sup>

The first doctrinal error imported to Nigeria by Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal leaders has to do with the Word of Faith teaching from the Word of Faith movement in the U.S.A. “A significant part of the background for the introduction of Word of Faith teaching into Nigeria was the distribution of the writings of E. W. Kenyon.”<sup>54</sup> According to Charles Lola,

The “Word of Faith” is not a church; it is a movement, that has become the most dominant in impact and influence on the 21st century Christian church particularly across the Global South. The Word of Faith movement came out of the Pentecostal movement in the late 20th century [1950-1970s]. Its founder was E. William Kenyon, whose own work is based on another man’s work.<sup>55</sup>

The clear difference between the teachings of Phinehas Quimby’s “New Thoughts” and William Kenyon’s “Word of Faith” is that Quimby’s teaching was based on the power of the mind, not on religion, whereas Kenyon applied the same principles to the heart of the Christian faith. At the heart of Kenyon’s Word of Faith movement is the belief in the “Force of Faith.” With the “Force of Faith,” it is believed that words can be used to manipulate the “Faith-Force” in order to obtain all of the promises contained in Scripture. It is from this belief in “Faith-Force” that comes the “name it and claim it” teaching, which is seen as the power of positive confession. Bishop David O. Oyedepo, one of the champions of the preachers of faith in Nigeria (whose church’s name is Living

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<sup>53</sup> Ijaola, “Pentecostalism, the Prosperity Gospel, and Poverty in Africa,” 138.

<sup>54</sup> Gary S. Maxey, *The WATS Journey: A Personal Narrative* (Lagos: WATS, 2014), 44-45, 50-51; Maxey and Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 85.

<sup>55</sup> Charles Lola, Google Form survey, January 10, 2020. In all instances where a survey participant’s name appears, the participant granted me permission to use his or her name. If a participant’s name does not appear, that person did not give me permission to use his or her name. Lola makes a clear distinction between biblical truths and the errors of the Word of Faith movement. Phinehas Quimby was an American; he was described as a spiritual healer, teacher, magnetizer, mesmerist, and inventor. His spiritual work was described as “agnostic.” According to his own son’s testimony, “My father’s healing was not in any way connected with the Bible or Christian Science. His method of curing the sick, religion played no part. There were no prayers, there was no assistance from God or any other divinity. He cured by his own knowledge and wisdom.” From the testimony of Quimby’s own son, all Christians should find it curious that William Kenyon ever came about using Quimby’s principles in “New Thoughts” as a basis for his application of faith to what ought to be the Christian and biblical principles of the Word of Faith movement. See Hank Hanegraaff, *Christianity in Crisis: The 21st Century* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 253-54.



Faith Church; a.k.a. Winner Chapel), boldly writes of himself,

There are still dispensationalists on the earth today, men that are sent to serve their generation by opening new chapters of depth in God's Word. The Holy Ghost has sent me to open a new chapter to this generation. He has sent me with the powerful Word of faith, and has also delivered into my hands mysterious instruments that have been used over the years to raise the dead, destroy HIV/AIDS, dissolve cancers, establish liberty, provoke success, and command favor, all for the uplift of Zion!<sup>56</sup>

The second error emanates from the Word of Faith movement, and it centers on the "health and wealth gospel" (a.k.a. the prosperity gospel).<sup>57</sup> Maxey and Ozodo remark,

We are saying that the major Characteristic of the contemporary Nigerian Church in which it differs markedly from its antecedent is the pronounced focus on *material prosperity*. Material prosperity is certainly an important focus, and especially for Nigerians who have progressively found themselves at wits end to know how to physically survive. But the pendulum has swung too far in the wrong direction. In much of the contemporary Nigerian Church, hunger for a holy God has been replaced by hunger for material prosperity. Dedication to God has been replaced by dedication to financial success. As the emphasis has continued doors have been opened to bring in unethical, corrupt and worldly elements, all in the name of prosperity.<sup>58</sup>

According to the doctrinal stand of the health and wealth gospel, sickness and suffering should not be parts of the Christian faith.<sup>59</sup>

The third doctrinal error centers on the Hyper Grace movement. This movement teaches faith without obedience, grace without restriction and accountability, liberty without responsibility.<sup>60</sup> The teachers of "hyper grace" maintain that all of Jesus's

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<sup>56</sup> Oyedepo, *Signs and Wonders Today*, 58.

<sup>57</sup> Kenneth Hagin had studied the works of William Kenyon and became the foremost admirer of Kenyon and the Word of Faith movement. Hagin largely made the Word of Faith movement what it is today. He was the foremost leader and proponent of the prosperity (or health and wealth) gospel. There are others who later joined in the pursuit of these falsehoods under the disguise of receiving a "Revelation of Knowledge." This is not to say that all that these men taught is wrong but that these particular teachings need to be brought under biblical scrutiny.

<sup>58</sup> Maxey and Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 82-83 (emphasis added).

<sup>59</sup> Roland S. Babatunde, *The Faith of our Fathers: Feared Not Sword and Fire* (Ilorin, Nigeria: Tanimola Press, 2014), 20.

<sup>60</sup> Maxey and Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 181-82.

teachings were prior to Calvary and therefore are a reflection of the Old Testament dispensation. As a matter of fact,

The resulting message of the hyper freedom and hyper grace is a modern form of antinomianism, *perverting the grace of God into a license for immorality* (Jude 4). Antinomianism comes from the Greek roots meaning lawlessness. An antinomian is someone who believes that under the gospel dispensation, the moral law is no longer relevant because salvation is obtained through faith alone (*sola fide*) . . . . So what the proponents of this new “grace revolution” or “grace reformation” are advocating is nothing but a revival of the much older heresy of antinomianism, which goes all the way back to Bible time.<sup>61</sup>

Just like his subtle tactic of luring people away from the truth, Satan seems to approach Nigerian Pentecostals with crafty deception. “None of the deceptive teachings that have led the Nigerian Church astray over the past forty years have come to us without significant elements of truth. All of them have appealed to deeply felt needs within the hearts of hungry and thirsty Nigerians.”<sup>62</sup> Hence, many people gullibly defend those deceptions with the mindset that those teachings are scriptural. The old Nigerian classical Pentecostals never focused on material prosperity.<sup>63</sup> The power of positive thinking (Word of Faith) did not factor into their theology, and holiness message (though with its tail of legalism<sup>64</sup>) characterized their evangelistic zeal—unlike today’s hyper grace teaching. But from the late 1970s onward, Nigerian Pentecostals began to derail gradually due to the aforementioned issues.

Today, NNPs seem to revive the errors that existed in Nigerian Pentecostalism to the extreme. There is, however, presently a clear line of demarcation between the Nigerian classical Pentecostals and the Neo-Pentecostals. The difference primarily

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<sup>61</sup> Maxey and Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 183 (emphasis added). See also Michael L. Brown, *Hyper Grace: Exposing the Danger of the Modern Grace Message* (Lake Mary, FL: Charismas House, 2014), 284-6. The apostle James’s warning is very clear: “faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (Jas 2:17).

<sup>62</sup> Maxey and Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 81.

<sup>63</sup> Sunday Bwanhot, interview by the author, Chicago, IL, December 7, 2019.

<sup>64</sup> Both the older Pentecostal churches and the holiness movement in general have been heavily plagued by legalism for decades. See Maxey and Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 82.

centers on the alarming rate of increase in ethical and moral decadence as a result of the inordinate pursuit of power and materialism in the name of “prosperity.” Ijaola observes that the claim of Neo-Pentecostalism to be part of the Pentecostal movement

rests in its belief in the exhibition of charisma of the Holy Spirit, including speaking in tongues, faith, signs, and wonders. However, it distinguishes itself by the doctrine of wealth and health. The prosperity gospel is often defined against the backdrop of the nexus between the experience of a spiritual rebirth—salvation—and the existential reality of poverty.<sup>65</sup>

Oye points out, “When the materialistic gospel was first imported to Nigeria in the 80s, somebody like me and some others concerned brothers in the Lord stood to oppose it. But some insensitive preachers and uninformed followers called us backsliders and lukewarm who are no longer hot for God. But today, time has proven what is right.”<sup>66</sup> Well-known professor of Christian theology, ethics, and public policy Sunday B. Agang expresses this decadence well:

Christians in Nigeria should be afraid of something more dangerous than the Islamization agenda; the ethical and moral decadence eroding Christian public life . . . . I worry more about the serious moral decadence and ethical decline which now characterize Christianity in Nigeria and the African continent at large. Today, many Christians are deeply involved in corruption and flaunt decadent and immoral lifestyles . . . . Christians in Nigeria are dancing on the brink of moral and ethical collapse.<sup>67</sup>

It is sad to say that the vast majority of Nigerian Pentecostals are not exempt from this moral and ethical degeneration.

The fourth challenge is a home-based error of syncretistic practices—that is, the mixture of elements from two or more distinct religious belief systems.<sup>68</sup> As earlier mentioned (according to figure 34), 76.7 percent of the survey respondents agree that

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<sup>65</sup> Ijaola, “Pentecostalism, the Prosperity Gospel, and Poverty in Africa,” 143.

<sup>66</sup> Oye, interview.

<sup>67</sup> Sunday Bobai Agang, “The Greatest Threat to the Church Isn’t Islam—It’s Us,” *Christianity Today*, April 21, 2017, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2017/may/radical-islam-not-nigerian-churches-greatest-threat.html>.

<sup>68</sup> Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 144-58.

NNPs have Christian beliefs and practices that portray the practices of African traditional religions (more light is thrown on this in the next section). Fifth, in the late 70s to early 80s, there came a loss of inner character or Christ-likeness—a form of worldliness among the early Nigerian Pentecostal leaders and members. “Worldliness involves taking on more and more of the coloring of the world around us until there is little distinction between those who are a part of the body of Christ and those who are not. Standard for ethical conduct are relaxed.”<sup>69</sup>

Finally, although the Scripture establishes the priesthood of all believers in Christ Jesus, African cultural practices involve a penchant for title-based hierarchies. Hence, the clamor for titles also worms its way into the midst of Nigerian church leaders. As Maxey and Ozodo correctly point out,

The gradual emergence of an increasingly self-centered quasi-biblical and quasi-ethical Christianity was clearly evident as we moved into the ‘80s and ‘90s. the proliferation of titles most visibly modeled and spurred by Benson Idahosa’s elevation as the first Pentecostal archbishop in Africa became the order of the day. . . . The resulting unbridled quest for titles within the Nigerian Church was the regrettable outcome. Pride gradually became one of the most unrebuked sins within the Church.<sup>70</sup>

At this point in the history of the Nigerian wing of Pentecostalism, self-glorification set in as self-centeredness began to manifest through self-advancement and self-governance. Again, Maxey and Ozodo aver,

The minimal title of “Rev Dr” became increasingly commonplace for literally thousands, no matter how questionable the ordination or how unmerited or illegitimate the doctorate. Very sub-standard theological schools began to emerge,

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<sup>69</sup> Maxey and Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 58.

<sup>70</sup> Maxey and Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 59. According to Danny McCain, one of the greatest dangers that leaders face is pride. People admire, respect, and bow down to leaders. People treat them special. Leaders get called to the high table; they do not have to wait in the queue. After leaders have been treated this way for a while, they begin to think that they *really are* important. It does not matter how big or little a person is; there is always a tendency toward pride. See Danny McCain, *Tough Tests for Top Leaders: God’s Strategy for Preparing Africans to lead Global Christianity* (Jos, Nigeria: Capro Media, 2000), 37. Africans are probably no prouder than any other group of people. However, since is Africa my home, these are the people I see daily. And I see a lot of proud people. The Bible says that God hates pride (Prov 8:13; 16:5; Jas 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5).

in too many cases offering doctorates in exchange either for money or for a few days of uncreditable resident study.<sup>71</sup>

### **The Danger of the NNPs' Gospel**

From the survey data discussed above, Nigerian Pentecostals seem to be derailing from the biblical gospel presentation, and Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals seem to be completely off the true course of biblical evangelism right from the start. Reacting to the issue of immorality among some NNP leaders, one survey respondent writes,

Many of the NNPs leaders have discouraged many people from going to church, especially the young people, due to their act of atrocities and exploitation of all forms. They ordain people (men and women) who have not really known the Lord as ministers because of money. They are fond of abuse young ladies and girls. They make doubt the reality of the supernatural. They are also mainly interested in money not in saving lost souls. They brainwashed people with their eloquent words and many more. But worst still, they make the unbelievers to speak blaspheming words about the name of Jesus, and many unbelievers think that Christians are bunch of fake people.<sup>72</sup>

Maxey and Ozodo admit, “We are struggling as a Church . . . . The Prince of Persia is blocking our prayers and the prayers of the saints in Nigeria for Nigeria. [We have] never seen a nation awash with so many Churches and aglow with so much unrighteousness, corruption and rank hypocrisy.”<sup>73</sup> Unlike its reputable integrity of the past, today, “the Nigerian Church has lost the credibility it once had within the society. The reputation of the Church leadership has declined, we have seen the erosion of our Christian heritage.”<sup>74</sup> Maxey and Ozodo go on to say, “Unfortunately, it is now noticeable that a significant segment of the Christian Church in this country is gradually but steadily departing from the basic goals of Christianity . . . . The entire Church is in the danger of losing its basic direction.”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Maxey and Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 59.

<sup>72</sup> P. Bunmi Samuel, Google Form survey, December 11, 2019.

<sup>73</sup> Maxey and Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 16.

<sup>74</sup> Maxey and Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 16.

<sup>75</sup> Maxey and Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 16.

Daniel E. Sopuru notes that the effects of the Neo-Pentecostal gospel are spreading like cancerous cells to every nook and cranny throughout the nation of Nigeria:

Neo-Pentecostalism has really watered-down Christianity. Secondly, Pentecostal pastors have thrown the dignity of the Clergy to the pigs. They tell a lot of lies to win people to themselves, and they make their followers see them as next to Jesus Christ, if not like Jesus Christ Himself. The fact is that if the Lord himself does not intervene, many people would go to hell from Pentecostal Churches. It seems this fits the description the Lord gave about the road that leads to destruction (wide and smooth, and many people find it), against the narrow and thorny and few people find it. I tend to believe that the Neo-Pentecostal Movement was from the Devil to counter what the Church stands for. It is a pity that many “evangelicals” run to those Churches thinking that they are models.<sup>76</sup>

The gospel of Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals is so contagious that many evangelicals are cheaply falling for it. Regardless of the international recognition of the global shift of Christianity toward the Global South, the nation of Nigeria seems to be at a crossroads presently concerning the quality of her Christianity.

Ironically, the gospel of Nigeria Neo-Pentecostals seems to be gaining wider recognition and attention:

Many well-known Church leaders around the world are seriously proclaiming that we are in the midst of the greatest revival the Church has ever known. Yet nobody who reads the New Testament with an open and sincere mind will agree with those who believe that the Church is experiencing a revival at present. The result is that increasingly, many Christians are living in ways not in keeping with the standards of the Scriptures. Materialism is enthroned and sin is tolerated, while holiness is largely ignored.<sup>77</sup>

The attention seems to have been largely placed on the popularity of Neo-Pentecostal preachers; hence, the biblical lifestyle of godliness and contentment has been eroded by a quest for popularity. Consequently, churches are multiplying all throughout Nigeria today, but there is no marked change in the way people live.<sup>78</sup> It is sad to say that “the Nigeria revival is losing its cutting edge. One obvious reason for this is that there are

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<sup>76</sup> Daniel E. Sopuru, Google Interview, October 18, 2019.

<sup>77</sup> Maxey and Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 16.

<sup>78</sup> Maxey and Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 16.

doctrinal errors in the camp of those pushing the Church forward. A result of this is that the Church is in serious danger of losing sight of the very reason for its existence.”<sup>79</sup> Hence, there is convincing evidence that NNPs are pursuing trajectories that do not bode well for the future of Christianity in Nigeria. In the next chapter, some of the questionable theological projections evident in the main gospel messages of Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals will be elucidated in comparison to the gospel presentation of Nigerian evangelicals. In so doing, thorough attention will be given to the theological and practical implications of the data discussed in this chapter.

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<sup>79</sup> Maxey and Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 15.

CHAPTER 4  
AN ANALYSIS OF THE GOSPEL-CONTENTS OF  
NIGERIAN NEO-PENTECOSTALS

This chapter analyses the theology and the practical messages of Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals (NNPs) in evangelism vis-à-vis the central evangelistic message of Nigerian evangelicals. Some of the NNPs' ten major emphases concerning the presentation of the gospel (as seen in chap. 3) receive closer attention, which will enable readers to discern the theological implications that these emphases may have on efforts to retain the biblical gospel in Nigeria. In addition to the sixty-two respondents to the questionnaire (as seen in chap. 3), twenty-five other Nigerian pastors, church leaders and church workers from both evangelical and Neo-Pentecostal denominations were interviewed through Google Forms and video calls. Moreover, books authored by some famous NNP church founders (called "General Overseers" or "GOs") have been consulted.

Today, the new Pentecostal denominations in Nigeria are in various versions as mentioned in the previous chapter. But due to their magnitude of influence, this thesis focuses on such denominations like, The Redeem Christian Church of God (RCCG), Living Faith Church (aka Winner Chapel), Christ Embassy (aka Believers' Love World Assembly), Deeper Life Bible Church, Gospel Faith Mission International (GOFAMINT), Mountain of Fire Ministry, Dunamis Church Int'l, Mountain of Fire Ministry (MFM), Commonwealth of Zion Assembly (COZA), Daystar Christian Center, House on the Rock, and a few other well-known ones.<sup>1</sup> This chapter begins by drawing

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<sup>1</sup> These Pentecostals churches attract the focus of this thesis simply because, that are part of the major Neo-Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria that pull crowds in hundreds of thousands. Anywhere the abbreviation "a.k.a." appears, it means "also known as."



attention to the foundational theological positions that precipitate the evangelistic activities of NNP churches.

### **The Theological Presuppositions of Nigerian Neo-Pentecostal Churches**

Interestingly, just as the theology of NNPs play a prominent role in the content of their gospel presentations, the growth of NNP churches also lies majorly on some of their theological inclinations. According to Richard Burgess, “Since the 1970s, Nigeria’s religious landscape has been transformed by the emergence of new, locally instituted, Pentecostal churches, with a more modern and global orientation than their Aladura predecessors.”<sup>2</sup> Burgess, in his desire to know the theology of the NNPs, has completed in-depth research that will be helpful at this junction. He begins by asserting,

Due to rapid expansion and adept use of media technologies, these churches have recently attracted the attention of scholars from a variety of disciplines. Nigerian theologian Deji Ayegboyi identifies three broad categories: “Holiness Movements,” “Prosperity Organizations,” and “Deliverance Ministries,” though there is considerable overlap between the three.<sup>3</sup>

As one of the largest Pentecostal bodies, Deeper Life Bible Church has planted over six thousand branches all over Nigeria. With another bigger auditorium under construction, Living Faith Church (a.k.a. Winners’ Chapel), opened the Faith Tabernacle church auditorium, containing 50,400 seats, in Lagos. The Dunamis Church International, founded by Paul Eneche, recently opened a new church auditorium in 2019 with seating capacity for 100,000 people. Because of its aggressive missionary ambitions and the migratory habits of its members, in addition to the present trend of globalization, Nigerian Pentecostalism has spread to various parts of the world.<sup>4</sup> As Burgess writes,

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Burgess, “Nigerian Pentecostal Theology in Global Perspective,” *PentecoStudies* 7, no. 2 (2008): 30.

<sup>3</sup> Burgess, “Nigerian Pentecostal Theology,” 31.

<sup>4</sup> Burgess, “Nigerian Pentecostal Theology,” 30.

Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), for example, has congregations in more than one hundred nations. In London, which has by far the largest Nigerian community in the U.K., there are over eighty Nigerian initiated denominations and independent churches. The largest single congregation in Western Europe is the London-based Kingsway International Christian Centre (KICC), founded by Pastor Matthew Ashimolowo, which has grown to around 12,000 in fifteen years. The largest Nigerian initiated denomination in Britain is RCCG, which has planted more than 250 congregations in under twenty years. Its flagship congregation, Jesus House, has over three thousand members.<sup>5</sup>

Burgess also observes that “as local Christian communities, African Pentecostal churches are now recognized as an important source for African theological reflection. Theirs is an enacted theology that emerges through reflection and practice, in contrast to the more formalized written theology of the European mission churches.”<sup>6</sup> However, the practical focus and concerns of African Pentecostals tend to center on issues like healing, economic security and fertility, with theologies that reflect a concern for identity construction and contextual relevance. In addition, many of the ingredients that sum up the religious repertoire of Nigerian Pentecostal churches are found within African Pentecostalism generally.<sup>7</sup> For instance, Burgess writes,

Nigerian Pentecostals claim to derive their theology directly from the Bible. While they may handle (biblical interpretation) in an uncritical way by neglecting its historical context, it is partly because they wish to make it relevant to local contexts. It is also because they are reluctant to divest the Bible of its supernatural character. Like liberation theology, Nigerian Pentecostals seek to understand local contexts and culture in the light of Scripture, but they do so by retaining a literalist approach to biblical hermeneutics. They look for correspondences between their own life situations and the Bible, and expect Biblical texts to have practical relevance and problem-solving potential.<sup>8</sup>

Contrary to the proper principles of interpretation (or hermeneutics), Nigerian Pentecostals seem to follow “postmodern theories” of reading and interpretation.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Burgess, “Nigerian Pentecostal Theology,” 31.

<sup>6</sup> Burgess, “Nigerian Pentecostal Theology,” 30.

<sup>7</sup> Burgess, “Nigerian Pentecostal Theology,” 31.

<sup>8</sup> Burgess, “Nigerian Pentecostal Theology,” 32.

<sup>9</sup> Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 41.

Burgess further adds,

Nigerian Pentecostals also have a fondness for narrative texts and find particular affinities between the biblical world and their own. This leads to a preference for the Old Testament and the narrative portions of the New Testament, especially the Gospels and the Book of Acts. Old Testament characters, such as Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Hannah and Ruth, are especially popular as illustrations of the fruits of God's blessings and miraculous intervention. Their pragmatic hermeneutical approach sometimes leads to allegorical readings of biblical narratives. Without abandoning a commitment to biblical literalism, they find multiple layers of meaning in the text, which satisfy African Pentecostal aspirations for a practical and experiential form of Christianity.<sup>10</sup>

According to Stephen S. O. Y. Baba,

The NNPs need to improve on their Hermeneutics. The NNPs approach of socio-cultural context of the people in engaging biblical texts needs review. Their method of interpreting the bible has a weakness. It begins with man and ends with man. The NNPs stresses the end results instead of emphasizing the starting point. In my own opinion, it is impossible for such a gospel they preach or teach that is apart from repentance and faith in Christ to bring a desire result. My submission is that they need to stop stressing the end results apart from the necessary starting point which is Salvation in Christ first—individual repentance and faith in Christ.<sup>11</sup>

Baba adds that NNPs need to stop the preaching of an 'escapism gospel' and also stop employing hermeneutics of suspicion.<sup>12</sup> As a result of their pragmatic approach to biblical interpretation, a selective hermeneutical method eventually becomes the NNPs' order of things.<sup>13</sup> This method has the potential to wrench biblical texts out of their contexts in order to support NNPs' predetermined arguments.<sup>14</sup> "This 'proof-texting' approach," says Burgess, "can result in 'truncated, if not erroneous, views on

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<sup>10</sup> Burgess, "Nigerian Pentecostal Theology," 33.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen S. O. Y. Baba, Google Forms survey, October 26, 2019.

<sup>12</sup> According to Baba, an 'escapism gospel' is any preaching of Christ that says there is no suffering. This is a new kind of prosperity gospel that substitutes positive thinking for salvation and presents the gospel as an escape route by teaching the congregation methods of removing pain and suffering from their lives as believers. The people who are doing this need to go back to the basics and use the valid standard principles of biblical interpretation, which teach punishment for sinners and present redemptive grace for fallen human beings through Christ, who brought proper reconciliation. The gospel of salvation—rather than an escapism gospel—must be emphasized.

<sup>13</sup> Charles Lola sees this as error of "selective private interpretation" of the Scriptures rather than biblical interpretation—comparing Scripture with Scripture. Charles Lola, Google Forms survey, January 30, 2020.

<sup>14</sup> Burgess, "Nigerian Pentecostal Theology," 33.

theological issues.’ This is especially apparent in the way Nigerian Pentecostals construct their theologies of deliverance and prosperity.’<sup>15</sup> Popular Africa theologian Ogbu Kalu critiques Pentecostal theology, labeling it “bumper sticker” hermeneutics or “experiential literalism,” where “personal and corporate experiences are woven into the hermeneutical task,” fusing the horizons of the past and present with a “pragmatic hermeneutical leap.”<sup>16</sup>

On the result of this pragmatic leap, John O. Enyinnaya writes, “In their elevation of experience over Scripture, and unquestioning acceptance of dreams, visions and spontaneous prophetic utterances, over and above the teaching of the Bible, Pentecostals err in their valuation of the authority of the Bible.”<sup>17</sup> Either as a result of hermeneutical illiteracy or intentional personal gratification, most Pentecostal preachers always focus their teaching and preaching on what their followers would like to hear. As Enyinnaya notes, “This shifting membership base of some of these churches make the preachers tend to preach what will suit the taste of listeners so they would come back next Sunday. This listener-friendly disposition or public relations concern of much of Pentecostal preaching makes it open to much suspicion.”<sup>18</sup>

Most NNPs never believe in the eternal security of believers in Christ Jesus; thus, worshippers bind themselves to their leaders, whose instructions they must strictly adhere to so as to “make heaven.”<sup>19</sup> Ter Haar observes that in African Christianity the

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<sup>15</sup> Burgess, “Nigerian Pentecostal Theology,” 33.

<sup>16</sup> Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 266-67. See also Burgess, “Nigerian Pentecostal Theology,” 33.

<sup>17</sup> John O. Enyinnaya, “Pentecostal Hermeneutic and Preaching: An Appraisal,” *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 8, no. 1 (2008): 149.

<sup>18</sup> Enyinnaya, “Pentecostal Hermeneutic and Preaching,” 151.

<sup>19</sup> The phrase “to make heaven” reveals that many of the Pentecostal Christians are still striving with their own power and strength to be able to get to heaven. This reveals their theology of work-based salvation, not salvation by grace alone (Eph 2:8). Adelaja writes,

A well-known General Overseer in Nigeria recently announced to his members publicly that anyone who does not pay his or her tithes will not make it to heaven. He threatens the members and all the

prophet-healer-miracle worker is strongly appealing and wields great authority, and he maintains that Adeboye fits this image.<sup>20</sup> In addition,

The authority that is ascribed to Adeboye by some of his ardent followers is questionable because it may be construed as appropriating divine prerogatives. His authority is regarded as ‘supreme, his orders final, and his power and supremacy considered next to Christ.’ One of his Assistant General Overseers has said, Adeboye is the God we now see in human flesh; what he tells us we take as coming from God directly. We do not argue with it. Such statements may be identified with the cult of hero-worship.<sup>21</sup>

Several Pentecostal leaders wrongly misinterpret Scriptures, such as 2 Chr. 20:20: “And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper” (KJV). These NNP leaders interpret the passage above as referring to *themselves* as the prophets who will bring their followers to heaven—the “promise land.”<sup>22</sup> The belief always is, if you want to get to heaven after death, you need

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pastors under him with curses. Similarly, another General Overseer recently proclaimed to his followers that anyone who misses coming to church more than five times will die prematurely. He warns that any of his members who leaves his “fatherly coverage” over them will die instantly.” These types of Neo-Pentecostal leaders threaten those who oppose their commands and plant seeds of fear in their followers’ hearts. They protect themselves with Scripture like Ps 105:15 (“touch not my anointed and do my prophet no harm”). (Sunday Adelaja, *Damaged by Religion: Path to Healing* [Kiev, Ukraine: Golden Truth, 2019], 51-52)

Hence, people obey such leaders to the letter not because of the love they have for God but because of their fear of the curses from their pastors.

<sup>20</sup> Gerrie Ter Haar, “A Wondrous God: Miracles in Contemporary Africa,” *African Affairs* 102 (2003): 409-28.

<sup>21</sup> Afolarin Olutunde Ojewole and Efe Monday Ehioghae, “Leadership and Power in the Pentecostal Movement: Selected Case Studies,” in *Pentecostalism and Politics in Africa*, ed. Adeshina Afolayan, Olajumoke Yacob-Haliso, and Toyin Falola (Ibadan, Nigeria: Springer International, 2018), 326. See also Enoch A. Adeboye, *As Pure as Light* (Lagos, Nigeria: CRM Book Ministry, 1999), 327; Adeboye, *How to Turn Your Austerity to Prosperity* (Lagos, Nigeria: CRM Book Ministry, 1989), 283.

<sup>22</sup> David O. Oyedepo, *Walking in Dominion* (Lagos, Nigeria: Dominion, 2006), 165-69. See also Oyedepo, *Understanding Your Covenant Rights* (Canaan Land, Lagos: Dominion, 2003) 1-5. Again, in his message to his audience, and talking about himself and his ministry, Oyedepo writes,

I do believe that you are going to partake of the fullness [full blessings] of this commission. You must diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord your God, and observe to do whatever He commands you through my mouth. Then, the Lord your God will set you on high, above all nations of the earth. “Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper. I say this over and over again, God sent me. He said, ‘Go and make my people rich!’” That is an

to follow your pastor's words to the letter.<sup>23</sup> Some members of NNP churches have yielded the total control of their lives to these so-called "men of God." Some denominations have prayer grounds, prayer camps, or prayer cities,<sup>24</sup> where people go to pray and fast for days, weeks, or months, as instructed by their pastors.<sup>25</sup>

One of the preachers of a life of "sinless perfection" is Williams F. Kumuyi, the founder and superintendent of Deeper Life Bible Church. Kumuyi believes that perfect holiness is possible here on earth, and to him, every single sin is enough to take someone to hell.<sup>26</sup> Kumuyi warns, "Be not deceived by the teaching of eternal security."<sup>27</sup> Most of Kumuyi's followers live in perpetual fear of hell. This denomination contains a lot of "dos" and "don'ts." Deeper Life Bible Church has over seven thousand branches in Nigeria alone.<sup>28</sup> NNP leaders always have a strong grip over their followers.

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assurance that wherever I stand, poverty must not survive. (Oyedepo, *Breaking Financial Hardship* [Lagos, Nigeria: Dominion, 1995], 54-55)

<sup>23</sup> Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye, "Anyone Not Paying His Tithes Will Not Get to Heaven," YouTube video, 6:04, April 13, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PX4T9teq97o>. Another equivalent Scripture is Hos 12:13: "And by a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved" (KJV). According to the Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal interpretation of this Scripture, "the prophets" are now the church leaders responsible for leading their followers to success on earth and to heaven as well. In the doctrinal liturgy of any Pentecostal or Neo-Pentecostal assembly, disobedience to a Pentecostals leader attract curses that can eventually cause any follower to miss out on heaven.

<sup>24</sup> The RCCG always holds a monthly Holy Ghost Conference at Redeem Camp on the outskirts of Lagos. Millions of people from different parts of the world used to attend this monthly program. Oyedepo holds a monthly program tagged "Shiloh" in his Ota Auditorium.

<sup>25</sup> See Victor Oludiran, *The 7 Levels of Prayer: A Tested Formula for Approaching the Throne of Grace* (Smyrna, GA: LICAIM, 2015), 69-71. Prayer and fasting are always in patterns of 7 days, 14 days, 21 days, 40 days, 60 days, 90 days, and 120 days—depending on the mandate given by the "man of God" (MOG). People stay on the prayer mountains' prayer camps uninterruptedly for the duration of the prayer-and-fasting period. At the MFM Prayer City on the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, prayer is said to go on 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, non-stop, all year round. See Abimbola Adelokun, "Pentecostal Panopticism and the Phantasm of the Ultimate Power," in Afolayan, Yacob-Haliso, and Falola, *Pentecostalism and Politics in Africa*, 102.

<sup>26</sup> Williams F. Kumuyi, *Adultery Forbidden* (Lagos, Nigeria: Life Press, 1984), 22; See also, Williams F. Kumuyi, *Believers in the Last Days* (Lagos, Nigeria: Life Press, 1995), 38.

<sup>27</sup> Kumuyi, *Adultery Forbidden*, 29.

<sup>28</sup> W. F. Kumuyi, *Deeper Life Bible Church Article of Faith* (Lagos, Nigeria: DLBC Gbagada Press, 2005), 9. See also Deeper Christian Life Ministry, "Pastor W. F. Kumuyi," accessed October 30, 2018, <https://dclm.org/about/w-f-kumuyi/>. Although Kumuyi is an advocate of certain Wesleyan theologies that hold unto some questionable theological positions, he is a man highly respected among his fellow Pentecostals for a life of good morals and for not being materialistic. See Williams F. Kumuyi,

Both the Pentecostal and charismatic movements of Nigeria hold to the continuation of the prophetic office. Babatomiwa Moses Owojaiye writes,

According to charismatic theology, as one of the leadership offices of the Old Testament (1 Sam 9:9, 11, 19; 2 Sam 15: 27) and New Testament (Eph 4: 11), the prophetic office is available to selected men and women (Acts 2:17). Charismatics teach that women such as Miriam (Exod 15:20), Deborah (Judges 4:4), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14; 2 Chron 34:22), Noadiah (Neh 6:14), and Anna (Luke 2:36) joined the ranks of men called to direct, build up, and mature the people of God as a God-fearing community.<sup>29</sup>

In African Traditional Religions, there is always a quest to know what will happen in the future. Hence, when people are not well disciplined after their conversions, they usually carry this same worldview and practice into Christianity—resulting in religious syncretism. Such syncretism happens a lot among Neo-Pentecostal followers. Byang Kato’s old observation has come into the limelight: “The defunct gods of African traditional religions are now rearing their heads. . . . the devil has many other avenues for fighting against Christ and His church and he knows where best to succeed. Christopaganism appears to be the area of attack within the next generation. The battle has started.”<sup>30</sup> NNP prophets who are able to foretell future events have multitudes of people following them as they turn themselves to little “gods.”<sup>31</sup> Bisola H. Johnson, who says she was once a captive of fake popular Nigerian prophet T. B. Joshua, writes extensively

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*Sanctification: A Christian Experience* (Lagos, Nigeria: Life Press, 2008), 1-10. Kumuyi adds, “The believer’s lifestyle should be characterized by total departure from every unclean thing. Purity of heart and life is the only true index of biblical Christian living.” Kumuyi, *Believers in the Last Days*, 35.

<sup>29</sup> Babatomiwa Moses Owojaiye, “The Problem of False Prophets in Africa: Strengthening the Church in the Face of a Troublesome Trend,” *Lausanne Global Analysis* 8, no. 6 (November 2019): 2.

<sup>30</sup> Byang Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* (Nairobi, Egypt: Evangel, 1975), 175.

<sup>31</sup> According to Ademola Adebisi, “In most Neo-Pentecostal churches, members are not permitted to stand up and look directly into the eyes of their leaders during conversations. As a sign of respect and honor, members have to bow down or kneel when talking to their leaders.” M. Ademola Adebisi, interview by the author, Louisville, KY, January 25, 2020. Danny McCain sheds more light on this issue in his book *Tough Tests for Top Leaders: God’s Strategy for Preparing Africans to Lead Global Christianity* (Jos, Nigeria: Capro Media, 2000), 37-42.

about her fourteen-year ordeal under the bondage of the “prophet.”<sup>32</sup> She gives various examples of fake prophecies given by Joshua, none of which ever came to pass. For example, Johnson writes,

T. B. Joshua’s false prophecies include this about the 200-plus schoolgirls kidnapped by Boko Haram in April 2014; T. B. Joshua said, “unless I am not called by God. I place my career and calling on the line. That these 200 plus school children kidnapped, they have to be released immediately, unharmed and unhurt.” Over three years later, they remain captive, with some of them possibly converted to Islam and carrying out terrorist murders. Therefore, T. B. Joshua is condemned by his own words as a false prophet. He also falsely predicted the 2014 Ebola crisis was over, as against its wildfire spread, which actually got much worse; and that the missing Malaysia Airline jet would be found in 2014. Today, in 2017 the plane is still missing [sic].<sup>33</sup>

Scripture clearly points out the litmus tests for a true prophet of God. One of these tests is that the predictions that come from the prophet must come one-hundred percent fulfilment. Failure to measure up to this standard attracts the death penalty under the Old Testament law (see Deut 18: 21-22). Johnson adds that “this fake prophet frequently talks about the visions God gives him, he claimed before that he sees the future as clearly as if he is watching Emmanuel TV.”<sup>34</sup> Joshua is just a sample of the numerous NNP fake prophets and prophetesses who are spreading fake teachings all over.

According to Burgess,

While the intention of Nigerian Pentecostals is to be biblical, their theology is also shaped by local concerns and contexts—all theology is culturally conditioned. Despite a tendency to demonize traditional culture and to present themselves as modern individuals, Nigerian Pentecostals interpret Christianity through the lens of

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<sup>32</sup> Bisola H. Johnson, *The T. B. Joshua I Know: Deception of the Age Unmasked* (Lagos, Nigeria: n.p., 2018), 1-3.

<sup>33</sup> Johnson, *The T. B. Joshua I Know*, 310.

<sup>34</sup> Johnson, *The T. B. Joshua I Know*, 310. Johnson continues,

A few days to the election in the USA, on Sunday the 5th November 2016, in a bid to be relevant, T. B. Joshua claimed that God had shown him the new president of the United States of America . . . . The Lord said, there is a State that enormously (cast 99%) vote for this woman, and the woman has a narrow win. This prophecy was nothing more than stating what the polls were saying on CNN and everywhere that it would be a narrow win for Hillary Clinton. As we all now know, it wasn’t nearly as close as predicted, and the winner is most definitely not “the woman” as T. B. Joshua forecasted.



existing religious categories and especially the traditional search for spiritual power, a pervasive theme in societies such as the Yoruba and Igbo. For the Yoruba, the quest for power (*agbara*) to enhance life is the hermeneutical key to understanding their attraction to all religion, including Pentecostalism. In Yoruba culture (for instance), the “good life” is summed up in the state of *alafia* or “peace,” which embraces protection, practical guidance, health, fertility, success and material prosperity, all fruits of power looked for in Christianity.<sup>35</sup>

As pointed out above, it is never an exaggeration to say that in an attempt to contextualize biblical theology, some vital truths of the biblical Christianity have been comprised by NNPs.<sup>36</sup> Relevancy should never lead to the reduction of gospel truth, otherwise one may fall into the error of presenting a different gospel. Either out of ignorance or to intentionally enslave their followers further, NNP leaders get angry at anyone who challenges their prowess of biblical interpretation:

Nigerian Pentecostals are sometimes intolerant of alternative readings of Scripture by those outside their particular constituencies and are liable to accept without question the interpretations of their leaders . . . . The opinion of the General Overseer or local pastor is rarely challenged publicly, presumably in recognition of their status and their role as power brokers. This is also reflected in the choruses of “amens” and “hallelujahs” that follow their declarations from the platform during church services and conferences. This reluctance to tolerate alternative readings may be connected to the idea that the actual words of the Spirit-anointed leader are loaded with spiritual power.<sup>37</sup>

In the minds of their members, when these leaders have spoken, God has spoken. For example, according to Sunday Adelaja, most Africans cannot travel unless they first go to their pastors for permission and to garner their prayers for safe travels. They see it as a miracle to travel to, and arrive safely at, their respective destinations.

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<sup>35</sup> Burgess, “Nigerian Pentecostal Theology,” 34.

<sup>36</sup> Owójaiye adds,

I do not know of any other ministry that has damaged the image of the church in the African public square today more than that of the self-proclaimed prophets who have perverted what charismatics believe is a genuinely biblical prophetic ministry. While this phenomenon is not peculiar to Africa, this kind of public abuse of the pastoral and prophetic ministry seems to be more obvious here than elsewhere. For this growing breed of avaricious pastors, the greater their material accoutrements, the more apparent is the stamp of God’s approval on their ministry. The Bible does warn that in the last days there will be many false prophets, and false prophets have come and gone throughout the history of church. Yet this is now too prevalent in the church in Africa. (Owójaiye, “The Problem of False Prophets in Africa,” 3)

<sup>37</sup> Burgess, “Nigerian Pentecostal Theology,” 33-34.

Many give their pastors a prophetic seed-offering (i.e., money) so that they will pray for the miracle of a safe journey.<sup>38</sup> However,

amidst all those prayers and dependence on miracles, Africa still has one of the highest rates of road accidents in the world. Statistic from World health organization revealed that the risk of dying as a result of a road traffic injury is highest in the African Region, and lowest in the European Region. Most Europeans don't depend on miracles for safe driving, they don't go to their pastors to ask for prayers before they travel and in fact, most of them don't believe in God, yet they still have a far lower rate of road accidents than in Africa.<sup>39</sup>

Men and women do not always need a miracle from heaven to drive safely; they need to take on the responsibilities of constructing good roads, learning road safety rules, and obeying them. Most of what many Africans are asking God to do are the kinds of things that they can do by themselves if they exercise prudence. Some of these miracles can be done without the dependence upon pastors. The crave for miracles allows many of these leaders to exercise “unquestionable authority” over the people they lead. Afolarin Olutunde Ojewole and Efe Monday Ehioghae writes,

The divine mystique which Adeboye presents allows his followers to implicitly believe that he is in direct touch with God. He seems to have reinforced this perception by the phrases that are common in his sermons and books, such as “God told me,” “My Father says,” and “The Lord instructed me.” Indeed, there are those among his parishioners who believe that God speaks to him in plain language, unlike others whom God may choose to communicate with through dreams and visions. There are equally many others who perceive him as a miracle worker, believing that whatever he touches ceases to be ordinary.<sup>40</sup>

Most of the Nigerian Neo-Pentecostal leaders are addressed as “Father,” “Daddy,” “Papa,” “Daddy GO,” and the like. The same honor given to these leaders must equally be accorded to their wives.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Sunday Adelaja, *How the Church Creates Economic Recession* (Kiev, Ukraine: Golden Truth, 2018), 30.

<sup>39</sup> Adelaja, *How the Church Creates Economic Recession*, 30-31.

<sup>40</sup> Ojewole and Ehioghae, “Leadership and Power in the Pentecostal Movement,” 326. See also Adeboye, *As Pure as Light*, 326-27.

<sup>41</sup> According to one Neo-Pentecostal pastor, “A Neo-Pentecostal leader’s wife is addressed as ‘Mummy,’ ‘Mother,’ ‘Mummy GO,’ ‘First Lady,’ and the like. She is always seen as second in command after her husband.” Isaac Kolade, interview by the author, Louisville, KY, November 20, 2019.

## **Analysis of Theologies and Contents of Gospel Presentations**

With this kind of precipitating theological worldview above, attention will now be drawn to the contents of the Neo-Pentecostals gospel and the areas of theological difference between the Nigerian evangelicals and Neo-Pentecostals in regard to their respective presentation of the gospel. However, before venturing into the areas of difference, it is good to know the areas of common agreement between the two branches. According to the survey responses, both church bodies believe that God exists and that Jesus is the Son of God. They both do not have difficulty believing that the Holy Spirit is the third person of Trinity and that he is needed for the effective communication of the gospel. Both bodies believe that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God and that it is essential for victorious Christian living. There is common agreement on the power of prayer and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit for victorious and fruitful Christian's living, and both agree that salvation is found only in Jesus Christ. Hence, both bodies believe in the unnegotiable need for evangelism with the aim of bringing the lost to Christ.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, the NNPs' undue emphasis on some of the following elements of their presentation of the gospel calls for critical scrutinization. These elements also form the content of the gospel being presented by the Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals.

### **Health and Wealth Gospel**

According to the data analysis in chapter 3, 90 percent of survey respondents buttress the point that NNPs present the gospel in a way that assures people of material prosperity.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, 100 percent of Neo-Pentecostal respondents agree that when

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<sup>42</sup> Concerning Interview survey question about the common grounds between Nigerian evangelicals and Pentecostals, most respondents agree with all of the common grounds that are itemized here.

<sup>43</sup> See figure 26 in chapter 3 under the question on "Neo-Pentecostals Major Emphasis in Evangelism."

presenting the gospel, NNPs over-emphasize physical healings.<sup>44</sup> Joseph Ezeigbo maintains that “NNPs portray evangelistic activity as a means of obtaining wealth and overcoming economic poverty. Many NNPs see ministry as a business and employment opportunity,”<sup>45</sup> whereas evangelical churches view evangelism as a means of proclaiming the gospel to the lost and to the dying world. Again, Bakare, a Neo-Pentecostal preacher who always tries to strike a balance in his teachings, writes, “Many [pastors] are not called by God but by their bellies. . . . The church cannot help fight corruption in the country because it is itself corrupt. If the river is polluted from the fountain it is flowing from, everyone who drinks it will drink poison. The Pastors say what the people want to hear, they no longer talk about sin.”<sup>46</sup> Further Paul Alexander aptly observes,

Pentecostal prosperity preachers on television shows and from behind pulpits around the world claim that a \$10 gift will yield \$1000. As Gloria Copeland, one of the main proponents of the prosperity gospel, has claimed, “You give \$1 for the gospel’s sake and \$100 belongs to you. You give \$10 and receive \$1000. Give \$1000 and receive \$100,000. Give one airplane and receive an equivalence of ten airplanes.” She should know; she and her televangelist husband have a \$6 million mansion and a \$20 million jet.<sup>47</sup>

This misconception has dominated the gospel presentations of NNP preachers. Their emphasis is on a “seed-sowing” gospel as a means of obtaining financial prosperity.

Bishop David Oyedepo, the founder of Living Faith Church and a close disciple of Kenneth Hagin and Kenneth Copeland,<sup>48</sup> remains one of the promoters of this

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<sup>44</sup> See figure 20 in chapter 3 under the question on “Neo-Pentecostals Major Emphasis in Evangelism.”

<sup>45</sup> Joseph Ezeigbo, Google Forms survey, October 23, 2019.

<sup>46</sup> Tunde Bakare, “Pastors Are Turning to Traders,” *Sunday Sun* (Lagos), September 25, 2005, 2, 47. See also Maxey and Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 17.

<sup>47</sup> Paul Alexander, *Signs and Wonders: Why Pentecostalism Is the World’s Fastest Growing Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 61. Many of the Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals preachers agree with the Copeland’s theology of material prosperity and esteem him as their hero.

<sup>48</sup> The New American Pentecostal movement—as championed by Hagin, Copeland, and host of others—has already left indelible marks on the Pentecostal movement in Nigeria. According to Oyedepo,

Having been a student of Kenneth E. Hagin for over 20 years, and excitedly following his ministry through his books, one day the Lord showed me a picture of Hagin while in my study room at 5 am

kind of gospel in Nigeria. In his chapter titled “The Covenant of Prosperity,” Oyedepo affirms,

In the early morning of August 27, 1987, I heard the Lord speak to me while I was on a mission trip to USA. “Get back home and make my people rich.” It was so clear, so vivid, so strong that I was on the next available flight back to Nigeria, I had to cancel every engagement that I had in US because I heard that clear word from the Lord. It was not an advice, it was a command; “Get back home and make my people rich.” I said to myself, “Who am I? What do I have to enrich anybody? How would they even believe that I am sent to enrich them?” Then God said from His word, “As poor making many rich” (2 Cor. 6:10). “Never mind how you look, go and say what I said.” The world is a living witness today that that mandate was not fake, it came from heaven and its effect shows in the lives of multitudes [sic].<sup>49</sup>

Today, Oyedepo has an auditorium in Ota, Lagos, with a seating capacity of over 50,000, and he has started construction of another building that will sit over 100,000 people at a time.<sup>50</sup> In addition to his faith and prosperity teachings, Oyedepo holds that “the state of perfect health is the will of God for all his covenant children. People pride themselves in having private doctors and family doctors but when Jehovah Rapha becomes your personal physicians, you become a living wonder. As far as God is concerned, you are not entitled to either sickness or pains.”<sup>51</sup> Oyedepo has millions of followers in Nigeria and in other countries, but the truth is that the majority of these followers are needs-oriented Christians. The faith of these people is anchored on getting

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and said to me, “Look at this man,” and I looked up. He then went on to say, “Pattern your ministry after this man . . .” I craved the unction upon Hagin so badly that when I was at his meeting in 1986, I said, Lord, whatever makes Hagin Hagin, I want it . . . As I was looking at him ministering from the gallery where I sat, the power of God fell on me! I broke down in tears, weeping profusely and uncontrollably, and the Lord said, “My son, David, the baton has been passed over to you.” (David Oyedepo, *Exploits in Ministry* [Lagos, Nigeria: Dominion, 2006], 269-70)

<sup>49</sup> Oyedepo, *Understanding Your Covenant Rights*, 145-46.

<sup>50</sup> According to Gary Maxey and Peter Ozodo, “The fact that there are scores of pastors and church leaders within the Nigerian Church who measure personal wealth in millions of dollars, and not less than a half dozen who own private jets, is a staggering and embarrassing indictment against all of us. Virtually none of them have transparent financial accountability to their followers.” Gary S. Maxey and Peter Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church* (Lagos, Nigeria: WATS, 2017), 112. Oyedepo is being hailed as the wealthiest pastor in Nigeria (with a total net worth of \$150 million). He has large properties that include about four private jets and foreign houses in countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere. Presently, more than ten NNP pastors have at least one private jet.

<sup>51</sup> Oyedepo, *Understanding Your Covenant Rights*, 117, 120. To the followers of Oyedepo, when one is baptized in the Holy Spirit, one receives the divine power that will liberate him or her from poverty and all manner of sicknesses.

“bread” from Jesus.<sup>52</sup> This is part of what defines the stupendous growth and expansion of Living Faith Church. The Religious Literacy Project at Harvard University captures it this way:

Some Pentecostal leaders became wealthy themselves as they directed their services to the wealthy, emphasizing a prosperity gospel which holds that faith is the key to prosperity in this world. In so doing these pastors contextualized the privilege of Nigeria’s Christian elite, and attracted hundreds of thousands of poor and middle class Nigerians aspiring to greater wealth. This approach provides the foundation for many of Nigeria’s megachurches, including the 50,000-seat Faith Tabernacle in Lagos, run by David Oyedopo, Africa’s wealthiest pastor.<sup>53</sup>

In a similar way, the RCCG in Nigeria is seen as one of the world’s fastest growing churches:

When pastor E. A. Adeboye stepped into the sanctuary at Dominion chapel in Stafford, the congregation shook with loudening praise music, waving hands and applause. The 1,000 or so worshippers dropped to their knees and join the Nigerian Pentecostal leader in prayer, spoken in a calm but confident tone, promising blessings to them. They listen to Adeboye’s message, punctuated with hearty rounds of “Amen!” and “Yes, Lord!” And when he left, they lined up to sit in chair where he sat or to lie on the ground where he preached. Adeboye is the General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, which numbers as many as 7 million followers in Africa. His church has seen rapid growth across continents, with Texas home to its highest concentration of churches in U.S.(sic)<sup>54</sup>

The goal of the RCCG’s General Overseer, Pastor Enoch A. Adeboye (popularly called “Daddy GO”), is to spread this church denomination virally across the entire globe. The RCCG aims at winning at least one member of every family in the

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<sup>52</sup> This is similar to what happened in John 6, where a multitude of people were following Jesus with false intentions. Jesus blatantly tells them, “Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life” (vv. 26-27). Among the notable Neo-Pentecostal preachers who always like to strike a balance is Joseph Ali. In his Macedonia call for biblical theology and sound doctrines among his colleagues, Ali notes, “There are some wrong attitudes that have spread among full-gospel preachers today. They stem from the teaching that makes God our ‘servant-boy.’ Since God exists for man, (as some believe) and not man for God (as it should be), the true Christian value is downplayed in the divine to meet man’s temporal needs.” Joseph Ali, “Balance of Truth” in Mayo Abaya, Peter Ozodo, Joseph Ali, eds, *Earnestly Contending for the Faith: An Agenda for Responsible Christian Leadership*, 2nd ed. (Abuja, Nigeria: Concerned Ministers’ Forum, 1999), 29.

<sup>53</sup> Religious Literacy Project, Harvard Divinity School, “Nigeria Pentecostalism,” accessed October 19, 2019, <https://rlp.hds.harvard.edu/faq/pentecostalism-nigeria>.

<sup>54</sup> Redeemed Christian Church of God Open Heavens Assembly, “Redeemed Christian Church of God Is Rapidly Planting Devout Congregations,” last modified December 15, 2019, <https://rccgopenheavens.org/2018/12/15/news/redeemed-christian-church-of-god-is-rapidly-planting-devout-congregations/>.

world to Christ, with a plan of establishing branch churches at a five-minute walking distance from every home in developing countries and a five-minute driving distance from every home in developed countries. The fact that RCCG has grown beyond the shore of Africa is well-supported.<sup>55</sup> For instance,

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 13,000 Nigerians live in Harris County, but local leaders with the Nigerian Foundation say the area could be home to between 50,000 and 100,000 Nigerian adults. Dominion Chapel in Stafford is already one of the church's largest buildings and broke ground Sunday to double its size. The church's North America headquarters are in Greenville, an hour northeast of Dallas. Though most members are Nigerians, they reach out to all people and don't maintain outward cultural ties to their African roots.<sup>56</sup>

However, in Nigeria, due to the excessive monetary obligations to which RCCG members are subjected, and because of the ostentatious living of many NNP pastors and leaders, this vision of expansion has been subjected to various criticisms. Nigerian lawyer and activist Femi Falana once said to Adebayo, "You are creating business centers, not Churches. This is the danger of religiosity as opposed to spirituality."<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, renowned Nigerian evangelical scholar Roland S. Babatunde

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<sup>55</sup> Isaac Gbadebo, interview by the author, Louisville, KY, January 30, 2020. According to Gbadebo, an RCCG pastor, "Let's Go a Fishing" is a one-Saturday-a-month aggressive evangelism program that is carried out in all the branches of the RCCG. On this day, every member turns out for house-to-house and street-to-street evangelism. This evangelism day always ends with planting new churches.

<sup>56</sup> Redeemed Christian Church of God Open Heavens Assembly, "Redeemed Christian Church of God Is Rapidly Planting Devout Congregations," accessed December 15, 2019, <https://rccgopenheavens.org/2018/12/15/news/redeemed-christian-church-of-god-is-rapidly-planting-devout-congregations/>.

<sup>57</sup> Femi Falana, "Pastor Adebayo Creating Business Centers Not Churches," *Punch* (Nigerian newspaper), October 19, 2017. In agreement with Falana, the Archbishop Emeritus of the Catholic Archdiocese of Lagos, Cardinal Anthony Olubunmi Okogie, "described such branches as 'mere business centers,' insisting that there was indeed no godliness in planting churches close to each other." Osahon Ibizugbe, "Having Churches Everywhere Has Not Resulted into Godliness in Nigeria – Cardinal Okogie," *Allure Magazine*, October 9, 2017, <https://allure.vanguardngr.com/2017/10/having-churches-everywhere-have-not-resulted-into-godliness-in-nigeria-cardinal-okogie/>. Talking about the pseudo-gospel missionaries in Nigeria, Daniel Sopuru writes, "In recent times, some professionals and businessmen have established churches with some funny names spreading man-made doctrines in the name of the gospel. They establish branches not only in the width and breadth of this country, but in other nations of Africa. They send 'missionaries' to those places spreading what they believe is what Christianity should be, while they end up being heralds of pseudo-gospel. The founders of such movements spend huge sums of money to buy up airtime in both radio and television stations convincing people of their dire need of material things and miracles. Most of them use Eastern mysticism embellished with Jesus' Name for personal success and business performances." Daniel O. Sopuru, *Modern Theology versus Biblical Theology: A Call for Biblical Christianity* (Makurdi, Nigeria: Evangelical Christian Literature and Radio Ministries, 2007), 129.

has challenged the NNP doctrine that maintains that a believer must not be sick or experience any suffering because Christ has paid it all:

Many Christians so persistent in teaching that if you are sick or economically poor, it must be a result of your personal sin. It can be but it is not always so because this world detests the things and people of God. The more intentional and persisted a person serves God, the more trials he would face. Fortunately, we always triumph in the name of the Lord whether in life or death. Either of the two will bring glory to God if he so desire (Rom 8:18-39). No Christian has the mandate to use a biblical passage to support his view at the detriment of relevant passages on the subject.<sup>58</sup>

To Nigerian evangelicals, whenever Christians pass through the challenges of physical ailments, such challenges are not the result of a lack of faith or a lack of the Holy Spirit in them; instead, oftentimes, God permits such situations as trials of faith. Moreover, apart from being tried and persecuted for aligning with Christ, Christians share in suffering with the entire creation in anticipation of future glory (Rom 8:18-27).<sup>59</sup>

More so, Conrad Mbewe observes that in Africa, the noise of miracles and healings has been blown beyond proportion among Neo-Pentecostals than the reality of miracles and healings that are witnessed. In lieu of this, Mbewe seems to make a sarcastic statement in leu of the present COVID-19 pandemic:

I know I'll get into trouble for saying this, but as a shepherd over my sheep, I need to point out the elephant in the room while the COVID-19 pandemic lasts. One of the loudest calls in the last few years has been that of so-called faith healers who have claimed to have the power to miraculously heal the sick "in the name of Jesus." Their voices have been very loud on radio, on television, on the internet, and on billboards, despite the lack of verifiable evidence. In comes COVID-19 and they have all gone deathly quiet, while over 100,000 people have died due to the pandemic. What kind of Christian love is this? Surely, this is the time for them to go to the epicenters of this disease and miraculously heal those who are on ventilators fighting for their lives. They cannot just go quiet.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Roland S. Babatunde, *The Faith of our Fathers: Feared Not Sword and Fire* (Ilorin, Nigeria: Tanimola Press, 2014), 20. In an interview interaction Babatunde points out that NNPs had for long trashed the theology of doctrine. Many of their songs reflects wordings like, 'me I no go suffer' (sic); God will butter my bread and sugar my tea' (sic); 'my case is different' etc. Roland S. Babatunde, interview by the author, Ilorin, Nigeria, February 25, 2020.

<sup>59</sup> Babatunde, *The Faith of our Fathers: Feared Not Sword and Fire*, 20.

<sup>60</sup> Conrad Mbewe, *19 Pastoral Thoughts on COVID-19* (Luzaka, Zambia: Ever Green, 2020),



Further challenging so-called faith healers (i.e., the elephant in the room), Mbewe points attention to the compassionate heart and healing ministry of Jesus:

When Jesus was on earth, leprosy was contagious and incurable. You did not touch lepers. They were quarantined outside the community and could only be allowed back into society upon being verified as healed by local priests. Jesus touched the lepers and miraculously healed them. He would then send them to priests for verification and reintegration in society. In the name of love, may those who claim to have similar powers go and heal the COVID-19 victims! If the health workers do this alone—at great risk to their lives—let us not hear anyone claiming to have miraculous powers to heal the sick after COVID-19 is over.<sup>61</sup>

Hence, Christendom must return to the true and thorough teachings of the Bible. Christian teachers must stop promoting vices, such as riches, at all costs (1 Tim 6:1-10) and, instead, should promote worthy character and godliness.<sup>62</sup> Concerning material prosperity (i.e., the wealth or prosperity gospel), J. D. Greear once wrote,

Let me be blunt: the prosperity gospel is a lie. God does love to give gifts to his children, and he delights in our successes. But the greatest prosperity is not driving a new car; it is knowing him and having a life that bring glory to him. Preaching a message that says if you come to Jesus, he will make you rich is not only wrong, it leads people to idolatry rather than faith. It leads people to use Jesus, not love him.<sup>63</sup>

Hence, in presenting the gospel, it is unbiblical to bait people into Christianity with promises of wealth and health. A Nigerian Neo-Pentecostal leader, Emmanuel Onofurho, points attention to the excessive flamboyance of his colleagues when he writes,

They are proud and flamboyant in their lifestyle. They are hardly approachable. They can hire and fire staff at will. They own a number of cars when their immediate assistants have none. Their preaching is more emotional than spiritual. When one is asked to sow seed of faith, he ends up sowing into the preacher's pocket.<sup>64</sup>

Sopuru once made a vivid observation on this when he said,

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<sup>61</sup> Mbewe, *19 Pastoral Thoughts on COVID-19*, 21.

<sup>62</sup> Babatunde, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, 20.

<sup>63</sup> J. D. Greear, *Gospel: Recovering the Power That Made Christianity Revolutionary* (Nashville: B & H, 2011), 183.

<sup>64</sup> Emmanuel Onofurho, "Challenges of the End-Time Church" in Mayo Abaya and Others, eds, in *Earnestly Contending for the Faith: An Agenda for Responsible Christian Leadership, Second Edition* (Abuja, Nigeria: Concerned Ministers' Forum, 1999), 55-56.

Take a look at most of the Presidents and Founders of the Contemporary Churches in Nigeria and in Africa; you will notice arrogance, flamboyance, pride, pomposity etc, in their speech and way of life. They make all sorts of unattested claims that place them above any normal human being in the eyes of their Church members. Members invite people to come and meet with their pastors, not with Jesus Christ. They claim their pastors can lessen or eliminate people's burdens. They call them names that Christ alone can bear. One of these “founders” once preached that his name is synonymous with Jesus Christ and that if demons torment you, do not bother calling on the name of Jesus that his own name should be called, and the demons would flee. His members believed him. Is this not arrogance and blasphemy in the highest order?<sup>65</sup>

Sopuru observation as seen here portray the clear situation of most of NNP churches.

### **The Place of Signs, Wonders, and Miracles in Gospel Presentations**

According to the data analysis in chapter 3, NNPs always present the gospel by making people believe that signs and wonders are waiting for them once they embrace the gospel.<sup>66</sup> Hence, 100 percent of survey respondents (Neo-Pentecostal respondents) agree that in the course of presenting the gospel, NNPs convince people of the miracles that await them once they come to Christ. When the gospel is presented in a way that makes recipients focus on signs, wonders, and miracles, there will be high rate of false converts who do not desire to know the true Savior. Scripture does not encourage believers to concentrate on signs, wonders, and miracles when they are presenting the gospel.<sup>67</sup> While not denying the reality of miraculous occurrences in Christendom as God deems them necessary, Nigerian evangelicals disagree with NNPs on two points concerning this issue: the normativism of miracles (as they were in the days of the twelve apostles)<sup>68</sup> and the placement of miracles as the central focus in evangelism. According to

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<sup>65</sup> Sopuru, *Modern Theology versus Biblical Theology*, 114-15.

<sup>66</sup> See figure 18 in chapter 3 under the section “NNPs’ Major Emphases in Evangelism.”

<sup>67</sup> In the Gospel of Luke, the disciples of Jesus return from a witnessing exercise filled with amazement because of the signs and wonders they experienced while on the field, but Jesus blatantly tells them, “Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (10:20).

<sup>68</sup> Sunday Adelaja, a renown Nigerian charismatic pastor in Ukraine, challenges NNPs on the issue of seeking after miracles. He brings up research conducted in America in 2016 that claimed that more

one survey respondent, “The NNPs mostly emphasize miracles and healing, but not so with the Evangelical church whose emphasis is repentance from sin and faith in God through Jesus Christ.”<sup>69</sup> To Nigerian evangelicals, it is possible to win people to signs, wonders, and miracles without actually winning them to Christ. In fact, performing or receiving miracles in the name of Jesus is never a criterion for salvation.<sup>70</sup> Again,

Miracles are God’s interventions. It is what God does at will. No man can hold God to ransom for doing or not doing a miracle. One may receive miracle and yet may not know or understand God. The people of Israel more than any nation got miracles from God, yet they failed to know God. For forty years they ate miraculous food from God and still did not know him. God showed his acts to them, but his ways were only discovered by one man, Moses.<sup>71</sup>

However, Joshua O. Odetunde, once a leading pastor in one of the RCCG branches in Nigeria, tries to strike a balance. According to him, “While evangelical churches place emphasis on biblical teachings for conversion through faith in Jesus Christ, Pentecostal churches place emphasis on demonstrating the power of God through signs and wonders.”<sup>72</sup> Nigerian Neo-Pentecostal churches need to place more emphasis on biblical teachings as the basis for spiritual experiences to ensure that faith in Jesus Christ is

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than 661,000 Americans have kidney failure. Of these, 468,000 individuals are on dialysis, and roughly 193,000 live with a functioning kidney transplant. In Nigeria, statistics revealed that 25 million Nigerians have kidney failure, and out of this number, about 18,000 will need dialysis every year. If these 18,000 Nigerians needing dialysis or a kidney transplant decide to go to miracle-workers to seek healing, instead of going to the hospital, they will surely die of kidney failure—not because God cannot heal but because God has given wisdom to doctors to be able to manage these diseases with modern medical procedures. (This too is a display of God’s mercy and miraculous working). Now, one may say, “But I know one pastor who heals people.” Well, that may be true, but how many does he heal per year? If one does the statistics and compares them with how many people are treated in hospitals by doctors per year, one will be amazed by the difference. The reason simply is that spiritual miracles are not an everyday occurrence; hence, one should not spend one’s whole life seeking after them. It is wise to trust the doctors to whom God has given the wisdom to heal. See Adelaja, *How the Church Creates Economic Recession*, 29-30.

<sup>69</sup> Ezeigbo, Google Forms survey.

<sup>70</sup> Christ Jesus warns against charismatic displays that do not lead to genuine salvation: “Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” (Matt 7:21-23).

<sup>71</sup> Adelaja, *Damaged by Religion*, 90-91.

<sup>72</sup> Joshua O. Odetunde, Google Forms survey, November 20, 2019.

distinct from spectacular experiences that do not result in fruitful Christian living.<sup>73</sup>

Owoade A. Stephen, another NNP leader, “maintains that while NNPs emphasize prosperity when they proclaim the gospel, Nigerian evangelicals emphasize the second coming of Jesus Christ and the need to receive salvation through him. NNPs need to present the gospel in such a way that recipients focus more on heavenly things rather than earthly things.”<sup>74</sup> Again, NNPs believe that all those who receive the gospel must be able to speak in tongues as evidence of their newfound faith. Evangelicals, however, maintain that speaking in tongues is not a must for everybody. Nevertheless, evangelicals need to depend less on academic presentations of the gospel and allow the Holy Spirit to take the lead as they evangelize the lost.<sup>75</sup>

### **Deliverance-Focused Gospel**

According to the data analysis in chapter 3, all the Neo-Pentecostal survey respondents (100 percent) agree that NNPs place much emphasis on deliverance in their gospel presentations. The reason for this emphasis is not farfetched. African Traditional Religions have a concept that the whole world is full of spirits. The only good spirit is that which comes back to be born again. So, the entire life cycle is dominated by fear. The graveyard is believed to be filled with the spirits of the dead roaming about. Since people bury their dead inside their compounds or backyards, places of fear are numerous.<sup>76</sup> Some rocks, mountains, rivers and certain trees (e.g., baobab and mahogany) are believed to have spirits dwelling in them. Sacrifices are offered to these objects to pacify the spirits since people live at their mercy.

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<sup>73</sup> Odetunde, Google Forms survey.

<sup>74</sup> Owoade A. Stephen, Google Forms survey, October 31, 2019.

<sup>75</sup> Stephen, Google Forms survey.

<sup>76</sup> Byang Henry Kato, “A Critique of Incipient Universalism in Tropical Africa,” (PhD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1974), 78. For further reading, see Richard J. Gehman, *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective* (Kaduna, Nigeria: Baraka Press, 2000), 34f.

In some communities, at the beginning of the harvest seasons, people place their first fruits at tombs or at the bottom of spirit-indwelt trees before consumption begins. Failure to carry out this practice can cause a person or community to incur the wrath of the gods, who, in return, can bring about afflictions such as diarrhea, measles, and drought. The spirits do not only bring sicknesses upon a community; they also possess certain persons in a community and enable them to carry out certain—usually evil—supernatural acts.<sup>77</sup> Hence, the average person in most places throughout Nigeria (or Africa) is always seeking deliverance and protection from evil forces. As a result of a lack of discipleship after conversion, the same concept of fear of the spirits is present within Christian churches.<sup>78</sup>

Again, the worship of gods, divinities, and ancestral spirits in African Traditional Religions is partly due to the dreadfulness for the spirits who can incur spells and curses for the slightest violations.<sup>79</sup> NNP leaders inflict the same fear into their followers, who believe that they will be under a spell and curse if they fail to pray in certain ways as directed by their pastors, ignore the clergy's instructions, fail to come for deliverance prayers, refuse to pay their dues in the church, and the like.<sup>80</sup> These dues

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<sup>77</sup> Kato, "A Critique of Incipient Universalism in Tropical Africa," 78-79.

<sup>78</sup> In the worldview of African religion, life is often explained with reference to religion and the spirit world. See John S. Pobee, *West Africa: Christ Would Be an African Too* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1996), 10.

<sup>79</sup> Geoffrey Parrinder, *Witchcraft: European and African* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1963), 9-15. For instance, phenomena such as birth, death, illness, infertility, drought, road accident, thunderstorm, and harvest are explained as purposive acts of spiritual forces, evil or benevolent. Underlying this view is the belief that humans are vulnerable and open to spiritual forces for ill or for good. No wonder, then, that salvation is perceived as freedom from spiritual powers, which limit or hinder people from attaining their own well-being. Thus, in African religion, salvation has to do with physical and immediate dangers that threaten individual or community survival, good health, and general prosperity or safety. See John S. Mbiti, "Some Reflections on African Experience of Salvation Today," in *Living Faiths and Ultimate Goals: A Continuing Dialogue*, ed. S. J. Samantha (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1974), 112.

<sup>80</sup> For more, see David O. Oyedepo, *Breaking the Curses of Life* (Lagos, Nigeria: Dominion Press, 1997), 13-149. Also, according to Adelaja, "A Bishop who is ranked to be one of the two most prominent Neo-Pentecostals leaders in Nigeria once said, When I pray, God hears me, when I curse a man, he remains cursed. When I pray that you should die, you will die. This is an attitude of a manipulator and an oppressor. You cannot be listening to such words every week and not be ridiculed or damaged." Adelaja, *Damaged by Religion*, 62. This is how many Neo-Pentecostals pastors enslaved their followers

include regular tithes, prophetic offerings (for the pastors), seed-sow offerings, first fruit offerings, and the like.<sup>81</sup>

Hundreds of thousands of people flood the churches of some of the pastors who specialize in deliverance. One of the most well-known and well-respected deliverance pastors in Nigeria is Daniel K. Olukoya, the founder and president of Mountain of Fire Ministry (MFM). As Burgess writes,

MFM describes itself as a “do-it-yourself Gospel Ministry” and promotes “violent prayer” as the solution to “stubborn problems.” According to Olukoya, “the only language the devil understands is the language of violence and resounding defeat,” and he exhorts his followers to “fight until every foe is vanquished and Christ is Lord indeed.” Because of its emphasis on protecting and delivering people from the activities of malicious spirits, Afe Adogame, suggests that it should be classified under the rubric of the “security gospel” rather than the “prosperity gospel” movement.<sup>82</sup>

Many of MFM’s prayer captions always center on warfare, battle, deliverance and the like:

One of Olukoya’s many publications, entitled “Prayers to destroy diseases & infirmities,” is described as a “spiritual warfare manual specifically targeted at destroying diseases and infirmities.” Another, entitled “Dominion Prosperity,” promises to lead believers “out of the dungeon of poverty” and place them “on the mountain top of prosperity.” . . . Other titles, such as “Dealing with Local Satanic

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with a threat of curses.

<sup>81</sup> See Adelaja, *How the Church Creates Economic Recession*, 178. For instance, in Nigeria, it is a must for every member of the RCCG, Living Faith Church, and some other churches to give their first salary of every year (i.e., January’s salary) to the church as the “first-fruit offering” of the year. Adeboye once wrote,

The Bible commands that we must honor God with our first fruits. “Some people gather their harvests and put them in bags with holes. The problem of leaking bags emanates from failure to honor God by giving Him the first fruits of your harvest. If you do not give to God, you may end up wasting away the proceeds of your harvest. Those who harvest into bags with holes are those who refuse to put God first.” (Adeboye, *Leaves Form Daddy G.O.’s Table*, 3:44-45)

<sup>82</sup> Burgess, “Nigerian Pentecostal Theology,” 37. See also Daniel Olukoya, “Praying for a New Beginning,” in *The Prayer and Deliverance Bible* (Lagos, Nigeria: MFM Ministry, 2007), 1-157. According to Adelakun,

Dr. Daniel Olukoya, is currently the General Overseer of MFM. The church features spectacular and aggressive styles of prayer and the members are encouraged to develop “violent faith” and engage in “violent prayers” to defeat their enemy. Unsurprisingly, their prayer rituals feature repeated chants of “Die! Die! Die! Fall down and die! Die by fire!” Their ritual language includes such expressions as “spiritual bullets,” “Holy Ghost machine gun,” and other colorful phrases that appropriate the language of modern warfare. According to the church website, “aggressive prayer is considered as an aid to spiritual focus and a check against being overwhelmed by the flesh.” (Adelakun, “Pentecostal Panopticism and the Phantasm of the Ultimate Power,” 101)

Technology,” “Overcoming Witchcraft,” “Power against Marine Spirits,” and “Dealing with the Evil Powers of your Father’s House,” reflect the church’s preoccupation with deliverance from witchcraft and evil spirits, as well as past associations with “occult” powers and traditional religious culture.<sup>83</sup>

MFM’s publications are full of elaborate liturgies of prayers specifically designed to liberate Christians from demonic powers and afflictions and to remove obstacles to individuals’ progress, success, and prosperity.<sup>84</sup> This type of ministry can sell best in places like Nigeria and some other parts of Africa where there is no access to good hospitals, high levels of illiteracy, and systemic abject poverty. According to Burgess, “In many occasions, members are encouraged to combine repetitive recitation of prayers with violent bodily movements in order to dislodge evil spirits that have gained access through ancestral covenants, witchcraft or idols.”<sup>85</sup> At MFM’s headquarters in Lagos, a single worship service can host over 200,000 people. However, from an evangelical point of view, the power to set free anyone who has received the gospel lies in the gospel message itself.<sup>86</sup> Unfortunately, people lose their lives daily by going to pastors for deliverance and engaging in ruthless religious activities. For instance,

While some people are told to fast endlessly for deliverance, others are forced to eat things that are not healthy for them. Some are forced to live in Church for an extended period of time. People do crazy things that they are told to do by their pastors in the name of deliverance. In the process, many people have lost their lives. I have deliberately included newspaper reports and police reports of some incidences of churches in Nigeria as evidence. . . . You can begin to see the extent

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<sup>83</sup> Burgess, “Nigerian Pentecostal Theology,” 37. See also Daniel K. Olukoya, *Strange Enemies, Strange Prayers* (Lagos, Nigeria: MFM Press, 2019), 1-100; Olukoya, *Mountain Top Life: Daily Devotional* (Lagos, Nigeria: MFM Press, 2019), 1-376; Olukoya, *The Hour of Freedom* (Lagos: Battle Cry Christian Ministries, 2014), 1-60; Olukoya, *Prolong Your Life* (Lagos, Nigeria: MFM Press, 2013), 1-29; Olukoya, *Power for Explosive Success* (Lagos, Nigeria: MFM Press, 2005), 1-74.

<sup>84</sup> When addressing the need of deliverance after salvation for the ministers of the gospel themselves, Daniel Olukoya writes, “You cannot minister effectively and have your services approved by God, if you fail to obtain deliverance in certain vital areas of life and ministry. . . . Ministers of the gospel should also be made conscious of the indispensable nature of personal and ministerial deliverance as a criterion for success and holistic living.” See Daniel K. Olukoya, *When the Deliverer Needs Deliverance: Deliverance Manual for Ministers and Church Workers* (Lagos, Nigeria: MFM Press, 2007), 7.

<sup>85</sup> Burgess, “Nigerian Pentecostal Theology,” 37.

<sup>86</sup> Jesus emphasizes this point in John 8:32: “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.” When the gospel is well-presented and accepted, it brings deliverance from sin and the oppression of Satan without any need for the laying on of hands by any professional deliverance minister.

of damage that have been created by religion in Africa, especially in Nigeria. On July 4, 2017, a popular Nigerian newspaper reported the death of three people in a church in Warri Nigeria during deliverance.<sup>87</sup>

People are full of every form of ignorance and fail to know that no church leader, preacher, or evangelist has in him the monopolistic power to deliver people from curses and the menaces of life. Jesus accomplished this feat on the cross.<sup>88</sup> Hence, Christ Jesus must be the central focus of every gospel proclamation. Daniel Sopuru remarks that as evangelicals, “we preach the gospel by saying, accept Christ as your Lord and Personal Savior, then your sins will be forgiven, and you will have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who will enable you to live Christ-like life.”<sup>89</sup>

### **The Gospel That Focuses on Breakthroughs**

NNP churches highly esteem prayers for breakthroughs, which are seen as sudden fortunes or riches that come upon people in response to the prophetic prayers of spiritual leaders on behalf of their members.<sup>90</sup> Hence, breakthrough messages center on acquiring massive riches without stress or sweat (i.e., instant gratification); they are messages that expect an effect without a cause.<sup>91</sup> Some churches have weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly anointing services for breakthroughs.<sup>92</sup> Maxey and Ozodo clearly write,

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<sup>87</sup> Adelaja, *Damaged by Religion*, 33-34.

<sup>88</sup> M. Ademola Adebisi, interview by the author, Louisville, KY, January 25, 2020.

<sup>89</sup> Daniel O. Sopuru, Google Forms survey, October 18, 2018.

<sup>90</sup> Akin Aniyikaiye, interview by the author, Louisville, November 21, 2019.

<sup>91</sup> Many NNP leaders always teach that for the people to receive healings, miracles, breakthroughs, successes, and the likes, certain principles have to be followed, such as tithing, sowing seeds, sacrificial offerings, and positive confessions. However, only these leaders become richer and richer by these principles of extortion and exploitation, while the followers continue to struggle with poverty. For more discussion on this issue, see Sopuru, *Modern Theology versus Biblical Theology*, 6-9.

<sup>92</sup> According to Amiable Abiodun, “During these services, members queue in front of the pastors, who come with olive oil (anointing oil) in bottles to anoint members as a way of connecting them with their breakthrough. Moreover, getting visas to travel to foreign countries, such as the US, UK, and Canada, is seen as a huge breakthrough.” Amiable Abiodun, interview by the author, Egbe, Nigeria, October 19, 2019.



It is to be feared that in the modern Nigerian Church much of the membership have come to the conclusion that Christianity is basically about material prosperity. Wealth is in many sectors projected as a sign of spirituality. Faith in Christ is quantified most readily in material terms. On the other hand, poverty is a curse. Churches with those messages are attracting ever-larger audiences as they focus messages on how to “prosper” and to get their next “breakthrough.” Scriptures that focus on self-sacrifice, self-denial, the cross, sin and holiness are seldom used. When members of such churches “prosper,” almost never does anyone ask after the genuineness of their sources of wealth.<sup>93</sup>

For instance, the followers of Oyedepo have been convinced by their general overseer’s teaching that “the anointing paves the way for wealth.”<sup>94</sup> Of the Neo-Pentecostal survey respondents, 96.7 percent maintain that converts are attracted to NNP churches because of their passionate desires to experience breakthroughs in life.<sup>95</sup> Indulgence in this regard has not only affected the quality of the church growth in Nigeria but has also had a negative effect on the economic growth of the nation. NNP Christianity is breeding followers who run after instant gratification instead of encouraging hard work and personal responsibility. If this trend continues, it will result in a nation of indolent people who desperately run from one church to another in search of miracles.<sup>96</sup> Nigerian pastors who convince their members to wait for miracles of money (i.e., financial breakthroughs), when such members do not work or engage in any business transactions, are simply saying that people can reap where they have not sowed. It is a message of effect without a cause, which encourages idleness and laziness.

As Adelaja correctly writes,

There is hardly a church in Africa and especially in Nigeria today that does not organize miracle and breakthrough services. Some churches have what is called “31 days miracle and breakthrough services.” Others have services like “one-month prophetic encounter service” and so on. All of these attract a lot of people including civil servants, businessmen, laborers and various citizens from different sectors of the nation. Some of these miracle seeking individuals actually abandon their jobs

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<sup>93</sup> Maxey and Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 115.

<sup>94</sup> To these members, when one is anointed by the Holy Spirit, wealth is a companion of this anointing. See David Oyedepo, *Anointing for Breakthrough* (Lagos, Nigeria: Dominion, 2014), 150.

<sup>95</sup> See figure 21 in chapter 3 under the section “NNPs’ Major Emphases in Evangelism.”

<sup>96</sup> Adelaja, *How the Church Creates Economic Recession*, 33.

and works to attend these miracle and breakthrough services . . . . Can you imagine how many inventions would have been invented if we spent those thirty or sixty days of miracle services in the laboratories doing research?<sup>97</sup>

If millions of Christians in Nigeria invested some of these days in research exercises to discover solutions and cures to some of the problems plaguing the nation, then Nigeria, as a whole, would have been better off.<sup>98</sup> Adelaja writes, “Miracles and Breakthrough are good, but unfortunately, researchers have found out that after many years of research, that neither of them is part of the factors that enhance the economic growth of a nation.”<sup>99</sup>

### **Emphasis on Speaking in Tongues**

In the Lucan narrative,

When the day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:1-4 NKJV).

This narrative recounts the Holy Spirit’s descent on the earliest apostles and followers of Christ on the same day as the Jewish religious festival of Pentecost in Jerusalem. From an ancient ecclesiological perspective, “Pentecost” occurred fifty days after Jesus’s two climatic events: forty days after Christ’s resurrection plus ten days after his ascension into heaven.<sup>100</sup>

In Pentecostalism, the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit came upon early believers to baptize the early church, is significant—hence the movement’s nomenclature. This phenomenological experience displayed in Acts 2:1-4 arguably

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<sup>97</sup> Adelaja, *How the Church Creates Economic Recession*, 36.

<sup>98</sup> Over eight-five million people in Nigeria belong to various church denominations. Sadly, the majority of them spend most of their time praying and asking God for miracles and breakthroughs daily and weekly. See Adelaja, *How the Church Creates Economic Recession*, 35.

<sup>99</sup> Adelaja, *How the Church Creates Economic Recession*, 33.

<sup>100</sup> Elmer Towns and Douglas Porter, *From Pentecost to the Present: The Ten Greatest Revivals Ever* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 13-15; Williams J. Larkin Jr., *Acts*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downer Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 48-50.

culminated in an event in which the Spirit of God paid a special visit to the world scene for the sole purpose of empowering the members of Jerusalem's earliest apostolic community.<sup>101</sup> The descent of the Spirit came as a fulfillment of the promise of Jesus Christ that the Holy Spirit would succeed him after the consummation of his career on earth through his resurrection and ascension (Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:4-8). In John 14-16 (often referred to as the Upper Room Discourse), Jesus taught a great deal about the ministerial nature of the Holy Spirit after the completion of his (i.e., Jesus's) mission.<sup>102</sup> With this teaching in mind, contemporary Pentecostals consistently emphasize spiritual power, spiritual gifts, and teachings concerning the Holy Spirit.

In Pentecostalism, therefore, predominant emphasis is afforded to the personal experience of God through the Holy Spirit. Specifically, Pentecostal groups seek to reenact the descent and baptism of the Spirit upon the early disciples as recorded in Acts 2:1-4. E. A. Livingstone defines Pentecostalism as "a religious movement whose members . . . share a common belief in the possibility of receiving the same experience and gifts as did the first Christians on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:1-4."<sup>103</sup> H. C. Achunike shares Livingstone's definition when he maintains that the term "Pentecostalism" refers to certain elements of the Christian life often associated with the experience of the power of the Holy Spirit that manifested strongly at the feast of Pentecost in the Bible and the consequent gifts of the Holy Spirit by Christ.<sup>104</sup>

The Acts periscope, depicted and referred to by Livingstone and Achunike above, is central to the claims of Pentecostal Christians, who desire to reenact the

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<sup>101</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Preaching the Word Acts: The Church Afire* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1996), 29.

<sup>102</sup> Adeyanju, "A Critical Examination of the Emergence of Pentecostalism and the Diversity of its Practices in Nigeria," 13.

<sup>103</sup> E. A. Livingstone, ed., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 86.

<sup>104</sup> H. C. Achunike, *Catholic Charismatic Movement in Igboland 1970-1995* (Enugu, Nigeria: Fourth Dimension, 2009), 35.

spiritual event as it originally occurred in the apostolic church at Jerusalem in the first century AD.<sup>105</sup> Achunike describes Pentecostalism as referring to “the emphasis on the Third Person of the Trinity and his manifestations in the individuals and corporate lives of Christians.”<sup>106</sup> Hence, the Pentecostal emphasis here is that every believer—all over the world—should have the same experience with glossolalia (i.e., speaking in tongues). Glossolalia plays a communicative and demarcative role in the lives of Pentecostal Christians. It is used among Pentecostal members to testify to the “conformity” of the believer to community requirements and for individual members’ involvement in his or her relationship with God.<sup>107</sup>

In African Traditional Religions, the concept of speaking in other tongues when in the “high-spirit” during worship and celebration times is not hidden. Of course, the source of these tongues is surely not the Holy Spirit. Hence, when the NNP gospel emphasizes speaking in tongues as a must for everybody, most converts seem to find a substitute for the old practice.<sup>108</sup> Take, for example, Chris Oyakhilome, the president of Christ Embassy (a.k.a. Believers Love World), who in his teaching on speaking in tongues maintained that “there are miracles you cannot receive from God until you are able to speak in tongues. He added, human prayer in human language cannot go far enough. Because, human languages are corrupted, and will not appeal to the holy God.”<sup>109</sup> Daniel Iselaye in his own opinion points it out that Oyakhilome’s teaching here is heretical, because, in the early church during the days of the apostles, everyone did not

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<sup>105</sup> Even though Pentecostals place emphasis on speaking in tongues as they try to reproduce this event exactly, they do not emphasize the “sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind,” which they have not been able to produce. See Achunike, *Catholic Charismatic Movement in Igboland 1970-1995*, 35-37.

<sup>106</sup> Achunike, *Catholic Charismatic Movement in Igboland*, 35.

<sup>107</sup> Adeyanju, “The Emergence of Pentecostalism in Nigeria,” 17.

<sup>108</sup> Adebisi, interview by the author, Louisville, KY, January 25, 2020.

<sup>109</sup> Chris Oyakhilome, “The Benefits of Speaking in Spiritual Tongues,” *Online Teaching* accessed April 28, 2020 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MhhXazexrM8>.

speaking in tongues (1 Cor 12:29-30).<sup>110</sup>

Michael Green writes, “A Tongue is a gift from the good Lord to some people. . . . But as we have seen there is no suggestion in any of the initiation teaching of the New Testament that it is the invariable mark of the presence of the Spirit.”<sup>111</sup> Hence, to consider speaking in tongues as a mark of genuine conversion or a sign of spiritual maturity lacks biblical support. Most Nigerian evangelicals see speaking in tongues as the least of the spiritual gifts, and it does not define one’s true Christian identity, as Neo-Pentecostals suppose. According to the exegetical analysis of Ponle Segun Alabi, the director of Covenant of Peace Evangelistic Association (COPEA), on speaking in tongues,

The Corinthians have been told they were carnal (1 Cor. 3:3), immature or babies (1 Cor. 3:1), AND not wise (1 Cor. 1:26)—yet they could speak in tongues. What part of their lives was being edified and how much of that edification is glorifying to the Church? So, before you make yourself out to be a super Christian because you speak in tongues—see it here, it does not the Church in Corinth superior to the Berean’s Church. We do not forbid speaking in tongues, but we seek the greater gifts that edifies the Church and promote that when speaking. Speaking and non-speaking in tongues is not our gospel- Jesus Christ who died and rose again. Did all speak in tongues in the New Testament Church? Listen to the Bible answer: “All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?”—1 Cor. 12:30. It’s in your Bible—check it.<sup>112</sup>

Daniel Iselaye maintains that what some people claim to be the workings of the Holy Spirit are actually those things that are falsifiable, yet people think they can use such claims as yardsticks to measure one’s spirituality, such as in the case of speaking in tongues and anointing. Such practices are similar to African Traditional Religions, so many worshippers feel at home.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Daniel Iselaye, interview by the author, October 25, 2019.

<sup>111</sup> Michael Green, *Thirty Years That Changed the World: A Fresh Look at the Book of Acts* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 259.

<sup>112</sup> Ponle Segun Alabi, “The Exegesis of Jude 20: Speaking in Unknown Tongues and Praying in the Spirit” (lecture, Ajilete Discipleship Center, Ogbomoso, Nigeria, February 6, 2020).

<sup>113</sup> Daniel Iselaye, Google Forms survey, October 25, 2019.

## Anointing and Power

According to NNPs, tarry meetings are needed for the endowment of anointing and power from the Holy Spirit.<sup>114</sup> For example, on a monthly basis, the RCCG observes what is called a “Holy Ghost Service,” where hundreds of thousands of members gather at the RCCG Redemption Camp to keep a vigil, with the expectation of receiving the power and anointing of the Holy Ghost as “Daddy Adeboye” administers them to attendees.<sup>115</sup> During this kind of gathering, which happens among all NNP churches, people are anointed with oil. They also participate in “Holy Communion,” which is expected to break all yokes and curses of life.<sup>116</sup> People are anointed with oil on their foreheads as a means of connecting with the power of the Holy Spirit. In his argument on the mystery of the anointing oil, Oyedepo refers to the anointing oil as “God’s life” in a bottle:

The anointing oil is a mystery of the end time, packaged by God for the endless victory of the saints. . . . It is the Spirit of God, mysteriously packaged in a bottle. It is designed to communicate the power of God, bodily. It is the power of God in your hand, in the person of the Holy Spirit. The anointing oil is the power of God placed in a tangible form in man’s hand, to make an open show of the devil. It is what it takes to be out of every grave.<sup>117</sup>

Tunde Bakare openly criticized Oyedepo on this. According to Bakare, God cannot be caged in a bottle. This practice depicts another vivid form of religious syncretism. The

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<sup>114</sup> In chapter three, 83.3 percent of the Neo-Pentecostal respondents agree that the NNPs teach the necessity of tarrying meeting for the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>115</sup> Isaac Gbadebo, interview by the author, Louisville, November 21, 2019.

<sup>116</sup> This oil (olive oil) is popularly known as anointing oil simply because the ministers have prayed upon the oil, which makes it to carry special power for all possibilities. Of course, coming from a fetish background, most of the converts enjoy visible substances being added to their faith. Most of NNPs prefer the name “Holy Ghost” (as seen in the KJV Bible) rather than the name “Holy Spirit.” This accounts for why many NNP leaders will not allow their members to use any other translation but the KJV. See also Pastor E. A. Adeboye, *Open Heaven*, vol. 13, *A Daily Guide to Close Fellowship with God* (Lagos, Nigeria: Open Heavens International Center, 2013), entry for September 5; “Pastor Begins Sales of ‘Holy Oil’ to Protect Members from Coronavirus,” *Vanguard* (Nigeria), February 6, 2020, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/02/pastor-begins-sales-of-holy-oil-to-protect-members-from-coronavirus/>.

<sup>117</sup> David O. Oyedepo, *Winning the Invisible Battles* (Lagos, Nigeria: Dominion, 2006), 173-74. When Pentecostal pastors have prayed over objects like oil, handkerchiefs, water, hand-bands, and the like, those objects are then referred to as “mantles” which are made available for sale to the members. The mantles are seen as carriers of miracles, and they can be used for various miraculous activities as deemed fit. However, Tunde Bakare openly condemned Oyedepo’s book as heretical.

Holy Spirit himself is the giver of power, who has no need for human or other physical agents to convey this power.<sup>118</sup> Bakare was not the only Neo-Pentecostal man that criticized Oyedepo on the issue of referring to the “anointing oil as the Holy Ghost in the bottle,” even Oyakhilome did. Oyakhilome writes,

I read a book the other day and the author said that the anointing oil is the Holy Ghost in a bottle. It’s not true; it’s simply ridiculous. He said that the oil is not a symbol, that it is not figurative. He emphatically declared that the oil is the Holy Ghost in a bottle. I was shocked, ‘Oh there’s no evil force that can come against the oil,’ he said. “if you have enemies, when they come face to face with the oil, something is going to happen.” Somebody needed a job and had been rejected. According to the testimony, he anointed his application letter with oil and they accepted him.<sup>119</sup>

Disagreeing with some of the teachings of his fellow Neo-Pentecostal leaders, Oke Sunday (a well-known Neo-Pentecostal pastor in Ilorin, Nigeria), remarks that in practical presentations of the gospel, most NNPs capitalize on laying on of hands, material prosperity, speaking in tongues, deliverance, and power. But the abuse of the acclaimed power of the Holy Spirit among NNPs has resulted in a quest for “power by all means,” money, and popularity. The early apostles never used tricks and magic in spreading the gospel.<sup>120</sup> Nigerian Neo-Pentecostal religiosity are full of this kind of belief and practice.

### **Breaking Generational Curses**

Some NNPs teach that after conversion, every Christian needs to go to their

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<sup>118</sup> See Wale Odunsin, “I Tore Oyedepo’s Book Because He Said Anointing Oil Is God’s Life in a Bottle – Tunde Bakare,” *Daily Post* (Nigeria), September 7, 2014, <https://dailypost.ng/2014/09/07/tore-oyedepos-book-said-anointing-oil-gods-life-bottle-tunde-bakare/>. See also Victorson Agbenson, *Moment of Truth: The Compelling Story of Pastor Tunde Bakare* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Safari Books, 2014), 262-66; Chris Oyakhilome, *The Oil and the Mantle* (Lagos, Nigeria: LoveWorld, 1997), 43-46.

<sup>119</sup> Oyakhilome, *The Oil and the Mantle*, 38. Oyakhilome also writes, “People have done to the oil what the children of Israel did to the brazen serpent of Moses. God did not intend for them to use it every time they had a problem. It was his appointed means of healing and delivering them on a particular occasion. But they abused it and began to call on it for every problem.”

<sup>120</sup> Oke Sunday, Google Forms survey, November 1, 2019.

leader(s) in order to be set free from generational curses.<sup>121</sup> But to evangelicals, when Christ died on the cross, he became a curse for us (Gal 3:3) in order to remove the curse of the law from us. Deuteronomy 28 contains lists of curses attached to failure to live according to the law. There are curses in the law, but Christ took away those curses when he was hung on the cross. Christ's work erases the fear that a Christian can suffer because of any sin committed by one's ancestors. Every curse was broken by the death of Jesus on the cross.<sup>122</sup> As Zac Poonen correctly avers, "When we received Christ as our Lord, every curse was broken. We don't have to live in fear of a generational curse any longer. Instead we have the opposite—the blessing of Abraham (Gal 3:14). That is why we can now receive the Holy Spirit through faith."<sup>123</sup> Moses Rahaman Popoola puts it this way,

And through faith in his finished work on the cross, all who believed are redeemed from all "curses" from God and man. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the only Redeemer, and Deliverer. There is no man or woman of God who has the anointing or oil to deliver (Luke 4: 18-19). Believers are to exercise authority on demonic power based on what Jesus has done on Calvary. Never live your life in a bondage anymore, as if the cross has never taken place.<sup>124</sup>

### **Victory over Enemies**

The gospel of NNPs promises victory over physical and spiritual enemies. Of the survey respondents, 96.7 percent of the Neo-Pentecostal respondents agree that NNPs assure people of their total victory over physical and spiritual enemies once they embrace the gospel.<sup>125</sup> The concept of salvation in African Traditional Religions centers mostly on deliverance from higher human enemies (e.g., the domination of a certain ethnic group

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<sup>121</sup> Daniel Iselaye, Google Forms survey. See more in Moses Rahaman Popoola, *Freedom from Generational Curses* (Ilorin, Nigeria: Modern Impressions, 2011), 1-19.

<sup>122</sup> John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Jesus: Study Guide Edition* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 147-48, 335-38. See also Gehman, *African Traditional Religion*, 13-14.

<sup>123</sup> Zac Poonen, *Through the Bible: A Message for Today from Every Book of the Bible* (Bangalore, India: CFC Production, 2016), 744.

<sup>124</sup> Popoola, *Freedom from Generational Curses*, viii.

<sup>125</sup> See figure 27 in chapter 3 under the section "NNPs' Major Emphases in Evangelism."



over another), freedom from the oppression of evil spiritual powers, healing from droughts and epidemic outbreaks, protection from cosmic disorders or natural disasters.<sup>126</sup> There is no belief in redemption and salvation of human souls as a result of the human fall; neither is there any idea of total depravity brought about by sin. Hence, prior to Christianity, worshippers in the African Traditional Religions sought salvation not from sin but from the evil enigma in the world around them—both physically and spiritually.<sup>127</sup> Moreover, in African Traditional Religions, and according to an African worldview, it is normal for people to run to local priests, herbalists, or spiritualists, who will help them by appealing to the spirits or help them in killing their enemies through charms, incantations, or invocations of evil powers.<sup>128</sup> Consequently, when people become Christians, due to improper discipleship, they carry this mentality into their new faith. This reality accounts for the reason that—in many parts of Nigeria—Christians always run to their pastors, prophets, or “men of God,” who will help them by praying for the death of their so-called human enemies and by anointing them for victory over their spiritual enemies. NNP leaders easily attract crowds of people with promises of victory over enemies because they are religious functionaries who are seen as mediators.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> See Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*, 174-6.

<sup>127</sup> Samuel M. Zwemer, *The Origin of Religion*, 3rd ed. (New York: Loizeaux, 1945), 71.

<sup>128</sup> These sets of people are seen as religious intermediaries or functionaries. According to Owojaiye,

In order to be free from evil attacks, one must be intentional in seeking protection from religious functionaries who have access to supernatural forces of good. This belief puts religious functionaries in a strategic position as special mediators between the realms of sacred and secular, as well as the worlds of good and evil. Africans see religious functionaries as people who possess supernatural abilities to intervene in the uncertainties of life caused by the activities of spiritual forces in the invisible world. From an African perspective, this is what explains the prevalence of the prophetic ministry, both in its genuine charismatic expression, but now, in the perverted form that is discrediting the entire church. (Owojaiye, “The Problem of False Prophets in Africa,” 3)

<sup>129</sup> According to J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, “Religious functionaries or specialists are people placed in the position of honor due to their supposed closeness to the supernatural world and realities. They are the custodians of esoteric intuition, mystical power or and knowledge that reveal mysterious religious formulae and objects. They occupy central formidable states in religions as the mouthpieces of transcendent deities.” See J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, “‘Blowing the Cover:’ Imagining Religious Functionaries in Ghanaian/Nigerian Films,” in *Religion, Media and the Marketplace*, ed. Lynn Schofield Clark (London: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 224-43.

Furthermore, prayer and fasting programs are always scheduled in NNP churches in order to war against both physical and spiritual enemies. All forms of prayers (e.g., “my enemy must die,” “die by fire,” “holy ghost fire consume them,” “burn to ashes”) are raised against enemies.<sup>130</sup> Evangelicals maintain that victory over spiritual enemies comes through the finished work of Christ on the cross. As for human enemies, believers are to pray for them and not to curse them.<sup>131</sup> Like the apostles, God may allow human enemies to kill believers, or he may not. Hence, believers who die in the hands of their enemies through persecutions die not as a result of any lack of faith (Heb 11: 35-40).

### **Proclaiming the Gospel as the Means to a Life of Earthly Success**

The NNP gospel promises its adherents success. In his book *Success Strategies*, Oyedepo describes God’s kind of success this way:

A faith-based journey through the scripture makes it abundantly clear that the God-kind of success enjoyed by the patriarchs (riches without sorrow; Proverbs 10:22) is the kind of success that is available and only attainable in the kingdom. It is having the good life without any strain, no stress or strife—success that only comes from above. It does not come with nightmares, but with good sleep, *for the Lord giveth his beloved sleep* (Psalm 127:2).<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> A friend of mine was invited by another friend to his church during its special prayer meeting that was combined with fasting. During the course of the prayer, the “man of God” (MOG) said, “It is now time for the business of the day.” At this moment, everyone began to open his or her pocket or bag to bring out either a picture or a piece of cloth. This was because the MOG had told the people on the first day of the prayer to come with any item or material belonging to anyone they know that is their enemy—that is, who is hindering, or standing as stumbling block to, their progress in life. The pews were filled to the brim as people queued before the MOG, who brought out a bottle of oil and was anointing those materials and shouting, “Holy Ghost fire; consume them. Die! Die! Die!” By this act, he convinced those in attendance that their enemies would die between seven and fourteen days. Adelaja maintains that “Because of religion, you could be told your parents are after you and are responsible for your failure, and you will believe it.” See Adelaja, *Damaged by Religion*, 82; Afe Adogame, “Dealing with Local Satanic Technology: Deliverance Rhetoric in the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries,” *Journal of World Christianity* 5, no. 1 (2012): 75-101.

<sup>131</sup> Jesus emphasizes this truth during the Sermon on the Mount: “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven” (Matt 5:43-45; cf. Rom 12:18; 1 Pet 3:9).

<sup>132</sup> David Oyedepo, *Success Strategies* (Lagos, Nigeria: Dominion, 2003), 6 (emphasis original).

If one goes by this definition of success (i.e., a state free of any strain, stress, strife, or nightmare), then all the apostles of Jesus Christ who faced persecution and, therefore, died were a bunch of failures.<sup>133</sup> The climax of NNPs’ teaching on success assures followers that one can reach a certain stage in their journey of faith when they will no longer experience any struggle or strife—a state of perfect ease.<sup>134</sup> In addition, Oyedepo maintains that

the struggle, which actually started in Genesis, has since continued and will only terminate when you are redeemed. Therefore, struggle for survival is a curse that came upon mankind after the fall. Man was not created for struggle, but became a victim of struggles as a result of the curse of God placed upon him at the fall. Sweat is a curse and it represents struggle for survival. In the book of Genesis 3:17-19 (where the word *sweat* first came to light) sweat connotes hardship . . . . If you are born again, you have been redeemed from the curse of struggles.<sup>135</sup>

Contrary to the way NNPs view success, evangelicals see success as fulfilling God’s intended purpose on earth, which may sometimes consist of hardship and strife, but the help of the Holy Spirit brings assurance and victory.<sup>136</sup> Coupled with NNPs’ misconstrued teaching on the biblical concept of success is their teaching on the “kingdom of God.” Oyedepo, in his book *Exploits of Faith*, maintains that the mission of faith is to bring heaven down to earth. In his faith confession, Oyedepo writes,

I would like to make this confession of faith: I’m set to create my heaven, to make Jesus real on the earth in His resurrected form, where sickness, disease and failure

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<sup>133</sup> In 2 Cor 11:23-27, the apostle Paul highlights some of ordeals he faced during his attempts to spread the gospel:

I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.

Even the patriarchs themselves faced lots of challenges in their journeys.

<sup>134</sup> See more in Gbeminiyi Eboda, *Accelerate Your Success Rate* (Lagos, Nigeria: Move Your World International, 2013), 79-81.

<sup>135</sup> Oyedepo, *Success Strategies*, 17-18.

<sup>136</sup> Babatunde, *The Faith of our Fathers*, 21-23.

couldn't touch Him, giving Him a name above all names. Whatever cannot depress, molest or oppress Jesus cannot come near me, because the Word is near me in my mouth and in my heart, even the Word of faith. I am here on earth to make Jesus real in character, charismas, results and in signs and wonders.<sup>137</sup>

There are many other preachers of the “heaven-on-earth gospel.”<sup>138</sup> But the fact remains that we are all living on the earth that is still groaning, waiting for its redemption (Rom 8:21-23).<sup>139</sup> The NNPs believe that when one is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, he should be able to present the gospel to achieve all these aforementioned elements.<sup>140</sup> However, using the established baseline in chapter two on the purpose of the power of the Holy Spirit for the presentation of the gospel, it becomes clear that the claim of the NNPs fall short of the biblical stand point of view on the roles of the Holy Spirit in evangelism.

### **The Practical Implications of the Neo-Pentecostals’ Gospel Proclamation in Nigeria**

When the gospel is presented with a promise that the recipients will be free from any form of suffering, pain, sickness and a poverty, it is ‘a gospel’ that fall short of the evangelical or biblical gospel. Austen Chimdi Ukachi is a Nigerian Christian researcher and a writer. Ukachi, in his effort to identify some of the reasons why the early revival in Nigeria has dwindled, writes,

The responses of over 70 percent of the interviewees in areas where revival had previously taken place point to the fact that the tempo of the revival began to

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<sup>137</sup> David O. Oyedepo, *Exploits of Faith* (Lagos, Nigeria: Dominion, 2005), 215-16.

<sup>138</sup> Oyakilome’s teachings center on the ability of the believers to live exactly like Christ and to create another heaven on earth, where there are no pains, no sicknesses, and no troubles of any kind. Myles Munroe, from the Bahamas, was another popular preacher of the “heaven-on-earth gospel.” His theological point of view on ‘heaven-on-earth gospel’ has influenced a lot of Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals leaders. Munroe’s popular emphasis was that believers can establish the perfect kingdom of Christ on earth exactly as it is in heaven. This remained his central message before he passed away in plane crash in 2014. See Myles Munroe, *Rediscovering the Kingdom: Ancient Hope for our 21st-Century World* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2004), 139-141. The fact remains, however, that if we could create our own heaven on earth as perfectly as heaven is, then there would be no need for the new heavens and new earth as mentioned in Rev 21.

<sup>139</sup> Furthermore, Jesus says, “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

<sup>140</sup> These elements include: healing, material prosperity, miracles, breaking generational curses, breakthrough, victory over enemy, anointing, speaking in tongues and to possess a working faith).

decline when the Church [Neo-Pentecostal] shifted emphasis from a Christ-centered gospel to a self-seeking and self-gratifying gospel. Pastors who were interviewed, some of whom have retired after several years of service in the ministry, lamented about the serious harm and damage that unbalanced gospel messages have caused the church. They testified that sacrificial living, prayer, and total commitment to the gospel were factors that contributed to the revival they experienced in the past years.<sup>141</sup>

The challenge with the Neo-Pentecostals preachers today is not that Jesus is not being mentioned as the savior. Rather, the problem centers on the fact that Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals lift healing, miracles, material prosperity and other supposed remunerations which they claim are waiting for anyone who accepts the gospel, above the real gospel message.<sup>142</sup> Hence, Jesus Christ is being projected as the medicine or pill needed for anyone who wants to live a complete stress, sorrow, and suffering-free life here on earth because Jesus will give health, riches, miracles, and more to everyone who follows him.<sup>143</sup>

The gospel that centers on sudden breakthroughs and miracles does not do harm to the biblical gospel alone but remains as a threat to the economic well-being of the nation. Adelaja maintains that miracle and breakthrough messages convince gullible minds (i.e., the masses) to think that the process of labor and production is not necessary for prosperity and that all that is needed is to “name it [i.e., confess it] and claim it. If NNP churches in Nigeria do not cease this kind of preaching, the nation will continually breed Christians who will be the masterminds of corrupt practices in society.<sup>144</sup> Such a gospel can only produce followers who will eventually become hackers, scammers, and

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<sup>141</sup> Austen C. Ukachi, *The Best Is Yet to Come: Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewals in Nigeria 1914-1990s* (n.p.: Xulon Press, 2013), 367. Ukachi is a Neo-Pentecostals man who is calling the attention of the fellow Neo-Pentecostals men back to the point where he thought they have missed the real gospel.

<sup>142</sup> Sopuru writes, “Observers have pointed attention to that fact that in their preaching, the Nigerian new wave prosperity preachers exalt the preaching of miracles and material prosperity at the expense of salvation, holiness and godliness.” See Sopuru, *Modern Theology versus Biblical Theology*, 64.

<sup>143</sup> Ukachi, *The Best Is Yet to Come: Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewals in Nigeria 1914-1990s*, 368.

<sup>144</sup> Adelaja, *How the Church Creates Economic Recession*, 24.

thieves. Frankly speaking, “if we don’t want to be a nation known for fraud and corruption, we must urgently begin to teach people that it is better to work hard than to pray for financial breakthrough.”<sup>145</sup>

When the gospel presentation focuses on the deliverance from both physical and spiritual enemies, the recipients of such gospel live perpetually in fear and in the consciousness of enemies rather than living in consciousness of Christ their redeemer. This is the situation of many of the Nigerian Neo-Pentecostal Christians who see or blame one enemy or enemies for every bad occurrence of life. Again, when the gospel presented compels every convert to experience the sign gifts of the Spirit, there will be a possibility of winning people into ‘signs’ but not unto Christ. As earlier mentioned, many of the Neo-Pentecostals maintain that the ability of a convert to be able to speak in tongue authenticates a genuine conversion and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.<sup>146</sup> All these open doors for the possibility of ingenuine conversions and downplay of quality members among the Nigerian Neo-Pentecostal denominations.

Another important point that survey participants draw attention to is the issue of church-to-church conversion tactic of NNPs’ evangelistic practices. Akila Adamu points out that “evangelical Christians reach out to non-Christians while the NNPs reach out to members from other churches. As soon as they convince members from the evangelical church to join them, they quickly position such members as pastors or elders

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<sup>145</sup> Adelaja, *How the Church Creates Economic Recession*, 24. A few years ago (around 2014), Chris Oyakilome, of the Christ Embassy (a.k.a. Believers’ LoveWorld), prophesied to one of his members by name, Lawrence Agada, a former senior cashier with Sheraton Hotels and Towers, Ikeja, Lagos, that God is set to do mighty thing in his life. This prophecy prompted Agada toward becoming rich by instant gratification. Not long after this, Agada was in the Nigerian police force’s list of wanted suspects for theft. He had donated stolen money and gifts worth ₦39 million to the church. A member of the same church, Gbenga Kehinde, was caught in similar act, when he defrauded Eko International Bank of ₦40 million, out of which he donated ₦10 million to the church. Okoro Osagie (a.k.a. Jerry Finger) was arrested by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) for defrauding foreigners to the tune of \$96,607 through the internet, of which more than 80 percent of the proceeds was given to Christ Embassy as tithes and offerings. See more in Adelaja, *How the Church Creates Economic Recession*, 50.

<sup>146</sup> See more in Chris Oyakhilome, *How to Pray Effectively: Volume One* (Lagos, Nigeria: LoveWorld Publishing Ministry, 2001), 36-42.

with the aim of retaining them as permanent members.”<sup>147</sup> This approach of winning members from existing churches to Pentecostal churches has generated a lot of rancor in Nigeria. The wide margin between the doctrinal positions of the evangelical and Pentecostal denominations in Nigeria paves the way for crises and divisions among Christians throughout the whole country. As noted above, many Nigerian evangelicals do not emphasize the signs gifts,<sup>148</sup> and they never focus on the “health and wealth gospel” like NNPs do. In lieu of these points, and coupled with the impoverished situation of Nigeria, Pentecostal pastors—in most places—find it easy to persuade evangelicals to leave their churches.

Beginning in the late 1990s, there has been a mass drift of members from evangelical denominations to Pentecostal denominations. Some evangelical preachers have titled this moment “sheep stealing,” calling Pentecostals wolves and hyenas.<sup>149</sup> However, as a means of a counterattack, vibrant Pentecostal leaders such as Oyedepo, Oyakilome, and Paul Eneche have refuted evangelicals on this point. For example, Eneche, whose church and ministry are flooded with vibrant members from mainline denominations, has eloquently preached, “There is nothing like sheep stealing. If you feed your sheep very well, your sheep will stay back at home in the pen.”<sup>150</sup> On this point, Eneche may not be totally correct because the ultimate objective of all evangelistic strategies should center on how to win unbelievers, not believers converting believers. In

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<sup>147</sup> Akila Adamu, Google Forms survey, November 17, 2019.

<sup>148</sup> For instance, according to the article of faith of my home church denomination, Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), “Some of the Spiritual gifts listed in Scripture, for example tongues, healing, etc., were sign gifts. However, an undue emphasis on possession of any of those sign gifts as a means or prerequisite for salvation is unscriptural and is rejected (Jn. 6:3-16; Jn. 16:13-14; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 14:1-40).” See Evangelical Church Winning All, *ECWA Articles of Faith and Practices* (Jos, Nigeria: Challenge Press, 2018), 6.

<sup>149</sup> From the middle of the 1990s to 2010, the battle between Nigeria evangelicals and Pentecostals was so hostile that it resulted in a conflict over church-to-church conversion. See more in Maxey and Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 46-57.

<sup>150</sup> Paul Eneche, “Hour of Healing and Deliverance” (Sermon, Dunamis Gospel Centre, Abuja, Nigeria, July 2010).

the presentation of the gospel, it is more appropriate to turn to places where there are many unbelievers in order to convert them rather than stealing members from other existing churches. The apostle Paul was clearly against the attitude of sheep stealing when he said, “It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation” (Rom 15:20).

As a way of concluding this chapter, the target of NNPs is on how to make Christianity more marketable. They place more emphasis on packaging the gospel in a more attractive way.<sup>151</sup> Jared C. Wilson has a good description for this when he writes on attractional churches. According to Jared, the term “attractional” refers to “a way of doing church ministry whose primary purpose is to make Christianity appealing.”<sup>152</sup> As a matter of fact, the attractional model is not just a matter of mere style; rather, it has become a paradigm. NNPs adopt the modus operandi of pragmatism and consumerism.<sup>153</sup> The ideologies behind these seem to fit into Wilson’s description:

“We will do whatever it takes to get people in the door,” I often hear pastors say. “We just want them to be able to hear the message of Jesus.” That latter motivation is wonderful, but the problem is that “doing whatever it takes to get people in the door” can replace or undercut what we want them to be attracted to. Whatever you win people with is what you win them to. The best motives in the world cannot sanctify unbiblical methods.<sup>154</sup>

Hence, to keep their converts in their churches, NNPs must continue to focus members’ attention on the ten emphases discussed above (e.g., financial prosperity,

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<sup>151</sup> As part of the ways of achieving this goal, many NNPs always invite worldly singers, comedians, and motivational speakers to their churches in order to attract large crowds of people.

<sup>152</sup> Jared C. Wilson, *The Gospel-Driven Church: Uniting Church-Growth with the Metrics of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 24.

<sup>153</sup> “Pragmatism” has to do with “If it works, then work it.” In this ideology, the end always justifies the means. In January 2020, I interviewed a member of Living Faith Church (LFC) concerning the signs and wonders aspect of this thesis. In part of his response, the man said, “My Papa [i.e., Oyedepo, the General Overseer of LFC] use to say, ‘only a fool will deny the proof.’” Anonymous, interview by the author, Louisville, KY, January 15, 2020. Statements like this are highly misleading. On the other hand, “consumerism” is a business term with an ideology of trying to satisfy the desire of the consumers (or customers) at all costs.

<sup>154</sup> Wilson, *The Gospel-Driven Church*, 24.



miracles, healings, breakthrough, success). Nevertheless, if a method does not depend on the genuine leading of the Holy Spirit, then adopting pragmatism in order to win souls remains awkward. Whatever one's approach to evangelism, redirecting people to anything (or anyone) other than Jesus jeopardizes the real gospel.

Lola Charles clearly remarks that the NNPs boast about not being legalistic like the orthodox and evangelical churches. However, in an attempt to avoid the error of legalism (into which older Pentecostal churches fell as their mantra for holiness), NNPs have equally fallen into an even greater error: the modern error of the hyper-grace doctrine.<sup>155</sup> For example, one survey participant reports, "In most of his teachings and preaching, Chris Oyakhilome, the founder and General Overseer of the Christ Embassy (a.k.a. Believers' LoveWorld) maintains that believers in Christ Jesus cannot sin; they may make a mistake, but they cannot sin again because in this world, believers are exactly like Christ himself."<sup>156</sup> Oyakhilome also teaches that believers in Christ Jesus cannot be sick:

Let this be dawn on your spirit for all time—you were not re-created for sickness, but for divine health. The moment you were born again, the life you came with from your mother's womb ceased to reign in your being; a new life from God took over. The day a man is born again the law of physical death is reversed. . . . The fallen nature of the first Adam came with sickness and could be influenced by it, but the nature of God, which you have now received came with life. It came with health. The power of sickness is destroyed. It cannot have a home in your body. Sickness has become a thing of the past. Health became yours the day you received Jesus into

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<sup>155</sup> Lola Charles, interview by the author, Ilorin, Nigeria, January 10, 2020. The hyper-grace doctrine concerns those who are of the opinion that a Christian can live anyway he or she deems fit because the sacrifice of Jesus has covered every sin—past, present, and future. However, part of what really qualifies someone to be a Christian is that sin no longer rules over the person (Rom 6:14). To be a Christian is to continue to live a Christ-like life, to be a true disciple of Jesus. Francis Chan and Mark Beuving clearly write, "Yet somehow many have come to believe that a person can be a 'Christian' without being like Christ. A 'follower' who doesn't follow. How does that make any sense? Many people in the church have decided to take on the name of Christ and nothing else." Francis Chan and Mark Beuving, *Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2012), 16-17.

<sup>156</sup> Adebisi, interview. Adebisi adds that even with the failure of Oyakhilome's first marriage, which ended in divorce and concerning which his wife accused him of marital infidelity, Oyakhilome still maintains that believers cannot sin again. At Christ Embassy, "sin" is not called sin but a "mistake." To this day, Oyakhilome, who is a close follower of Benny Hinn, has millions of people following him as members both in Nigeria and abroad.

your life. It became your present tense possession.<sup>157</sup>

In his references to the prayer of the apostle Paul in Ephesians 1:17-18 and Colossians 1:9, Oyakhilome writes, “I believe we need to pray these prayers for the Church in these days. It’s not God’s will for you to be sick or to suffer, but ignorance of the word of God can keep you under the hold of sickness. It can make you think God wants things that way, particularly when you think about the fact that some ministers actually teach this.”<sup>158</sup> These kinds of teachings are customary for many NNPs and form part of their evangelistic messages.

According to Joseph Ali,

The record must be set straight, it is not that the Nigeria Neo-Pentecostals are not preaching the gospel at all. The problem lies in putting other things in place or above the cross of Jesus; and if the cross is not the central focus, then, it is not the gospel. For decades, myself and few other Pentecostal friends have been raising alarm about this deviation.<sup>159</sup>

Ali further adds,

There is a need to return to the balanced or total gospel. We need to emphasize the gospel without de-emphasizing the blessings (i.e., prosperity, healing, deliverance, sign and wonders etc.) that accompany the gospel. Nevertheless, our fellow Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals preachers have lowered the standard of the gospel, and the ultimate priority have been misplaced. Someone like me left an evangelical church in the late of 80s because the holistic gospel was not preached then. The failure of the Nigerian Evangelicals in preaching the total gospel gives room for many of the Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals to adulterate the gospel.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Chris Oyakhilome, *None of These Diseases* (Lagos, Nigeria: LoveWorld Publication, 2001), 59-60. Later, Oyakhilome adds, “When you are born again it was the seed of God that came to you and produced life in you. You are full of God as Jesus is. He told his disciples, “I am the vine, ye are the branches” (John 15:5). The same life that flows through the vine flows through the branches. That means there is a new blood type, blood type-D for Divine. And the life you now have is the indestructible life! This is the reason no sickness can destroy you” (85-86).

<sup>158</sup> Oyakhilome, *None of These Diseases*, 129.

<sup>159</sup> Joseph Ali, interview by the author, Ilorin, Nigeria, April 22, 2020. Joseph Ali is the leader of a Pentecostal denomination known as Christ Assembly Church, Nigeria. For many years, Ali, Mike Oye, Onofurho, and few others (all of them Pentecostal leaders) formed a forum known as “Contending for the Faith” with the aim of correcting the heretical teachings of Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals.

<sup>160</sup> Ali, interview.

Nevertheless, Ali maintains that there are a few Pentecostal churches that are still striving to strike the balance. “For instance, First Square church (in Nigeria), Deeper Life Bible Church, RCCG and my church, are still contending for the truth at all cost even though we may still have some imperfections.”<sup>161</sup>

In a point of view similar to Ali’s, Mike Oye says,

All hope of restoring the true gospel back in Nigeria is not completely lost, because, having seen the fake life and false gospel of some of the Neo-Pentecostal churches, many of the orthodox and evangelical members who once migrated (through church-to-church conversion) to these churches are beginning to return back to their former churches which they initially tagged as ‘cold churches.’ Some remnants are leaving these fake churches and are seeking for orthodox, evangelical and classical Pentecostal churches who still retain the truth. Much so, today, there is an insurgent of revival among many orthodox and evangelical denominations with a balance teaching on the gospel and the Holy Spirit.<sup>162</sup>

Some who are disappointed with the Neo-Pentecostal aberration are finding their way back to the Orthodox and evangelical denominations. This return is a continuous trend today in Nigerian Christendom. Nevertheless, many will still remain in these Neo-Pentecostal churches with the adulterated gospel because that is what they want. Jesus forewarned his disciples about this issue—that the road to eternal life is narrow, and few are those that find it (Matt 7:14). The rise of fake prophets with fake miracles to deceive even the elect is part of the end-time signs that Jesus spoke about (Matt 24:2).<sup>163</sup>

In this chapter, some of the theological differences between the evangelicals and the NNPs are clearly seen; and the contents of the NNPs gospel are well elucidated. Again, using the baseline of evaluation as discussed in chapter two, it has become clearer in this chapter that the emphasis of the NNPs on the role of the Holy Spirit in evangelism fail to fall in line with the biblical position. Much so, in this chapter, attention was also

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<sup>161</sup> Ali, interview.

<sup>162</sup> Mike Oye, interview by the author, Ibadan, Nigeria, April 22, 2020.

<sup>163</sup> Oye, interview.

drawn to the practical implications of the gospel according to NNPs. The next chapter summarizes the entire argument of this thesis, points out some recommendations, and provides some areas of further research on Nigerian Christianity.

CHAPTER 5  
SUMMARY, RESEARCH FINDINGS,  
RECOMMENDATIONS, AND  
CONCLUSION

**Summary**

The subject of evangelism can never be overemphasized. This thesis has endeavored to establish that evangelism involves the passionate presentation of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit and then leaving the results up to God. The gospel is not a merely preaching of morals—calling on people to turn a new leaf without receiving a new life; it is not inviting people to church and making them feel good and comfortable; it is not the just mere works of charity and community development; and it is not also tilting the story of Jesus to conform to acceptable human philosophy or cultural norms.<sup>1</sup>

The core of the gospel message is the plan of the Holy Trinity to save humanity (Heb 10:9), the love of God that drew the plan of salvation (John 3:16), the execution of God’s plan for the salvation of man (1 Cor 15:3-4), and the proclamation of the finished work of Christ on the cross for the redemption of sinners (Luke 24:46-47).<sup>2</sup> Hence, the true gospel must be preached to encompass the establishment of God’s kingdom (Luke 16:16), repentance that leads to the knowledge of the truth (2 Tim 2: 25-26), repentance from sin that is accompanied with a godly sorrow (2 Cor 7:10), repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 24: 46-47), a repentance toward God by

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<sup>1</sup> Evangelical Church Winning All (South West Forum), *2019 Sunday Manual for Adults*, vol. 28 (Ilorin, Nigeria: Victory Signs International, 2019), 34.

<sup>2</sup> Evangelical Church Winning All, *2019 Sunday Manual for Adults*, 28:34. For further reading, see John Stott, *The Cross of Christ: Study Guide Edition* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2006), 23-30; Mark Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 10-17.

confessing Jesus Christ as Lord, and a repentance that leads to life eternal by putting one's faith in Christ (Acts 11:18).<sup>3</sup> The proclamation of the gospel message does not rest on the competency of anyone's personal ability but on the power of the Holy Spirit. Hence, the place of a thorough understanding of Acts 1:8 for every Christian who wants to embark on evangelism needs to be re-emphasized. Buttressing his argument on this biblical text and on the non-negotiable place of the Holy Spirit in any attempt to present the gospel, Timothy K. Beougher points out a paramount conclusion. For evangelism, Beougher writes,

the first resource God provided is power. Power overcomes our fear of inadequacy. Boldness is God-given courage which overcomes fear and produces freedom in sharing the Gospel. As believers, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit. . . . We tend to focus on the strategy and forget the power! But the strategy is worthless without the power. This requires a continuous in filling of the Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup>

A person can launch into this power by first realizing one's inadequacy. For instance, when a man discovers that he is not sufficient for the task of the gospel's proclamation, then God steps in through the power of the Holy Spirit. This thesis has taken a closer look into the Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals' understanding and practice of evangelism as they suppose it to be under the influence of the Spirit. The impact of NNPs in making Christianity widely known in Nigeria can never be over emphasized. The passionate zeal of NNPs is worthy of emulation, and their liturgical practices strive for relevancy to different contexts. There is no doubt that NNPs have discerned an effective means of attracting young people. The Commonwealth of Zion Assembly (COZA) church has a captivating caption that reads, "Discover, Develop and Deploy your talent."<sup>5</sup> Captions like this one draw many youths who are jobless due to the economic

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<sup>3</sup> Evangelical Church Winning All, *2019 Sunday Manual for Adults*, 28:34-35.

<sup>4</sup> Timothy Beougher, *Overcoming Walls to Witnessing* (Charlotte, NC: Billy Graham Association, 1993), 13.

<sup>5</sup> Despite the several sexual allegations (with convincing evidence) levied against Biodun Fatoyinbo (the founder of COZA), the population of the youth following him is still amazing.

insatiability of Nigeria. Like the attractional churches, NNPs use music and creative elements that appeal to the desired audience, and teaching that is designed to be inspirational and practical with a powerful magnetic influence upon today's young generation.<sup>6</sup>

However, one of the issues frankly addressed in this thesis concerns the theological quality, not just the numerical conversion. To put it straight to NNPs concerning their gospel proclamation; what is the theological foundation of the gospel they preach? How genuine is the faith of their converts? How biblical is the pattern of their growth?<sup>7</sup> Considering, for instance, the data and presentation of Pew Research,

Nigeria is the seventh most populous country in the world, with 206 million people. By 2100, it is projected to be the world's third most populous country—ahead of the U.S.—with 733 million people, according to United Nations estimates. Nigeria is expected to add more people than any other country during that span. . . . Nigeria's population is almost evenly split between Muslims (50%) and Christians (48.1%), as of 2015. It has the world's fifth-largest Muslim population (90 million) and the world's sixth-largest Christian population (87 million).<sup>8</sup>

From the demographics above, one would expect that the 87 million Christians in Nigeria are enough to set the fire of revival ablaze compared to the handful of early believers that were reckoned to have turned the world upside down.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, an internal observer has pointed out that “the more the churches, the more the corruption in the land.”<sup>10</sup> The answer to this issue is not far-fetched; people embrace the Neo-Pentecostal

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<sup>6</sup> Jared C. Wilson, *The Gospel-Driven Church: Uniting Church-Growth with the Metrics of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 24.

<sup>7</sup> To date, about 80 percent of Pentecostal Christians are migrants from traditional mainline churches. See more in John O. Aina, *How to Cub Youths Exodus from the Church* (Jos, Nigeria: ECWA Challenge Book, 2015), 28-32.

<sup>8</sup> John Gramlich, “Fast Facts about Nigeria and Its Immigrants as U.S. Travel Ban Expands,” Pew Research, February 3, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/02/03/fast-facts-about-nigeria-and-its-immigrants-as-u-s-travel-ban-expands/>.

<sup>9</sup> The journey of the gospel that made an indelible mark upon the history of the entire world history began with just about 120 of the early believers who gathered in the upper room. For more, see Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001), 3.

<sup>10</sup> Precious Kayode, Google Form survey, November 20, 2019.

gospel as an alternative means of getting out of poverty and a quick way of amassing materialistic wealth. Hence, the conversion of many who call themselves Christians in Nigeria is questionable.<sup>11</sup> When the content of the gospel that people receive and believe is faulty, it will also affect people's way of living.

To overcome the danger of bias in delving into the subject under discussion, a survey was carried out, coupled with consulting key books written by renown NNP leaders. In addition, a comparison was made between the practical and theological emphases of Nigerian evangelicals and Neo-Pentecostals in regard to their presentations of the gospel. Despite the differences in the approaches of the two camps, the core message of the gospel, though with different degrees of emphasis, is still the same: "the salvation of sinners comes through Jesus Christ alone." Where there are radical differences, as one sees in the Word of Faith movement, material prosperity (or health-and-wealth) gospel, and others, such differences are an indication of errors in the gospel presentation.

The research of this thesis has proven that concerning evangelism, there is a misconstrued understanding of Acts 1:8 among many NNPs. Hence, not preaching the true gospel to the lost through a genuine understanding of the place of the Holy Spirit has resulted into an inordinate accumulation of material riches and other mundane things among the NNP leaders. Daniel Iselaye aptly observes that both evangelical and NNP churches should know that the modern focus on material prosperity and the idea of measuring growth by "numbers—as seen among today's modern churches—is mostly a scam of the devil."<sup>12</sup> According to the survey respondents, however, the deviations of some NNPs is due primarily to a lack of biblical literacy, whereas, some deviate as a result of their selfish pursuit of fame, power, and materialism.

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<sup>11</sup> Kayode, Google Form survey.

<sup>12</sup> Daniel Iselaye, Google Form survey, October 25, 2019.



From the witnessing pattern of NNPs, this thesis has revealed a borrowing from the practices of African Traditional Religions (ATR) into Christianity. Sometimes, the similarities are so close that one wonders if those who claim to be Christians have ever left their old religion at all. As a matter of fact, virtually all the respondents of the Google Forms survey agreed that the quest for power and spiritual superiority has now led many Neo-Pentecostal Christians and church leaders to involve themselves in syncretism, the occultism, and magical practices.

Placing emphasis on the spiritual gifts and manifestations of speaking in tongues, healings, and signs and wonders is not the gospel presentation, and proclaiming that salvation comes with incentives can be a misleading bait. For example, Akin Ibimidu writes, “The Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals always proclaim; come to Jesus to be prosperous, delivered, healed, and suffer no more etc. Hence, the true gospel is not proclaimed, but the incentives are the focus.”<sup>13</sup> According to J. C. Ryle, “There is a common, worldly kind of Christianity in this day, which many have—a cheap Christianity which offends nobody, and requires no sacrifice—which costs nothing, and is worth nothing.”<sup>14</sup> The argument of this thesis, therefore, has called attention to the need for NNPs to return to the sound and true gospel message.

### **Research Findings**

Besides some issues discussed in chapters 3 and 4, there are some other cogent issues that are worth highlighting. First, the survey responses revealed that in Nigeria today, the wane of integrity and respect for Neo-Pentecostal churches and their leaders among the unbelievers is unprecedented. There is little regard and honor for the clergy and their churches due to substandard practices of Christianity. Most of the Neo-

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<sup>13</sup> Akin Ibimidu, Google Form survey, October 23, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Omar C. Garcia, “A Cheap Christianity,” Go Beyond (blog), January 10, 2020, <https://gobeyond.blog/2020/01/10/a-cheap-christianity/>.

Pentecostal church in Nigeria has become so earthly minded and has vastly lost its spiritual power and authority. Second, some survey respondents pointed attention to NNPs' use of comedians in their churches as a means of gathering crowds. To NNPs, the end justifies the means, and the results silence the critics. The negative effect of this slogan (i.e., the end justifies the means) has been discussed in the previous chapter as deviating from the biblical approach to evangelism. Wale Aerogun, a very reputable Nigerian preacher and teacher, once lamented in his sermon, "It is so pathetic how these comedians will climb the church pulpits and crack all form of ungodly jokes that appeal to the emotions of their audience."<sup>15</sup> Third, another discovery from the survey revealed that due to heavy financial tasks, unfulfilled prophecies and promises, and the immoral lives of their leaders, some youths are already boycotting churches.<sup>16</sup> Some of these youths buy internet data to watch some Christian programs they like online instead of going to churches on Sundays.<sup>17</sup> Fourth, in the quest for quick riches, some NNP pastors are embracing Islam. There are a handful of young Neo-Pentecostal

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<sup>15</sup> Sola Areogun, "Declination of Ministerial Ethic" (sermon preached at Lagos Region Apostolic Ministration, Nigeria, December 2018). Areogun added,

We allow comedians to come into churches and be playing with the Holy things of God. One of the most terrible assaults of hell against the Church of God in Nigeria in these last days is invasion of comedians on the pulpits. The devil is making the things of God look stupid to us and the things of the world to look wise, thereby weakening our power for spiritual warfare. Where have we gotten these pastors that do not understand the terms and the consecration of the calling of God?

Areogun is the founder and general overseer of the Dream Centre of the Life Oasis International Church.

<sup>16</sup> There are several cases of some Nigerian Neo-Pentecostal pastors being caught in sexual scandals on the daily pages of the Nigerian News Papers and on the internet. Some members are ashamed to be identified with such pastors and their churches. See Jon Batiste, "Mega Churches Pastor Stays on despite Multiple Affairs," *Christianity Today* 60, no. 6 (July/August 2016): 18-19; Tunde Ososanya, "Biodun Fatoyinbo: CAN Reacts to Sexual Allegations against COZA Pastor," accessed on April 29, 2020, <https://www.legit.ng/1246454-biodun-fatoyinbo-can-reacts-sexual-allegations-coza-pastor.html>.

<sup>17</sup> Responses from Google Form survey. Further, according to Sunday Adelaja,

In some churches, they tell you, "if you are worshipping with us for three months and did not receive a miracle, stop coming." So that makes people keep going all the time, yet they will not see anything. Eventually, when three months lapses, they will not see anything. Eventually, when three months lapses, they tell you to keep the faith, that after one year you will see your miracles. At the end of the year, you are already entangled in the web of the church; you cannot come out anymore. (Sunday Adelaja, *Damaged by Religion: Path to Healing* [Kiev, Ukraine: Golden Truth, 2019], 100)

pastors that have converted to Islam and turned into Islamic clerics.<sup>18</sup>

### **Recommendations**

Based on personal observations from the trends in the survey responses and the argument of this thesis, below are a few recommendations. First, this thesis recognizes that although there are clear-cut signs of deviation seen among some of NNPs, there are still some of Neo-Pentecostal leaders that are striving to retain sound biblical teachings (see more in chap. 3). Hence, I recommend that Neo-Pentecostal leaders who are still standing on the true teaching of God's Word need to separate themselves from, and point out the truth to, those on the other side.

Second, though Pentecostalism has impacted Nigeria's religious space, it is necessary to curtail the excesses that today's NNPs are breeding. Hence, this thesis calls on NNP leaders to harness their energy toward producing mature Christians who can, in turn, help in building up the nation as they labor with an ecumenical spirit to synergize with evangelicals and other religious bodies.

Third, I recommend that the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) develop and encourage solid pastoral training for all church leaders. The growth of mushroom churches throughout the geographical regions of Nigeria without having a commensurate moral and spiritual impact on the people involved makes no sense. Pastoral ministry is more than an employment opportunity; it is a calling that ought to be backed up with sound formal training. Neo-Pentecostal denominations in Nigeria need to go back to standard Bible schools. Some of the leaders are highly sincere in their erroneous convictions, but this reality is never a justifiable ground for aberrant versions of the gospel. For instance, the error of placing personal revelations, personal experiences, and

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<sup>18</sup> Muslims in Nigeria reward any Christians who intentionally and openly convert to Islam with monetary and material gifts. Hence, because of these instances and due to fake Christians' conversions or lack of discipleship, many young Christians in Nigeria are heading that way. This is part of a major concern today in Nigerian Christendom.

the words of general overseers (GOs) above the Scriptures—as most NNP leaders and members do—is due to biblical illiteracy. But no amount of sincerity can justify the damage of propagating a pseudo-gospel. Hence, the Nigerian Christian body needs to advocate for formal training for a would-be church leader.

Fourth, there is an urgent need for disciple-making. As a way of concluding this thesis, I want to call urgent attention to the inevitable task of discipleship so that the Nigerian church’s missiological enterprise will produce a lasting and fruitful result. Considering the current state of Christianity in Nigeria, the subject of discipleship cannot be over emphasized. Disciple-making is really a part of the inevitable process of turning new converts into mature believers in Christ. To this point, Lai writes, “A man may be consecrated, dedicated and devoted but of little use if undisciplined. Discipleship is disciplining (or training) the new believers in the basics of the faith. Once the basics are mastered, discipleship continues into all other aspects of faith.”<sup>19</sup> Therefore, it is very important to know that evangelism, discipleship, and church planting are inseparable processes. Again, as Lai points out,

The goal of discipleship is to teach new believers to identify with Christ and be obedient to God’s word, so that fruit may be harvested both in and through their lives for Jesus. As believers mature, leaders should be appointed in culturally acceptable ways. These leaders must be trained to shepherd the fellowship, evangelize the unbelievers, disciple believers and plant other churches in nearby communities. In all church planting efforts, there should be a plan for raising up national leaders and as quickly as possible, giving the leadership of the fellowship into their hands.<sup>20</sup>

Well-disciplined members are always good tools for evangelism, serve well for the growth of any given local church, and portray a life of unquestionable integrity for the world. Hence, contextual research on discipleship will go far in providing good grounding for Nigerian converts to Christianity.

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<sup>19</sup> Lai, *Tent Making: Business as Missions*, 155.

<sup>20</sup> Lai, *Tent Making: Business as Missions*, 155.

Speaking on the expansion of Christianity inside and outside Nigeria by Nigerians, the fact that mass conversion is characterized by syncretism in most parts of Nigeria is undeniable. To make matters worse, the delusion of Pentecostalism concerning a health-and-wealth gospel has really posed a big challenge. In some areas, the spread of Christianity among some NNPs can be likened to those old and ever relevant words of the apostle Paul to the Philippians: “For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things” (Phil 1:18-19).<sup>21</sup> There are thousands out there preaching other gospels different from the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. This reality supports the need for an urgent call for Nigerian evangelicals to rise to this challenge.

### **Areas for Further Research**

Considering the present situation of Christianity in Nigeria, there are other issues that are worth researching. Here, I offer four researchable issues that will help in strengthening Christianity in Nigeria. First, the pattern of church planting and growth among NNPs needs a critical evaluation. Second, there is a present concern on “occultism in modern Nigerian Christianity.” Third, there is a division on how Christians ought to respond to the persistent persecutions against Christians in Nigeria. This division has led to a debate concerning the “theology of the third cheek.”

### **Questionable Church Planting and Growth Movement**

According to Luke’s record, the early church grew unstoppable after the believers received the power of the Holy Spirit as promised by Christ: “They broke bread

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<sup>21</sup> In a similar, the Apostle Paul described the followers of false preachers of the gospel as follower with itching ear. “For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear” (2 Tim 4:3).

in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:46-47 NIV); “But the Word of God continued to spread and flourish” (12:24 NIV); “In this way, the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power” (19:20 NIV). Further, as Danie Vermeulen writes,

If the church is a body then it has all the necessary “DNA” to reproduce after its kind. We can conclude that both Jerusalem and Antioch were “mother” churches. The best example though is the church at Antioch. Through the church planting of Barnabas and more specifically Paul, many churches were reproduced from one local church. The essence of Paul’s ministry was the church—his ministry resulted in a church but he undoubtedly expected a multiplication of churches to take place.<sup>22</sup>

From Vermeulen’s words, one can deduce that intentionality in establishing new churches ought to precipitate all evangelism strategies. Mark J. Terry writes, “The apostles were very church-oriented in their evangelism. They did not just win persons in isolation; rather, they sought to baptize their converts and gather them into congregations for nurture and mutual encouragement.”<sup>23</sup> The combination of Jesus’ emphasis in Matt 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15-16 reveals that an evangelistic witnessing ought to result in grooming mature disciples for Christ. Terry also states, “For Paul, faithfulness to the Great Commission meant more than preaching evangelistic messages here and there. It meant completing a sequence of activities that would result in mature churches. We could say without overstating the case that, for Paul, to ‘make disciples of all nations’ (Matt 28:19) required planting churches.”<sup>24</sup> Moreover, according to Vermeulen,

Jesus’ first sermon was to announce the new Kingdom (Matt 3:2). He said He would build His church and that the gates of Hades would not stand against it. We can therefore conclude that this new Kingdom is made up of churches, that He will subdue the Kingdom of darkness, penetrate it and rescue those in bondage through His church (Col 1:18, Eph 3:10-11, Rom 5:17). Where the light shines, darkness

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<sup>22</sup> Danie Vermeulen, *The Process of Planting a Church* (Strubens Valley, South Africa: Dawn Africa, n.d.), 6.

<sup>23</sup> J. Mark Terry, *Evangelism: A Concise History* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 1998), 26.

<sup>24</sup> Terry, *Evangelism*, 5.

disappears. When a church is planted within a community, the Kingdom of God arrives in that community—a force directly opposed to the kingdom of darkness, with a vision to fulfill the last Adam’s mission, “. . . The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.” (1 John 3:8 NIV).<sup>25</sup>

The early believers, in their endeavors of planting churches, extended the domain of God’s kingdom. Further, as Ellis and Mitchell Roger say, “If a church exists which never thinks about reproducing itself . . . , never expects or anticipates that this is the natural business of growing up, then it is actually sterile.”<sup>26</sup> The Word of Jesus Christ himself attests to this when Jesus affirmatively expresses, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last” (John 15:16 NIV). Patrick Lai writes,

The ultimate objective of all mission work is to establish God’s church where it does not already exist (Romans 15:20). The Nevius model of church planting describes a church as a body of believers who are self instructing, self propagating, self supporting, and self governing. The development of a strong movement of God in any people group involves three essential steps: evangelism, discipleship, and church planting. Evangelism and discipleship are not ends in themselves. The church is the bride of Christ. Evangelism should lead to a gathering of new believers who come together to form a fellowship, which becomes in time a church.<sup>27</sup>

Lai clearly portrayed here that evangelism precedes church planting and church planting precedes church growth. Still on the issue of bearing fruit through church planting, Stuart Murray says, “Perhaps it would be better to regard reproduction through church planting as normal, and the survival of ecclesiastical structures for more than a couple of generations as abnormal and problematic.”<sup>28</sup> However, a balance must be maintained in an attempt to see church growth, or else the temptation of exchanging quality for quantity is very possible. God has a specific plan for every local church in a

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<sup>25</sup> Vermeulen, *The Process of Planting a Church*, 7.

<sup>26</sup> Ellis Roger and Mitchell Roger, *Radical Church Planting* (Cambridge, MA: Crossway, 1992), 73.

<sup>27</sup> Patrick Lai, *Tent Making: Business as Missions* (Waynesboro, GA: Authentic Media, 2005), 154.

<sup>28</sup> Stuart Murray, *Church Planting: Laying foundations* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Press 1998), 59.

given location. Studying the growth and life cycle of bonsai trees, Ken Hemphill came up with a book on church growth titled *Bonsai Theory of Church Growth*. According to Hemphill, “It should be recognized from the beginning, that as there are numerous trees, there will be many sizes of churches. The giant redwood is not intrinsically better than the diminutive dogwood. Each tree is different, each having its own form, function, and beauty.”<sup>29</sup> In Hemphill’s opinion,

Church growth does not mean all churches should or could become very large churches; but a church, as a living organism, should grow to its natural, God given size. When Jesus established the church, as recorded in Matthew 16, He promised He would build His church. Thus we can say that church growth is at once natural and supernatural. It is *supernatural* because God gives the growth and it is *natural* because the church was created as a living body to grow. The church must grow in such a manner that it fulfills the Great Commission in its own community.<sup>30</sup>

As earlier discussed in chapter 1 of this thesis, NNP churches are not just multiplying within a Nigerian context alone; instead, the growth is cutting across the African continent and the entire globe at large.<sup>31</sup> Hence, research that centers on the critical evaluation of the church-planting and church-growth model among NNPs is highly needed, just as this thesis has focused on the misconstrued emphases of NNPs on the role of the Holy Spirit in evangelism. Having mega-churches, with reliance on the power of money, can be a great deception and deviation from the real truth if care is not taken. One ought to know that bigness does not always mean greatness. As stated by a popular professor of missions, a dedicated minority can have a huge impact upon a whole nation.<sup>32</sup>

Take for instance the following by Sunday Adelaja:

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<sup>29</sup> Ken Hemphill, *The Bonsai Theory of Church Growth* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991), 14.

<sup>30</sup> Hemphill, *The Bonsai Theory of Church Growth*, 14-15 (emphasis original).

<sup>31</sup> Read more in Gary S. Maxey and Peter Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church* (Lagos, Nigeria: WATS, 2017), 1-8.

<sup>32</sup> Iselaye, Google Form survey.



A recent study done on the richest pastors in the world showed that Nigerian pastors are among the top ten richest pastors in the world. The list began with Bishop David Oyedepo of the Living Faith Church being the richest pastor in the world with a net worth of about \$150 Million. The general overseer of the Christ Embassy Church, Pastor Chris Oyakilome was found to be the third richest pastor in the world with a net worth of about \$50 million. The general overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, pastor E. A. Adeboye was the 5th richest pastor in the world with a net worth of about \$39 Million. While the pastor of the synagogue church of all nations, pastor T. B. Joshua was the 9th richest pastor in the world with a net worth of about \$10 Million.<sup>33</sup>

According to the findings above, it is pathetic that a country like Nigeria, with thousands of its people wallowing in abject poverty, has four of the ten richest pastors in the world. According to Adelaja, “The question, therefore, is how possible is it for that to be the case. How do world richest pastors emanate from poverty ravaged economies like Nigeria! The answer is not far-fetched. These Nigerian pastors are rich because of the miracle-centered gospel that they preach.”<sup>34</sup> It is not an exaggeration to say that the numerous Neo-Pentecostal churches and their miracle centers have not done much good to biblical Christianity in Nigeria. The reason why Nigeria still has daily increase in the number of mega churches, more miracle crusades, prayer centers, vigils and conferences is not as a result of outbreak of genuine revival, but simply because some certain individuals are benefitting from all these as they play on the ignorance of others.<sup>35</sup> In regard to these individuals, Adelaja writes,

These individuals are the pastors who have recognized that the church and miracle-gospel is a profitable business. So, let’s build more churches and get more money is the mindset of these businessmen called pastors. By building more churches, they have more platforms where they spread the deceptive message of miracles and breakthrough. They know that Nigerians have been brainwashed to always depend on miracles for anything they want in life and are ready to pay any amount of money to get those miracles. Hence, these pastors and their business empires, called churches accrue millions of dollars to themselves by milking many Nigerians dry. Unfortunately, those giving their money to pastors in exchange for miracles are not aware that they are in a business, a business that enriches the pastors and leaves the

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<sup>33</sup> Sunday Adelaja, *How the Church Creates Economic Recession* (Kiev, Ukraine: Golden Truth, 2018), 177-78.

<sup>34</sup> Adelaja, *How the Church Creates Economic Recession*, 178.

<sup>35</sup> Adelaja, *How the Church Creates Economic Recession*, 133.

miracle seekers longing for more and more miracles.<sup>36</sup>

These pastors seem to have made mammon (money) their god and can go to any length to deceive the masses to rake money out from them. Why are some of them building more mega churches? The reason simply is that they want more money to buy private jets and fund their luxurious lifestyles. The pastors are getting richer as they collect all kinds of monetary seeds and offerings from the gullible miracle seeking Nigerians.<sup>37</sup>

### **Occultism in the Nigerian Modern Christianity**

Occultism has to do with getting involved with the magical powers of Satan. There are several occultic or demonic people today who are parading themselves as ministers of the gospel. A Spirit-filled Christian does not need to wander too far to discover that some new churches in Nigeria are in the danger of making occultism the measure of recognized Christianity. Though the world “occultism” may seem to be too negative or biased, as Daniel Sopuru explains, the practices of some modern preachers fit such nomenclature.<sup>38</sup> Sopuru tells a story of how fetish-practices are penetrating the Nigerian Christianity through some Neo-Pentecostal leaders. According to him, one man from Nigeria went to study in India. After failing all his courses, he decided to get involved in the practice of mysticism. He spent more years in India and came back to Nigeria with mysterious powers. Upon his return to Nigeria, he convinced many people

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<sup>36</sup> Adelaja, *How the Church Creates Economic Recession*, 133.

<sup>37</sup> Adelaja, *How the Church Creates Economic Recession*, 134. “It is for these reason that we have more churches than hospitals and schools. The businessmen-pastors know that they could easily become millionaires without hard work by simply selling miracles and breakthrough to the naïve populace. That is why the easiest way to become a millionaire in Nigeria now is to start a church that is centered on the message of miracles and breakthrough.” See Adelaja, *How the Church Creates Economic Recession*, 134-5.

<sup>38</sup> Daniel O. Sopuru, *Modern Theology versus Biblical Theology: A Call for Biblical Christianity* (Makurdi, Nigeria: Evangelical Christian Literature and Radio Ministries, 2007), 2. The equivalent of “occultism” in the Western world today is the “New Age Movement.”

of the call of God upon his life. He established a “church” and became a president and founder. Today, there are several branches of his church in villages and cities, where he goes around seducing and hypnotizing unsuspecting victims.<sup>39</sup> There are scores of such fake pastors all over Nigeria.<sup>40</sup> Some experience failure in their careers or businesses and all of a sudden turn to ministry as way out. As Sopuru avers, “It is a pity that these management-professional-turned-preachers have saturated Nigeria and indeed Africa with their pseudo-gospel to the detriment of the spiritual life of millions on this continent.”<sup>41</sup> For some decades now, Manly P. Hall has highlighted how occultism has crept into modern-day Christianity:

There is abundant evidence that in many forms of modern thought—especially the so-called “prosperity” psychology, “will-power building” metaphysics and systems of “high-pressure” salesmanship—black magic has been passed through metamorphosis, and although its name may be changed, its nature remains the same.<sup>42</sup>

### **Theology of the Third Cheek: A Response to Persecution and Terrorism**

Globally, terrorism is one of the major contemporary issues in missions today,<sup>43</sup> but the Nigerian version of terrorism seems to be more disastrous than found elsewhere. The Islamic sect Boko Haram, for example, has killed thousands of Christians in Nigeria from 2008 to today. According to a report from *The Voice of the Martyrs*,

In Nigeria, they call it crisis. Attacks from Boko Haram terrorists and nomadic

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<sup>39</sup> Sopuru, *Modern Theology Versus Biblical Theology*, 129.

<sup>40</sup> After spending fourteen years of her life in what she described as a “demonic cage” at the Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCOAN), Bishola Johnson sees her liberation as the miraculous act of God’s mercy. She and others young ladies were abused by the famous Nigerian prophet T. B. Joshua for over a decade. For more details, see Bisola H. Johnson, *The T. B. Joshua I Know: Deception of the Age Unmasked* (Lagos, Nigeria: n.p., 2018).

<sup>41</sup> Sopuru, *Modern Theology versus Biblical Theology*, 129.

<sup>42</sup> Manly P. Hall, *Masonic, Hermetic, Dabbalistic and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy* (Los Angeles: n.p., 1969), 101-2.

<sup>43</sup> See more in “Christ in the Crisis: Forgiving Her Husband Killers,” *Voice of the Martyrs* (October 2019): 4.

Fulani militants are so common that everyone understands “crisis” to mean a village raid or terrorist bombing. More than 35,000 Nigerians have been killed in the fighting between rebels and government soldiers since 2011. While many of those killed were militants or soldiers, a good number of were Christians who were targeted in raids on Christians villages or churches.<sup>44</sup>

Besides their killing of people, this catastrophic sect has caused a lot of political trauma and vandalization that has almost crippled the economic systems of the regions it has invaded. Countless numbers of churches have been brought down by fire, with thousands of Christians murdered in cold blood.<sup>45</sup>

At the interdenominational service organized by the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) to mark the end of the recent three days of prayer and fasting in Nigeria,<sup>46</sup> the president of the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), Stephen Panya Baba, warns against the looming danger for Nigeria as a nation if drastic measures are not taken to put things in better shape:

With this myriad of atrocities, our very existence as Christians is at stake, even the existence of our nation Nigeria is at stake, our country is failing. The debt profile of Nigeria keeps soaring with nothing to show for the debt, unemployment is on the increase. Inflation rate in Nigeria is higher than in any other African countries, our naira keeps failing and yet we keep deceiving ourselves that all is well. Socially, the situation is deteriorating, corruption has continued to get worse. Going by the rating of Transparency International our nation Nigeria is the second most corrupt country in West Africa. Security-wise, the country is falling apart with the high prevailing rate of kidnapping, banditry and other crimes. Human lives no longer mean anything again. In fact, the value of human lives in Nigeria have been made so cheap and value less than that of a cow.<sup>47</sup>

Baba has raised an alarm that the government of Nigeria is skewing

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<sup>44</sup> “Christ in the Crisis,” 4.

<sup>45</sup> Oluwaseun Bamidele, “Boko Haram Catastrophic Terrorism: An Albatross to National Peace, Security and Sustainable Development in Nigeria,” *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* 14, no.1 (2012): 1-5.

<sup>46</sup> Because of the barbaric and gruesome killing of Christians day by day in Nigeria, and the insecurity ravaging the country, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) declared three days of prayers and fasting (January 31 to February 2, 2020) to cry to God for mercy. This body (CAN) comprises churches of various denominations across Nigeria.

<sup>47</sup> Stephen Panya Baba, quoted by Isaac Shobayo, “Insecurity: Nigerian Future Is at Stake—ECWA President,” *Nigeria Tribune*, April 2, 2020 accessed on April 29, 2020, <https://tribuneonline.com/insecurity-nigeria-existence-is-at-stake-%e2%80%95-ecwa-president/>.

appointments against the Christians and that there is ongoing manipulation of politics to the exclusion of Christians. He adds,

There is a grand conspiracy to destroy Christianity. The Christians have become endangered species, the church is facing extinction. There is a grand conspiracy to exterminate the church of God. Our only hope for deliverance is God, we can no longer run to the government for deliverance anymore because the spirit of Haman is at work in this nation.<sup>48</sup>

For decades, churches in the persecuted areas have put up a tolerant attitude toward this persecution as believers in Christ lay down their heads for the jihadists' swords. Not until recently have Christians (in the northern part of Nigeria) begun to raise questions as to what the appropriate response to this persistent persecution from Islamic fanatics should be. Some are of the opinion that Jesus Christ actually taught about not giving room to vengeance when he said, "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. *If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also*" (Matt 5:38-38 NIV; emphasis added). But the question is, if one gives both the right and left cheek to be slapped, and yet the aggressor refuses to stop there, where is the "third cheek" to give out again? In a practical example, a Christian man runs away from his house to hide himself in the church's building because of a Muslim who wants to kill him. The Muslim man enters this man's house and burns it down and then follows him again to church and burns the church down, too. In the hand of this Muslim is a sword that he wants to use to kill the man and his entire family. But if this Christian man has an AK-47 gun in his custody, should he allow the Muslim to have his way?<sup>49</sup> This type of situation is the root cause of the neo-theological concept called "Theology of the Third Cheek."<sup>50</sup> If a Muslim slaps the first

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<sup>48</sup> Baba, "Nigerian Future is at Stake."

<sup>49</sup> This is more than just an illustration; it is the daily experience of many Christians living in areas that are hostile toward Christianity.

<sup>50</sup> For further reading on the "Theology of the Third Cheek," see Sunday Bobai Agang, *No More Cheek to Turn* (Nairobi, Kenya: WorldAlive, 2017), 13-60.

cheek and then slaps the second cheek, then no third cheek should be given to him again. Hence, the “Theology of the Third Cheek” is a view that centers on self-defense in the face of persistent persecution.

Very recently, the general secretary of CAN, Musa Asake, lamented the increased rate of the killing of Christians in Nigeria by Muslims:

I don't know why this is happening; we have security agencies in Nigeria. But when a Christian is killed, they [Muslims] either say it's due to blasphemy or they don't give a reason at all. . . . There has never been a situation where a Christian will go and kill somebody in the name of religion, but Christians are being killed by Muslims.<sup>51</sup>

Asake notes as suspicious the silence of the Nigerian president (a Muslim-Fulani man) on issues of the killing of innocent Christians either by religious extremists or Fulani herdsmen, who are killing people and wiping out villages as if there are no laws or government in the country. Asake adds,

From the way I see things happening, *there is a grand plan to wipe out Christians in this country* but by the grace of God it will not come to pass. This is why I am saying if the government is not going to protect us, then we have no choice but to protect ourselves. We will not continue to fold our hands and accept being killed for no reason.<sup>52</sup>

In Nigeria, this new theological concept raises much tensions and debates among evangelical believers. Proponents of this view direct attention to several passages in the Old Testament to support their position. One example is the self-defense strategy of Nehemiah's team when they were rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.<sup>53</sup> Opponents of

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<sup>51</sup> Mussa Asake, quoted by Bayo Akinloye, “There is a Grand Plan to Wipe out Christians – CAN General Secretary,” *Punch*, July 17, 2016, <https://punchng.com/grand-plan-wipe-christians-can-general-secretary/>.

<sup>52</sup> Asake, “There is a Grand Plan to Wipe out Christians” (emphasis added).

<sup>53</sup> Neh 4:16-23 (ESV) reads,

From that day on, half of my servants worked on construction, *and half held the spears, shields, bows, and coats of mail*. . . . Those who carried burdens were loaded in such a way that each labored on the work *with one hand and held his weapon with the other*. *And each of the builders had his sword strapped at his side while he built*. The man who sounded the trumpet was beside me. And I said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, “. . . In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us.” So we labored at the work, and half of them held the spears from the break of dawn until the stars came out. I also said to the people

the “Theology of the Third Cheek” position ground their argument with scriptural support taken from the lives and teachings of Christ and the apostle Paul (see, e.g., see Matt 5:43-48; Rom 12:17-21). Rhetorically, they ask, “Can Christians be justified for killing unbelievers in an attempt to prevent non-Christians from killing them and their loved ones? Then, what would the Christians do at the face of persisted persecution when they have means of liberating themselves most especially in countries with equal right and choice of religions?”<sup>54</sup> Hence, the “Theology of the Third Cheek” is still a fresh and interesting issue that is open for further research in Nigeria.

### Conclusion

Nigerian Neo-Pentecostalism, with its spread and zeal, has had a great influence on global Christianity. But today, Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals’ over-emphasis on signs and wonder gifts is inimical to the biblical concept. This shortcoming negates a systematic understanding of the true message of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:1-4). The presence of the Holy spirit in the church and his indwelling of individual Christ-followers (Acts 1:8; Eph 4:3; 5:18; Col 3:3) are the basis for Christian witness, and such witnessing is done by believers’ yielding to and being empowered by the Spirit daily. Many other scriptural passages attest to this notion.<sup>55</sup> The teaching on “being filled with the Holy Spirit” has had a landmark meaning historically within the body of Christ. “To be filled with the Spirit” connotes that believers are holy and Christlike people with cleansed and purified hearts. Christianity without holiness falls

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at that time, “Let every man and his servant pass the night within Jerusalem, that they may be a guard for us by night and may labor by day.” So neither I nor my brothers nor my servants nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us took off our clothes; *each kept his weapon at his right hand.* (emphasis added)

<sup>54</sup> These questions have been debated again and again among the church leaders in Northern Nigeria, where Muslims kill Christians almost every day.

<sup>55</sup> For more reading, see Wayne Gruden, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 1016-21.

short of the biblical position.<sup>56</sup> In addition, as Maxey and Ozodo affirm,

A Spirit-filled person has been primarily defined as one who is pure in heart, who lives a Christlike life, and who walks in the power of the Holy Spirit. It has pointed not primarily to outward signs and wonders but to inner character and to a reputation of holiness that is visible both privately and in public. The ensuing power, whether exercised quietly or with great demonstration, is always a concomitant to purity of heart, and never the central focus. Throughout the centuries, Spirit-filled people have been most basically looked up to as exemplars of Christian ethics and personal holiness. They may well have been endowed now and again with extraordinary power, but that power has always been secondary in nature.<sup>57</sup>

The research findings of this thesis in regard to NNP leaders do not match up with the descriptions above. Again, in the words of Maxey and Ozodo,

Regrettably, the definitions have gradually become blurred. As a result, nowadays when we call someone “Spirit-filled” in Nigeria we do not necessarily mean that they live like Jesus. They may in fact be living privately—and sometimes even publicly—in a manner quite contrary to Christian morality. They may be acclaimed as great “Spirit filled” men or women but may be lacking in basic areas of ethical behavior and exemplary moral living.<sup>58</sup>

Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals grossly err in their over-emphasis on the ten major doctrines or teachings identified earlier in this thesis. These ten emphases should be seen as by-products of properly lifting Christ up, and they may be experienced only as God grants, not at the whims of preachers.<sup>59</sup> Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals must rediscover what constitutes the core message of salvation. Again, this thesis has never aimed to condemn all that NNPs do; instead, it has intended to serve as an eye-opener for the NNPs’ need to readjust and come back to the true biblical gospel that can edify souls in preparation for eternity with Christ.

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<sup>56</sup> Maxey and Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 161.

<sup>57</sup> Maxey and Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 161.

<sup>58</sup> Maxey and Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 161-62.

<sup>59</sup> Roland S. Babatunde, interview by the author, Ilorin, Nigeria, February 25, 2020.



## APPENDIX 1

### RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

I am Tunde A. Samuel, a doctoral student of the above reputable Theological Seminary. I am conducting a research on “The Holy Spirit and the Practice of Evangelism among the Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals.” The focus of this thesis is to look into the various practices and emphases that bring ‘significant growth’ among the Nigeria Neo-Pentecostals (NNPs) in the course of evangelizing. With attention on Acts 1:8, this research will look at how the NNPs see the roles of the Holy Spirit in the presentation of the gospel. I shall attempt to place the practices of the NNPs in this regard side-by-side with the scriptural injunctions to see areas of strength or weakness. I will also evaluate some of my findings on the roles of the Holy Spirit (as seen among the NNPs) and the practical implications on Nigerian Christianity as whole. Please, carefully respond to the questions and observations concerning the beliefs and practices of the NNPs in an objective way and with all sincerity. You can use the available spaces to make your own opinion known on any of the areas covered in the questionnaire. You are free to add your personal observations as well.

Note! The Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals here refer to the New Pentecostal church denominations that started gaining recognizing and popularity right from the early 1980s till now as a result of much emphasis on some of (or all of) the following: anointing and power of the Holy Spirit, deliverance, material prosperity, breaking of curses, breakthrough, word of faith, supremacy of the founders' or general overseers (GO) authority and several others.

#### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to look into the roles of the Holy Spirit in evangelism and how the practices and emphasizes of the Nigeria Neo-Pentecostal denominations on the role of the Holy Spirit have brought about a significant or a questionable growth. This research is being conducted by Tunde Abednego Samuel for purposes of completing a Dissertation required for the Doctor of Missiology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville KY, USA. In this research, by your own observation, you will help to click on the appropriate responses on some of the questions raised here about the Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses [without your consent]. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

By your completion of this Questionnaire, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research

**Low Risk**

There is no risk of any form with this questionnaire. However, your name will not be mentioned without your consent. You are equally not mandated to put your name.

**SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA**

- 1. Age (Tick the appropriate bracket)  
Below 25 ( ); 25-45 ( ); 46-65 ( ); 66-85 ( ); 86 and Above ( )
- 2. Academic Qualification BA ( ); MA ( ); Doctoral Level ( ); others \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Field of Study/Area of Specialization \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Church Affiliation or Denomination; Evangelical ( ); Pentecostal ( ); Other \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Your Position in your Church \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. Country Origin \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. Residential Country \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. Name \_\_\_\_\_
- 9. Email \_\_\_\_\_
- 10. Date \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION B: TICK THE APPROPRIATE BOX**

Wherever five Scale rating is used:1—Represents Disagree; 2—Represents Strongly Disagree; 3—Represents Not Sure; 4—Represents Agree; 5—Represents Strongly Agree

**I. The Pentecostals and the Holy Spirit**

S/N	STATEMENTS	1	2	3	4	5
1.	NNPs are groups of Christians who give greater emphasis on the Holy Spirit than other Christian denominational bodies					
2.	The Holy Spirit is not really at the center of some of the NNPs ministerial activities as they claimed					

S/N	STATEMENTS	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Some Nigeria NNPs develop spirituality claiming the importance of spiritual gifts to their ministries					
4.	Speaking in tongue is a hallmark of Holy Spirit baptism among most of NNPs					

## II. Factors informing Nigeria Neo-Pentecostal Emphasis on the Holy Spirit

S/N	STATEMENTS	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Historical Antecedent					
	a. The early apostolic band in the book of Acts					
	b. The religious awakening					
	c. Modern Pentecostals experiences					
2.	The hunger and thirst for spiritual power					
3.	The Necessity to satisfy the spiritual yearning of members					
4.	The desired mandate to perform signs and miracles					
5.	The realization of the need to be different from other ministers of the gospels					

## III. The Process of Getting Acquainted with the Holy Spirit

S/N	STATEMENTS	1	2	3	4	5
1.	The Process of Getting Acquainted with the Holy Spirit involves Prayer and fasting					
2.	Reading through the records/biographies of previous successful Pentecostal pastors					
3.	Tarry meetings					
4.	Emphasizing the necessity of being baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit among members					

## IV. Ten Major Emphases That Characterize the NNPs' Gospel as Hallmark of the Power of the Holy Spirit

S/N	STATEMENTS	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Signs and Wonders					

S/N	STATEMENTS	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Miracles					
3.	Healings					
4.	Breakthrough					
5.	Deliverance					
6.	Anointing and Power					
7.	Breaking generational curses					
8.	Word of Faith					
9.	Material prosperity					
10.	Victory over enemies					
11.	Most a time, the ten above are placed above salvation and holiness					

#### **V. The Negative Results of Pentecostal Emphatic Teaching on the Holy Spirit**

S/N	STATEMENTS	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Emotionalism					
2.	Personal or selfish agenda					
3.	Exploitation of the laity through signs and wonders					
4.	Lack of reverence for, and neglect of the Word of God					
5.	Undermining of salvation and too much pursuit and emphasis on physical signs					
6.	Syncretism					
7.	Christian practice that is void of biblical truth					
8.	Some Pentecostals leaders go diabolical to get powers					
9.	Increase in quantity of members but not in quality (Genuity)					
10.	Some Nigerian Neo-Pentecostal leaders have positioned themselves in the place of the Holy Spirit to their members					
11.	Most of the miracles among the Neo-Pentecostals today are fake (this does not negate the possibility of real miracles)					

## VI. The Biblical Purpose of Power Promised by Jesus in Acts 1:8

S/N	STATEMENTS	1	2	3	4	5
1.	The power is meant to promote evangelical task and zeal of the Church					
2.	The promised power to arm the children of God for their ministries					
3.	The divine energy is meant for the Church's discipleship program in the context of the Great Commission.					
4.	The promised power is to enable believers to stand and suffer for the truth at the face of severe persecution					
5.	The power is to create a different environment for the Church to thrive					
6	The promised power enable signs and wonders to follow the believers evangelistic task (but not for the pursuit of signs and wonders).					

### Other Questions

#### A. Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals and the Gospel Presentation

- i. How serious do the Nigerian neo-Pentecostals emphasis the presentation of the gospel?
- ii. What are wrong in the ways Nigerian Pentecostals present the gospel?
- iii. Do you think that the gospel presented by some Nigerian Pentecostals fail to fall in line with the true gospel of Jesus Christ?

#### B. The Purpose of Power Promised by Jesus in Acts 1:8 and the Pentecostals Practices

- i. Do you think that the emphasis of the Pentecostals on Acts 1:8 tally with the real purpose for which Christ promised?
- ii. What are some of their wrong emphases?
- iii. Mention some of the original reasons why Christians need the promised power according to this text.

#### C. What are some of the positive contributions of the Neo-Pentecostals to Nigeria Christianity?

#### D. What are some other negative contributions of the Neo-Pentecostals to Christianity in Nigeria?

#### E. Input your personal contribution here

## APPENDIX 2

### INTERVIEW PROFILE

I am Tunde A. Samuel, a doctoral student of the above reputable Theological Seminary. I am conducting a research on “The Holy Spirit and the Practice of Evangelism among the Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals.” The focus of this thesis is to look into the various practices and emphases that bring ‘significant growth’ among the Nigeria Neo-Pentecostals (NNPs) in the course of evangelizing. With attention on Acts 1:8, this research will look at how the NNPs see the roles of the Holy Spirit in the presentation of the gospel. I shall attempt to place the practices of the NNPs in this regard side-by-side with the scriptural injunctions to see areas of strength or weakness. I will also evaluate some of my findings on the roles of the Holy Spirit (as seen among the NNPs) and the practical implications on Nigerian Christianity as whole. Please, carefully respond to the questions and observations concerning the beliefs and practices of the NNPs in an objective way and with all sincerity. You can use the available spaces to make your own opinion known on any of the areas covered in the questionnaire. You are free to add your personal observations as well.

Note! The Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals here refer to the New Pentecostal church denominations that started gaining recognizing and popularity right from the early 1980s till now as a result of much emphasis on some of (or all of) the following: anointing and power of the Holy Spirit, deliverance, material prosperity, breaking of curses, breakthrough, word of faith, supremacy of the founders' or general overseers (GO) authority and several others.

#### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to look into the roles of the Holy Spirit in evangelism and how the practices and emphasizes of the Nigeria Neo-Pentecostal denominations on the role of the Holy Spirit have brought about a significant or a questionable growth. This research is being conducted by Tunde Abednego Samuel for purposes of completing a Dissertation required for the Doctor of Missiology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville KY, USA. In this research, by your own observation, you will help to click on the appropriate responses on some of the questions raised here about the Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses [without your consent]. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

By your completion of this Questionnaire, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research

### **Low Risk**

There is no risk of any form with this questionnaire. However, your name will not be mentioned without your consent. You are equally not mandated to put your name.

### **SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA**

1. Age (Tick the appropriate bracket)  
Below 25 ( ); 25-45 ( ); 46-65 ( ); 66-85 ( ); 86 and Above ( )
2. Academic Qualification BA ( ); MA ( ); Doctoral Level ( ); others  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Field of Study/Area of Specialization \_\_\_\_\_
4. Church Affiliation or Denomination; Evangelical ( ); Pentecostal ( ); Other  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Your Position in your Church \_\_\_\_\_
6. Country Origin \_\_\_\_\_
7. Residential Country \_\_\_\_\_
8. Name \_\_\_\_\_
9. Email \_\_\_\_\_
10. Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **SECTION A: General Interview Questions**

1. What is your opinion on the Neo-Pentecostal movements in Nigeria?
2. In your view, the promise of the descent of the Holy Spirit as given in Acts 1:8 meant what to the original apostles?
3. The Neo-Pentecostals' interpretation and use of the power inherent in the passage is lopsided, rating it above other Scriptures related to the Holy Spirit.  
**True or false**
4. Why do you think the Nigeria Neo-Pentecostal Pastors and Christians are very emphatic on the Holy Spirit in their Christian life and liturgy?

5. From the question above (Q. 4), do you believe that this scenario has resulted in power-mongering and spiritual elitism in the Church of God today? **True or false**
6. Do the modern believers, especially among the Neo-Pentecostals, really understand the important of the “power from on high” promised by Jesus in Acts 1:8? Yes or No
7. The emphasis of the Pentecostals on the “Spirit of God,” “Spiritual baptism,” and the likes are derived from Acts 1:8. **True or false**
8. Through a wrong interpretation of the text, many Neo-Pentecostal pastors and Christians have abused “spiritual power and influence in the contemporary Church. **True or false**
9. What do you think constitutes some of the abuses of the Pentecostals because of their emphasis on the Holy Spirit?
10. Is it through that many Neo-Pentecostals pastors have employed the text to differentiate themselves from others because they are more special to God as a result of their perceived anointing derived from it. How do you view this?
11. Do you think the quest for power and spiritual things has now led many Pentecostal Christians and their church leaders to involve themselves in occultic and magical practices. **True or false**
12. Do you think that not preaching the true gospel to lost sinners through the genuine understanding of the place of the Holy Spirit has resulted into accumulation of wealth and mundane material things among the Nigeria Neo-Pentecostal leaders? **True or false**

### **SECTION B: Comparative Interview Questions of NNPs and the Evangelical Denominations**

1. What are some of the theological differences in the evangelistic activity of the NNPs and the Evangelical church in Nigeria?
2. What are the areas of practical differences in evangelistic activity of the NNPs and the Evangelical church in Nigeria?
3. What is the central evangelism message of the NNPs?
4. What is the central evangelism message of the Nigerian Evangelical church?



5. What are the areas of common grounds in the teaching and practice of evangelism between the NNPs and the Evangelical?
6. What areas do the evangelical churches need to improve upon when it comes to the gospel presentation?
7. What areas do the NNPs need to improve upon when it comes to the gospel presentation?

Feel free to add your personal contributions down here

## APPENDIX 3

### SURVEY DATA PRESENTATION OF EVANGELICAL RESPONDENTS

The following survey data presentation comprises responses from Nigerian evangelical members in Nigeria and in the diaspora. I designed a questionnaire (using Google Forms) and sent it to various individuals in some evangelical denominations.<sup>1</sup> There are about twenty-eight (28) participants from evangelical denominations; twenty-five (25) of them reside in Nigeria, and three (3) of them reside in United States (but they still have strong connections to Nigeria because they visit Nigeria annually). Pie and bar charts are used in the data presentations of respondents' information (where necessary) and their responses.

#### **Background Information**

The background questions seek to establish the fact that the respondents are qualified enough to participate in this questionnaire exercise. This undertaking began with obtaining the following pieces of information: age range, educational status, church affiliation, church involvement, nationality, and present country of residence.

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<sup>1</sup> The survey for this thesis was carried out with the permission and approval of The Southern Theological Seminary (SBTS) doctoral office and in accordance with the SBTS ethics of survey (research).

## Age Range

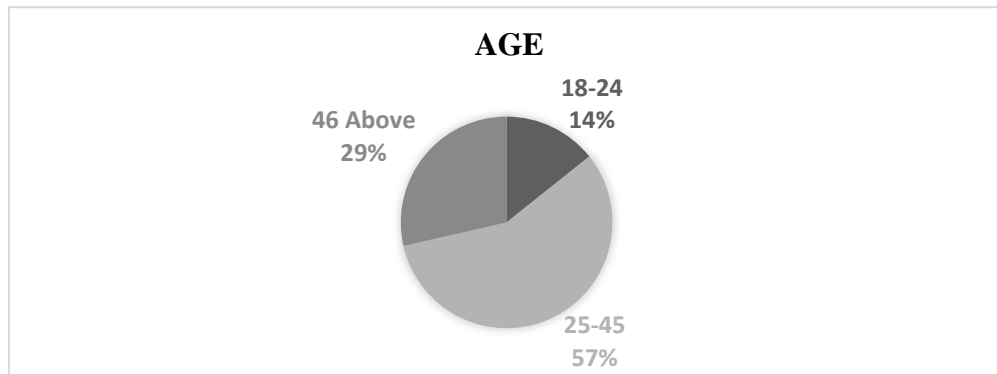


Figure A1. Respondents' age range

Figure A1 above reveals the age range of the survey respondents. Respondents are mature enough to make good judgments pertaining to my research endeavor.

## Academic Qualifications

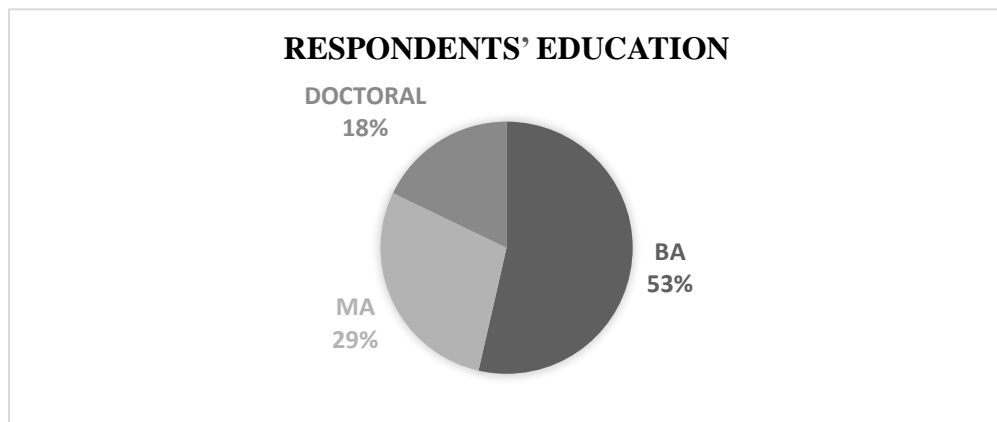


Figure A2. Respondents' academic qualifications<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Note: "BA" represents respondents with Bachelor of Art degrees, "MA" represents respondents with Master of Arts degrees, and "Doctoral" represents for respondents with doctoral-level degrees.

As seen in figure A2 above, respondents cut across different academic levels; hence, they are learned.

### **Church Involvement**

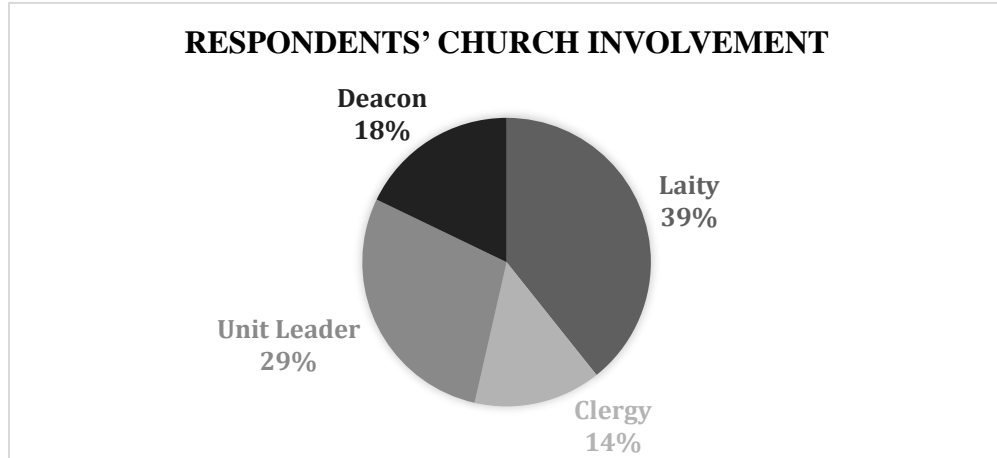


Figure A3. Respondents' church involvement

As seen in figure A3 above, all respondents are members in good standing in their respective local churches. They range from being pastors, deacons, laypersons, and unit leaders in their respective churches.

## Nationality and Present Country of Residence

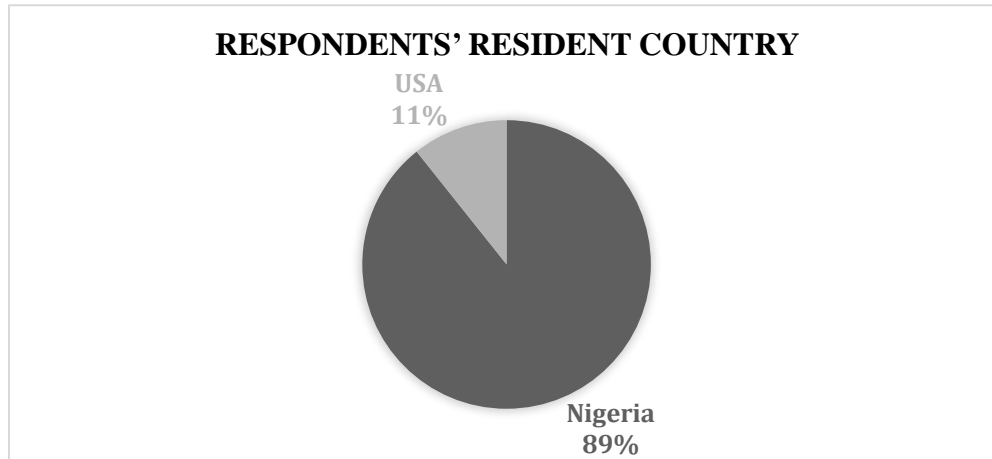


Figure A4. Respondents' nationality and country of residence

All respondents are citizens of Nigeria by birth. According to figure A4 above, about 89 percent of survey respondents currently live in Nigeria. The remaining 11 percent are Nigerians in the diaspora who relocated to the United States within the past two years or those who have resided in foreign countries for more than two years but still retain strong connections with their home country, Nigeria, which they visit regularly.

### **Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals and the Holy Spirit**

This section summarizes the practical beliefs of NNPs concerning the Holy Spirit. Respondents rated statements using a five-point Likert scale.<sup>3</sup>

Item 1: "NNPs are groups of Christian bodies that appear to give much emphasis on the Holy Spirit."

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<sup>3</sup> In the Likert scale, 1 = "disagree"; 2 = "strongly disagree"; 3 "not sure"; 4 = "agree"; and 5 = "strongly agree."

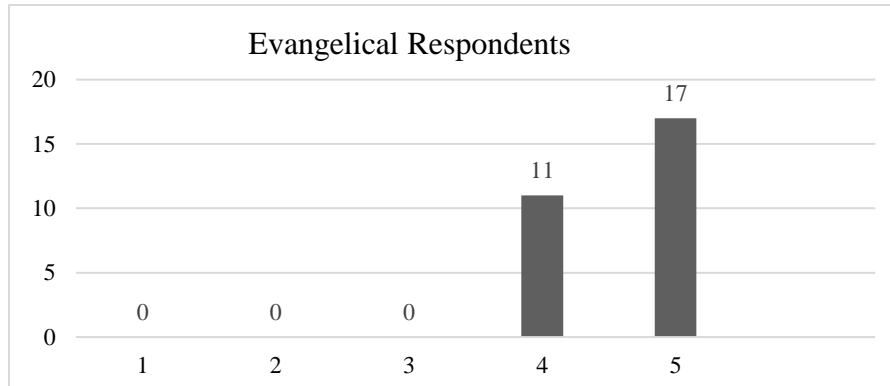


Figure A5. NNPs and the Holy Spirit: Item 1

According to figure A5 above, 100 percent of evangelical respondents agree that NNPs place much emphasis on the Holy Spirit when it comes to their doctrine and evangelistic activities.

Item 2: “The Holy Spirit is not really at the center of some of the NNPs ministerial activities as they Claimed.”

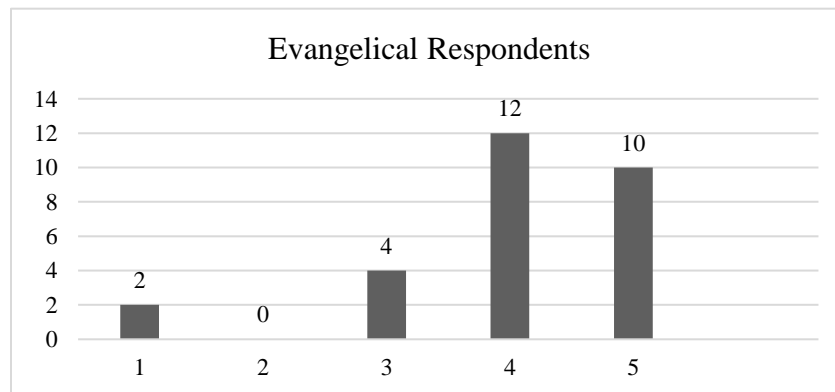


Figure A6. NNPs and the Holy Spirit: Item 2

According to figure A6 above, 78.6 percent of evangelical respondents either agree or strongly agree with the point raised here. These results reveal that even though NNPs claim to lay much emphasis on the Holy Spirit vis-à-vis their outward disposition

(as seen in figure A5), in reality, the Holy Spirit is not truly at the center of some NNPs’ ministerial activities—as they claimed. Only about 7 percent of evangelical respondents disagree with this.

Item 3: “Some NNPs develop spirituality claiming the importance of spiritual gifts to their ministries.”

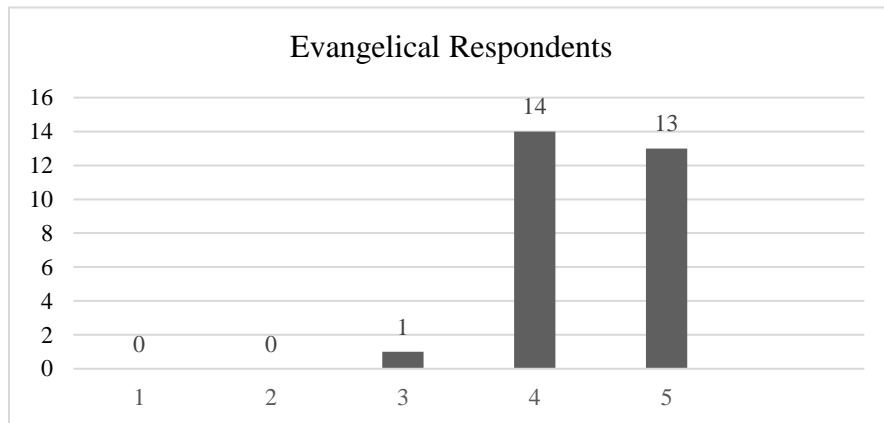


Figure A7: NNPs and the Holy Spirit: Item 3

As seen in figure A7 above, 96.4 percent of evangelical respondents hold to the fact that some NNPs develop spirituality claiming the importance of spiritual gifts to their ministries, while only about 3.6 percent remain in different.

Item 4: “Speaking in tongues is a hallmark of Holy Spirit baptism among most of NNPs.”

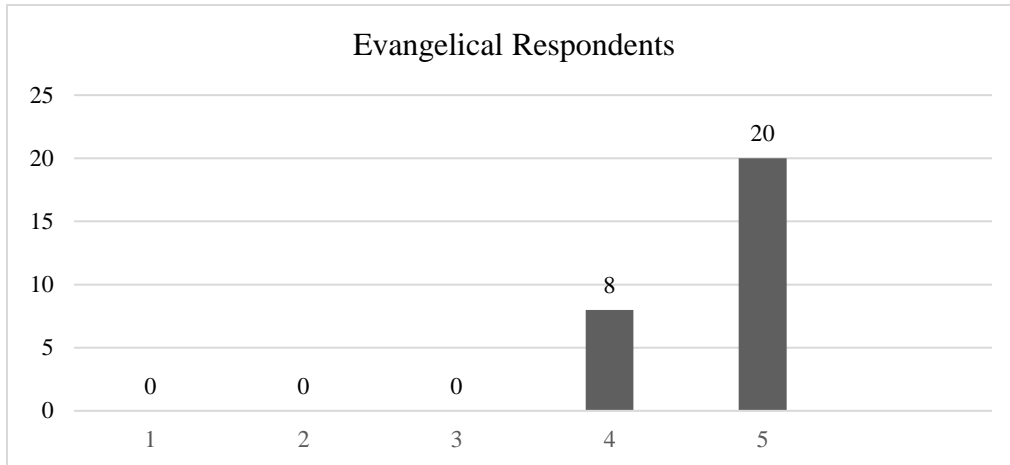


Figure A8. NNPs and the Holy Spirit: Item 4

According to figure A8 above, 100 percent of evangelical respondents maintain that the NNPs see speaking in tongues as the hallmark of Holy Spirit baptism.

### **Factors Informing the NNPs' Emphasis on the Holy Spirit**

The following factors inform NNPs' emphasis on the Holy Spirit.

Item 1: "Historical antecedents like the early apostolic band in the book of Acts; the religious awakening; and the modern Pentecostals experiences."

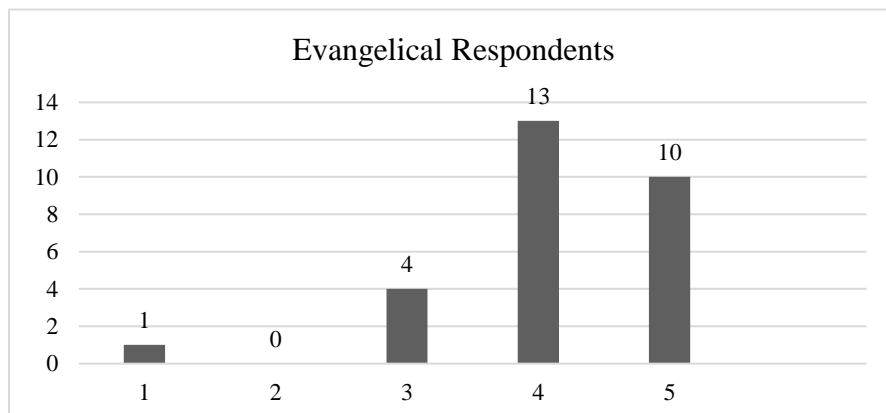


Figure A9. NNPs' emphasis on the Holy Spirit: Item 1



According to figure A9 above, 82.1 percent of the evangelical respondents agree that NNPs claim to pattern their practices after the beliefs and practices of early Christians, as seen in the Acts of Apostles, coupled with the experiences of some of the foremost leaders of the Pentecostal movement.

Item 2: “Another factor is the hunger and thirst for spiritual power.”

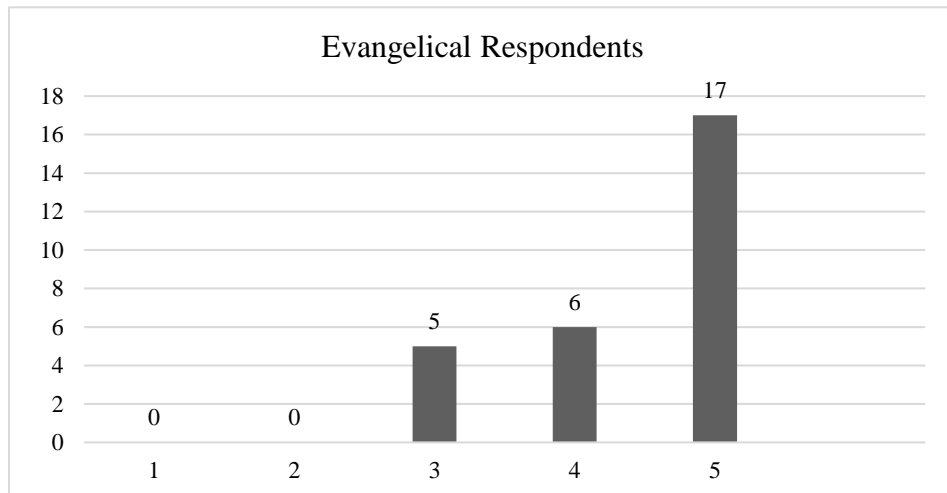


Figure A10. NNPs’ emphasis on the Holy Spirit: Item 2

According to figure A10 above, 82.4 percent of evangelical respondents maintain that one of the major factors precipitating NNPs’ emphasis on the Holy Spirit is a thirst for spiritual power. This means that the more that NNPs emphasize the Holy Spirit, the more the spiritual power they believe they will wield. About 17.6 percent of the respondents are undecided.

Item 3: “Another factor is the Necessity to satisfy the spiritual yearning of members.”

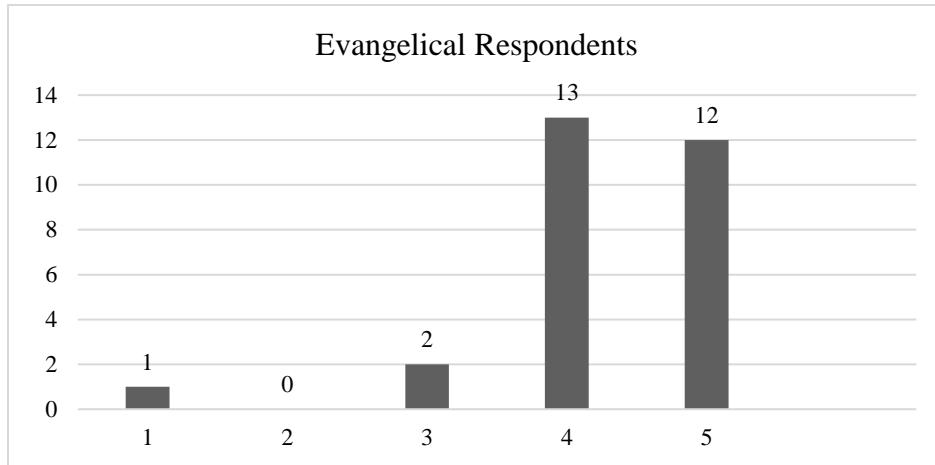


Figure A11. NNPs' emphasis on the Holy Spirit: Item 3

According to figure A11 above, the majority of the evangelical respondents (89.2 percent) agree that NNPs believe that placing more emphasis on the Holy Spirit will satisfy the spiritual yearning of their members. Only 7.1 percent of respondents are not sure of this.

Item 4: "Another factor is the desired mandate to perform signs and miracles"

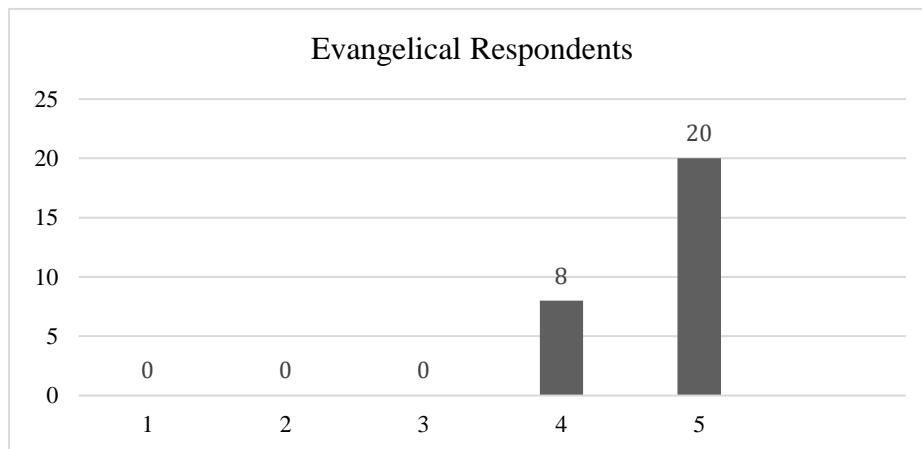


Figure A12. NNPs' emphasis on the Holy Spirit: Item 4

As seen in figure A12 above, 100 percent of evangelical respondents maintain

that NNPs’ desired mandate to perform signs and miracles increases their emphasis on the Holy Spirit.

Item 5: “Another factor is the realization of the need to be different from other ministers of God.”

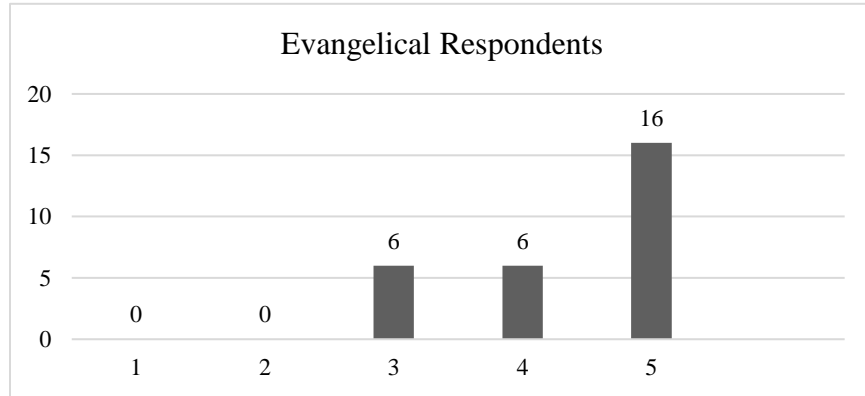


Figure A13. NNPs’ emphasis on the Holy Spirit: Item 5

According to figure A13 above, 78.6 percent of evangelical respondents agree that NNPs emphasize the Spirit in order to differentiate themselves from Christians of other denominations. About 21.4 percent of respondents are not sure if this is true.

### **Process of Getting Acquainted with the Holy Spirit among the NNPs**

The following methods are the ways that NNPs believe that anyone can get acquainted with the Holy Spirit.

Item 1: “Prayer and fasting”

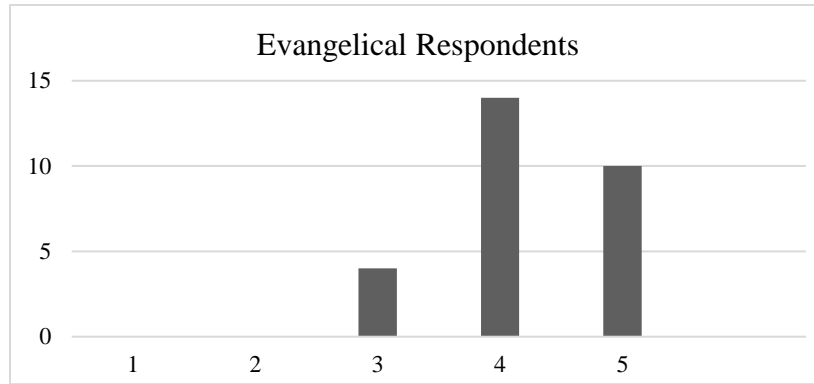


Figure A14. NNPs’ getting acquainted with the Holy Spirit: Item 1

According to figure A14 above, 85.7 percent of the evangelical respondents indicate that NNPs believe that prayer and fasting facilitate connectivity to the Holy Spirit among their members.

Item 2: “Reading through the records/biographies of previous successful Pentecostal pastors.”

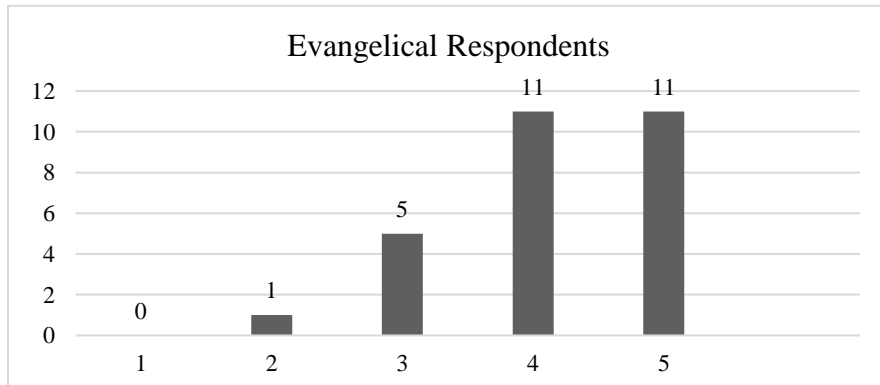


Figure A15. NNPs’ getting acquainted with the Holy Spirit: Item 2

As seen in figure A15 above, 78.6 percent of evangelical respondents agree that NNPs see that the reading of the records and biographies of previous successful Pentecostal leaders can lead to intimacy with the Holy Spirit. About 17.9 percent of

respondents remain unsure.

Item 3: “This Process of Getting Acquainted with the Holy Spirit embraces the tarry meetings.”

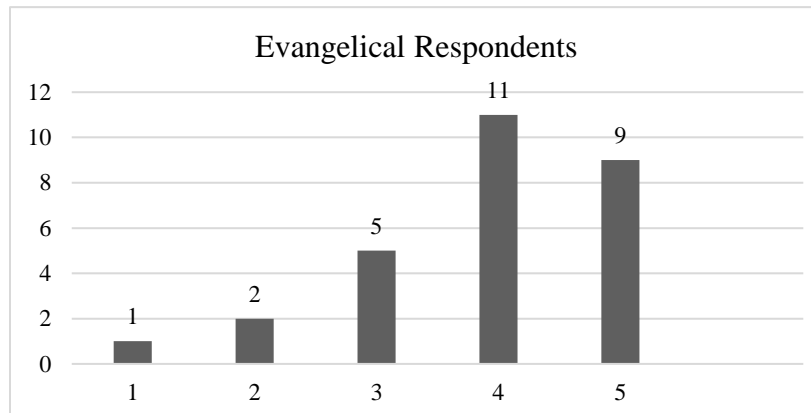


Figure A16. NNPs’ getting acquainted with the Holy Spirit: Item 3

As seen in figure A16 above, 71.4 percent of evangelical respondents agree that NNPs believe that just as the early apostles waited in the upper room after the ascension of Jesus Christ, today, tarry meetings are needed for the enduement of the Holy Spirit. However, 10.7 percent of respondents disagree, and about 17.9 percent are undecided.

Item 4: “The process of getting acquainted with the Holy Spirit is by emphasizing the necessity of being baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit among members.”

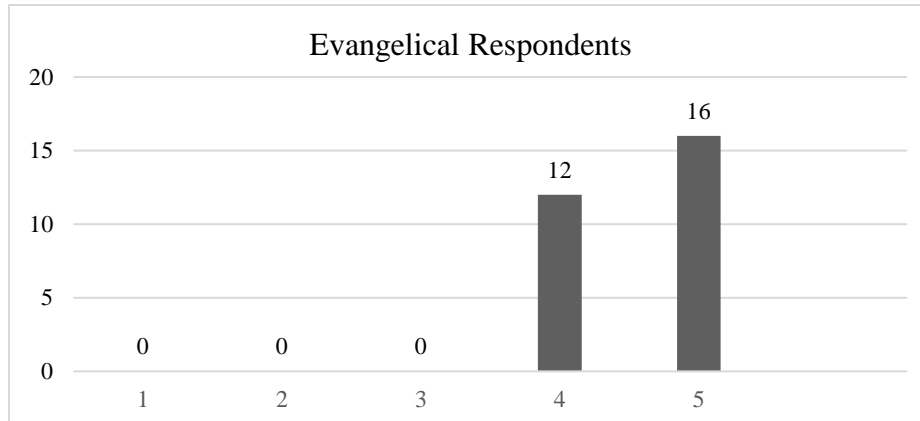


Figure A17. NNPs’ getting acquainted with the Holy Spirit: Item 4

According to figure A17 above, 100 percent of evangelical respondents hold that NNPs believe that emphasizing the necessity of being baptized with the Holy Spirit will eventually lead members to get acquainted with the Holy Spirit.

### NNPs’ Major Emphases in Evangelism

This section discusses respondents’ ratings of ten major emphases that characterize the gospel as presented by NNPs.

Item 1: “Emphasis on signs and wonders.”

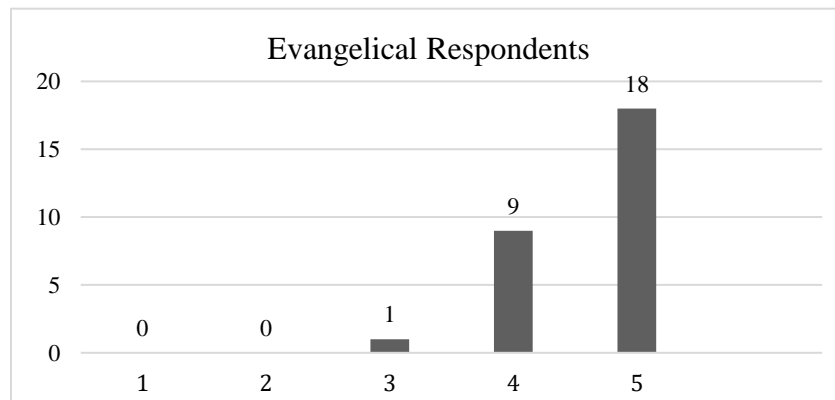


Figure A18. NNPs’ major emphases in evangelism: Item 1

According to figure A18 above, 96.4 percent of evangelical respondents agree that the manner in which NNPs present the gospel makes people believe that signs and wonders are awaiting them once they embrace the gospel.

Item 2: “Emphasis on Miracles.”

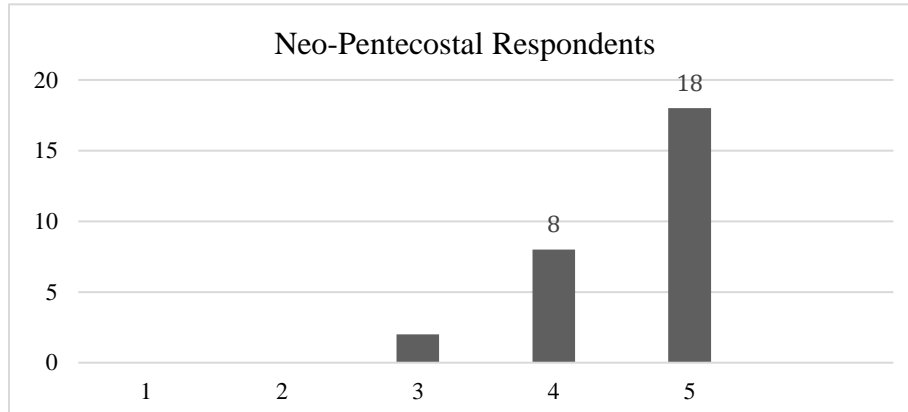


Figure A19. NNPs’ major emphases in evangelism: Item 2

As seen in figure A19 above, 92.9 of evangelical respondents agree that in the course of presenting the gospel, NNPs convince people that miracles await them once they come to Christ.

Item 3: “Emphasis on Healing.”

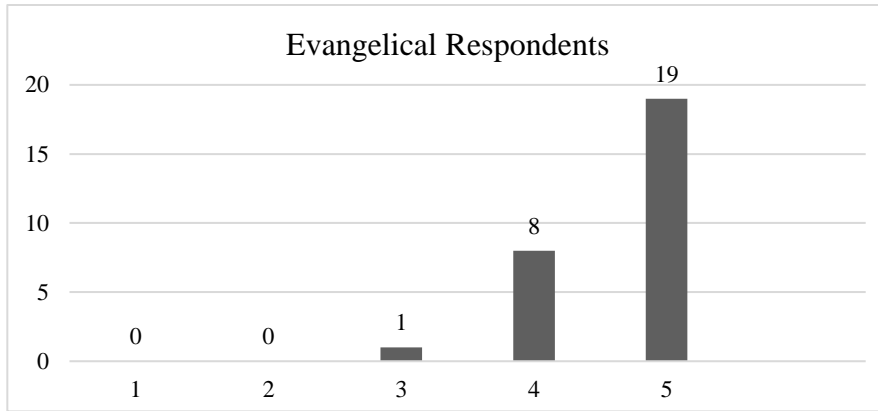


Figure A20. NNPs’ major emphases in evangelism: Item 3

According to figure A20 above, 96.4 percent of evangelical respondents believe that in presenting the gospel, NNPs place great emphasis on physical healings.

Item 4: “Emphasis on Breakthrough.”

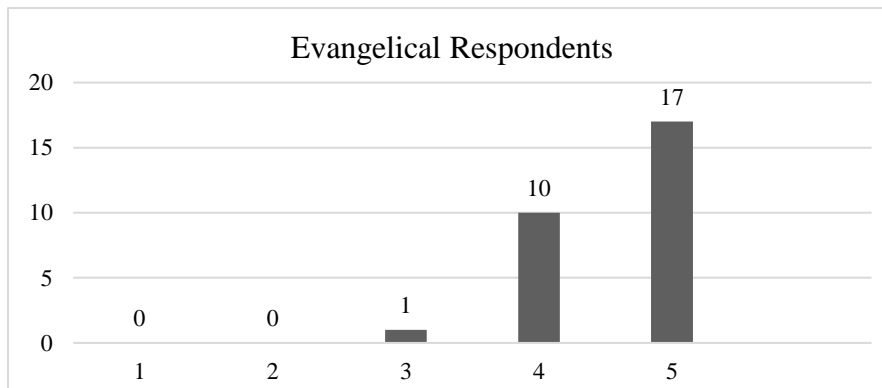


Figure A21. NNPs’ major emphases in evangelism: Item 4

As seen in figure A21 above, 96.4 percent of evangelical respondents maintain that NNPs emphasize “breakthroughs” during their gospel presentations.

Item 5: “Emphasis on Deliverance.”



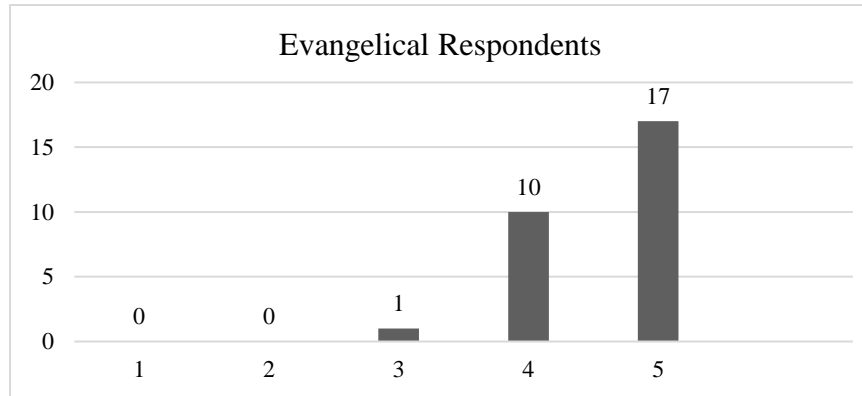


Figure A22. NNPs’ major emphases in evangelism: Item 5

According to figure A22 above, 96.4 of evangelical respondents agree that NNPs place great emphasis on deliverance in their gospel presentations.

Item 6: “Emphasis on Anointing and power.”

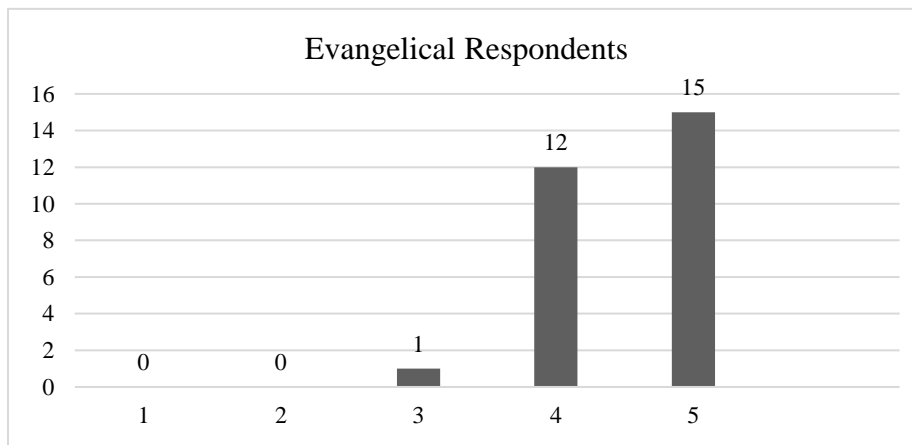


Figure A23. NNPs’ major emphases in evangelism: Item 6

As seen in figure A23 above, 96.4 of evangelical respondents agree that NNPs greatly emphasize anointing and power in their gospel presentations.

Item 7: “Emphasis on breaking generational curses.”

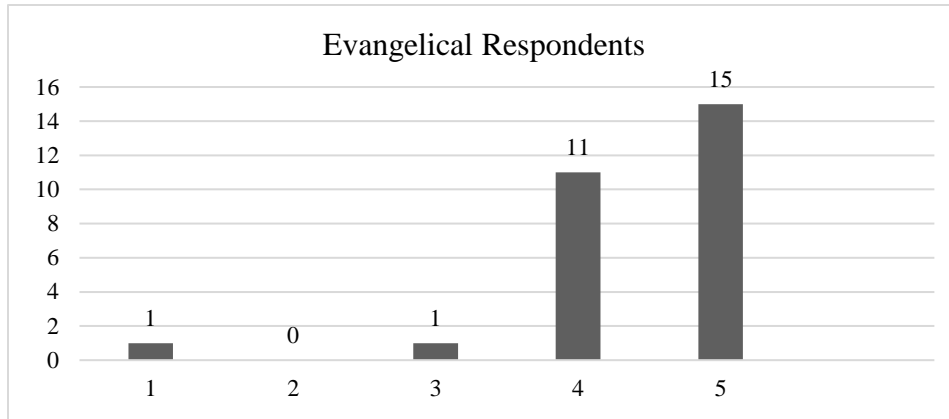


Figure A24. NNPs’ major emphases in evangelism: Item 7

According to figure A24 above, about 92.9 percent of evangelical respondents maintain that NNPs emphasize breaking generational curses in their gospel presentations.

Item 8: “Emphasis on ‘working faith’ (name it and claim it).”

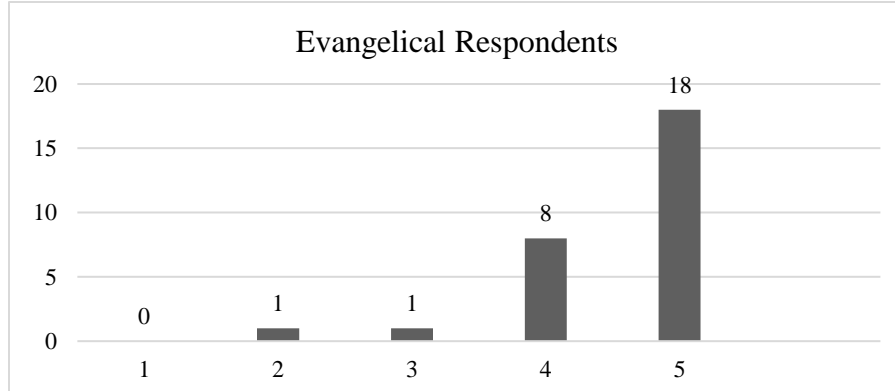


Figure A25. NNPs’ major emphases in evangelism: Item 8

As seen in figure A25 above, 92.9 percent of evangelical respondents maintain that NNPs believe that people can name whatever they want and obtain it by faith (words of faith) if they accept the gospel.

Item 9: “Emphasis on Material Prosperity.”

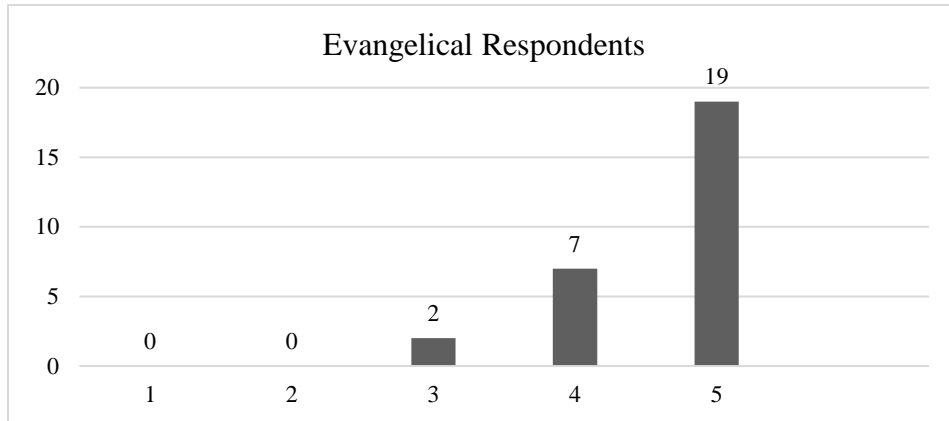


Figure A26. NNPs’ major emphases in evangelism: Item 9

According to figure A26 above, about 92.9 percent of evangelical respondents maintain that NNPs present a gospel that assures people of material prosperity if they accept Christ.

Item 10: “Emphasis on victory over enemies (physical and spiritual).”

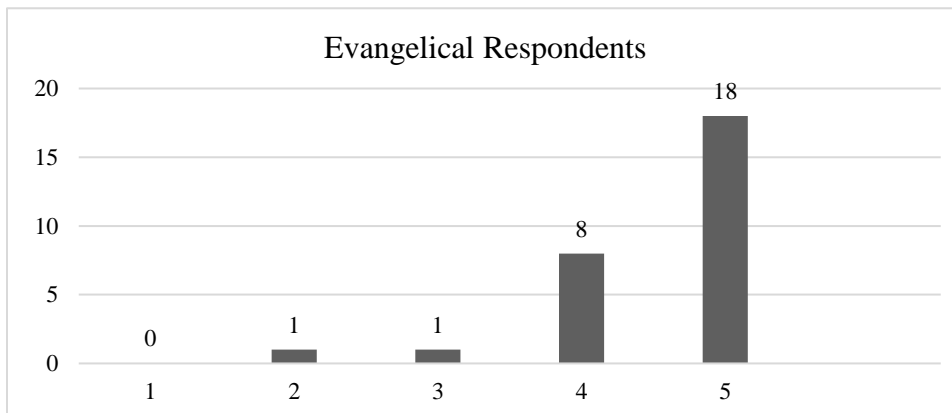


Figure A27. NNPs’ major emphases in evangelism: Item 10

As seen in figure A27 above, 92.9 percent of evangelical respondents indicate that NNPs assure people of their total victory over physical and spiritual enemies once they embrace the gospel.

Item 11: “Most time, the ten emphases above are placed above Message of Salvation and holiness.”

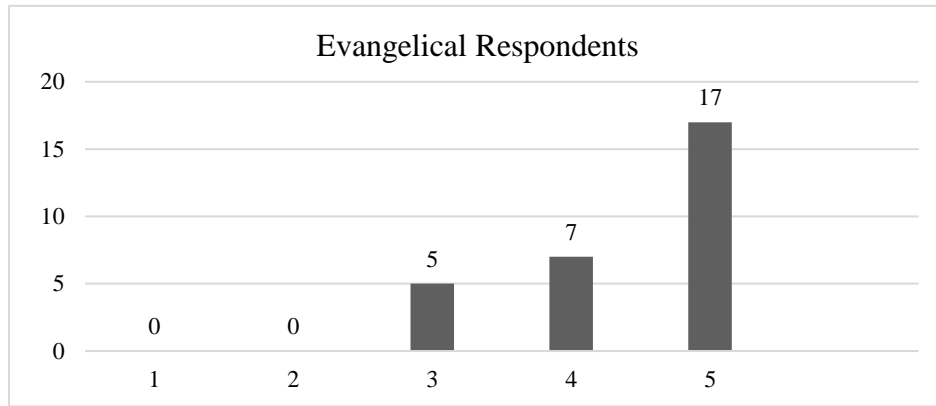


Figure A28. NNPs’ major emphases in evangelism: Item 11

According to figure A28 above, about 85.7 percent of evangelical respondents indicate that NNPs place these ten emphases above the message of salvation and holiness. About 14.3 percent of respondents remain indifference on this issue.

### **Possibility of Negative Resultant Effects**

If NNPs’ gospel presentations focus on the ten emphases discussed above at the expense of the genuine message of salvation and holiness, what will be the implications of this reality in the lives of the converts and the church at large? To answer this question, this section discusses respondents’ ratings of potential negative effects of NNPs’ emphatic teaching on the Holy Spirit.

Item 1: “Emotionalism.”

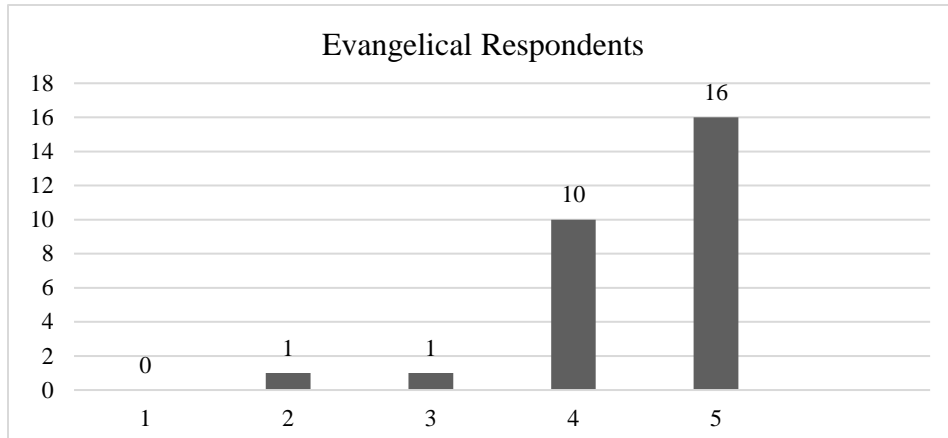


Figure A29. Possibility of negative resultant effects: Item 1

According to figure A29 above, about 92.9 percent of evangelical respondents agree that winning converts with the above approaches may breed converts who exhibit excessive emotional displays in the church.

Item 2: “Personal and selfish aggrandizement.”

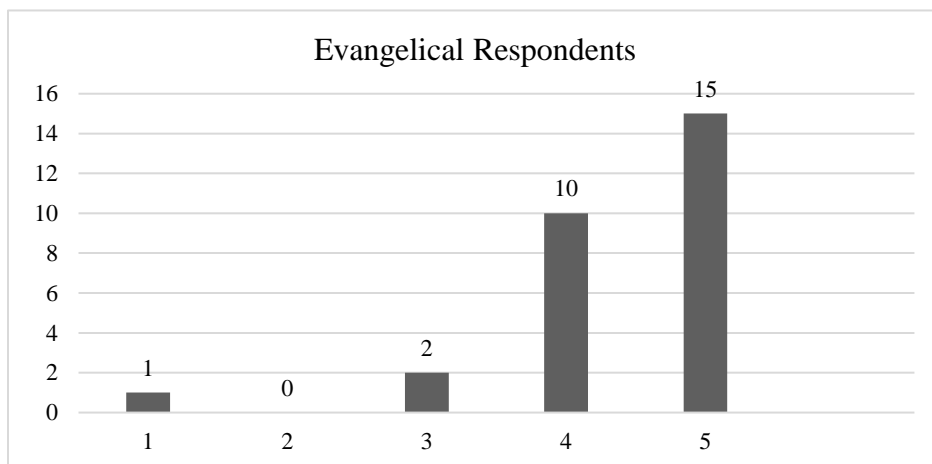


Figure A30. Possibility of negative resultant effects: Item 2

As seen in figure A30 above, 89.3 percent of evangelical respondents believe that in winning converts with the above approaches, NNP churches may be full of people

with motives characterized by personal and selfish aggrandizement.

Item 3: “Exploitation of the laity through signs and wonders.”

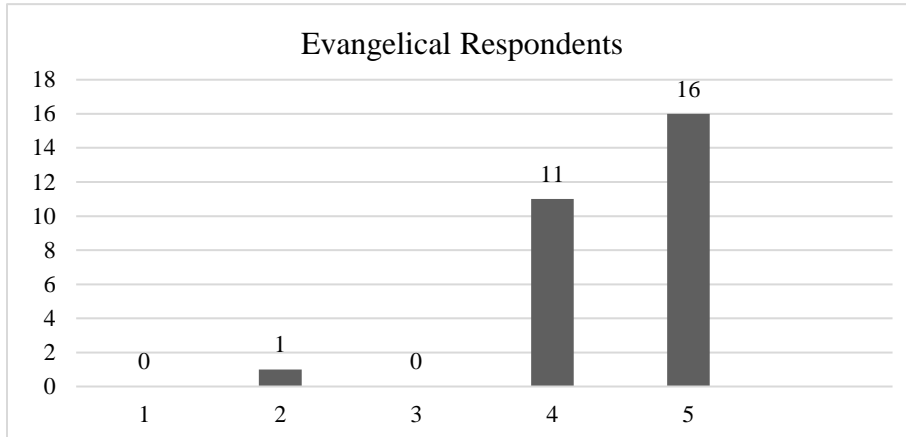


Figure A31. Possibility of negative resultant effects: Item 3

According to figure A31 above, 96.4 percent of evangelical respondents maintain that the NNPs’ gimmicks of signs, wonders, and miracles have brought about the exploitation of the laity.

Item 4: “Lack of reverence for, and neglect of the Word of God.”

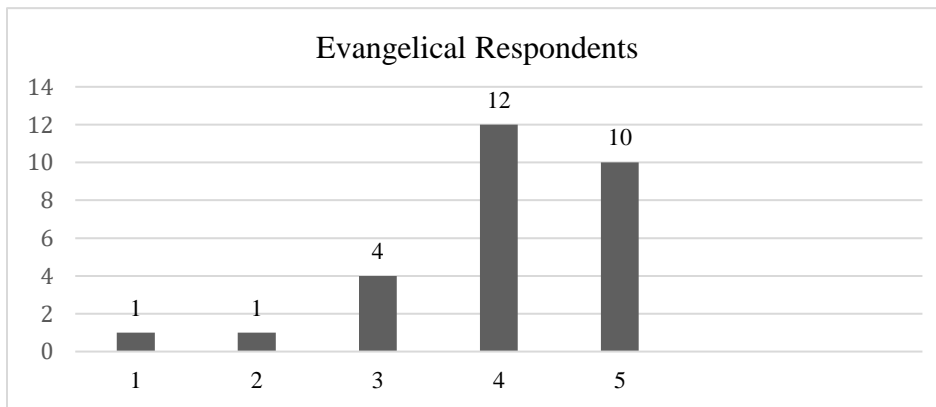


Figure A32. Possibility of negative resultant effects: Item 4

As seen in figure A32 above, about 78.6 percent of evangelical respondents agree that NNPs’ emphasis on the ten approaches above in evangelism is already leading to a lack of reverence for, and an inappropriate understanding of, Scripture.

Item 5: “Undermining of salvation with too much pursuit and emphasis on physical signs.”

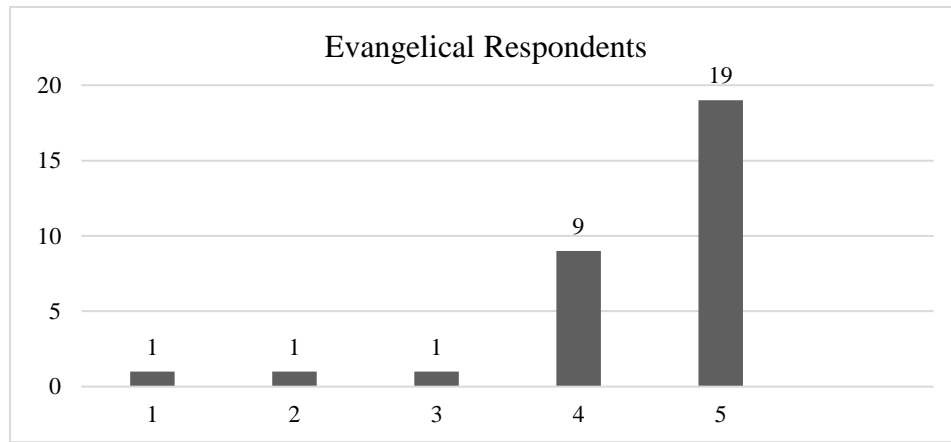


Figure A33. Possibility of negative resultant effects: Item 5

According to figure A33, 89.3 percent of evangelical respondents agree that NNPs’ emphasis on the ten approaches above in evangelism will lead to more focus being given to physical signs than real spiritual transformation. However, 7.1 percent of respondents disagree with this.

Item 6: “Syncretism (mixture of Christian beliefs with the practices of African Traditional Religions or other religions).”

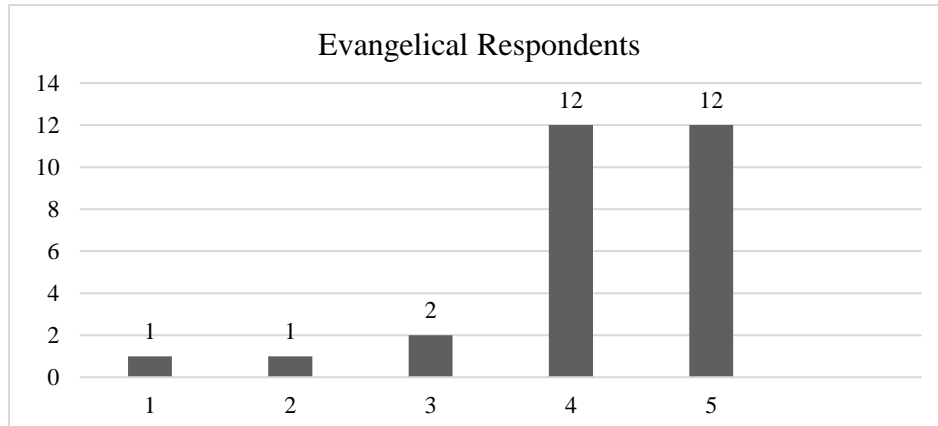


Figure A34. Possibility of negative resultant effects: Item 6

According to figure A34 above, about 85.7 percent of evangelical respondents maintain that NNPs’ emphasis on the ten approaches above in evangelism will lead to a mixture of Christian beliefs with the practices of African traditional religions or other religions. This is a manifestation of syncretism.

Item 7: “Christian practice that is void of sound biblical truth.”

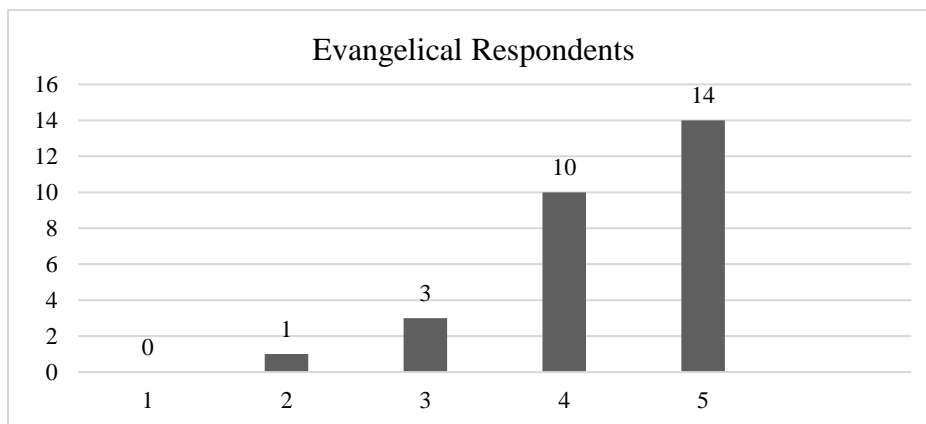


Figure A35. Possibility of negative resultant effects: Item 7

As seen in figure A35 above, 85.7 percent of evangelical respondents believe that NNPs’ emphasis on the ten approaches above in evangelism will result in Christian



practices that are void of sound biblical truth concerning the gospel.

Item 8: “Some NNPs leaders going diabolical to get powers.”

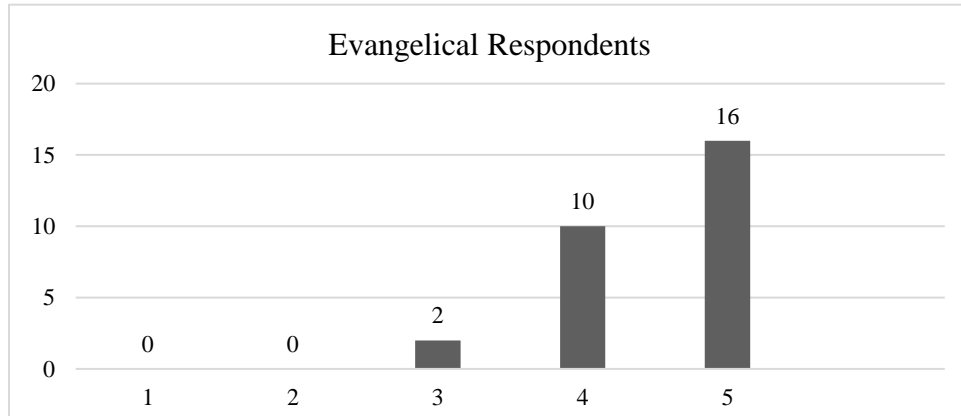


Figure A36. Possibility of negative resultant effects: Item 8

According to figure A36 above, about 92.9 percent of evangelical respondents indicate that many NNP leaders are going diabolical to obtain powers. They do this in order to force miracles, signs, and wonders to happen at all costs.

Item 9: “Increase in quantity of members but not in quality.”

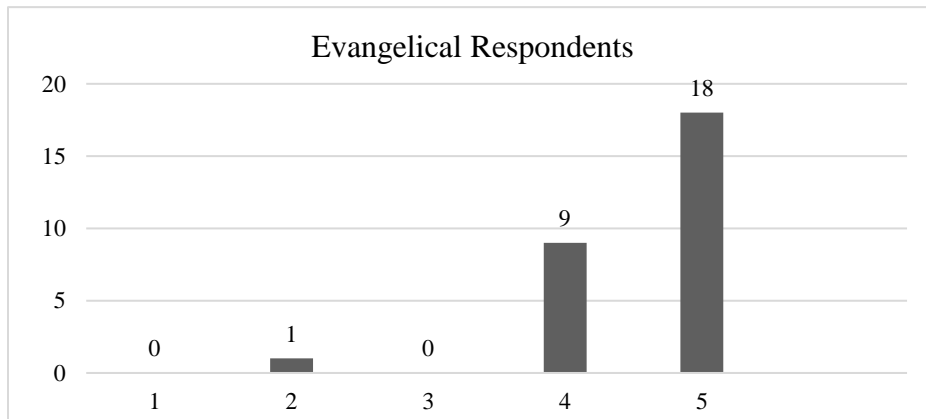


Figure A37. Possibility of negative resultant effects: Item 9

As seen in figure A37 above, most evangelical respondents (about 96.4 percent) believe that the evangelistic practices of NNPs will breed large numbers of converts, but those converts will be lacking in the quality of Christlikeness.

Item 10: “Some Nigerian NNPs leaders have positioned themselves in the place of the Holy Spirit or ‘gods’ to their members. They always want members to get permission from them before taking decisions.”

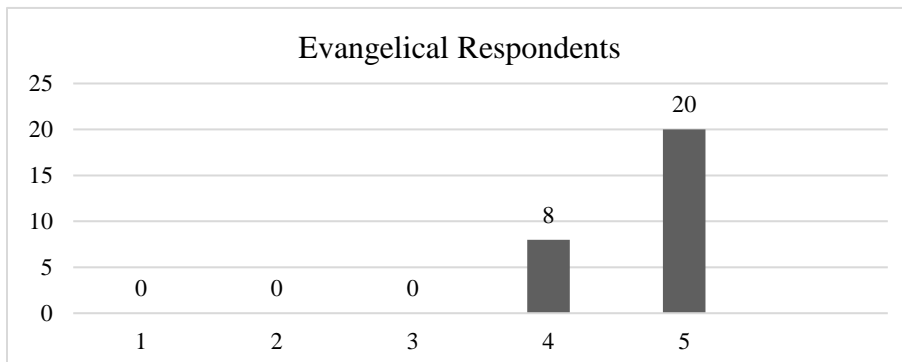


Figure A38. Possibility of negative resultant effects: Item 10

According to figure A38 above, 100 percent of evangelical respondents agree that some NNP leaders lord their power over their members.

Item 11: Most of the miracles among the Neo-Pentecostals today are fake (this does not deny the possibility of real miracles).”

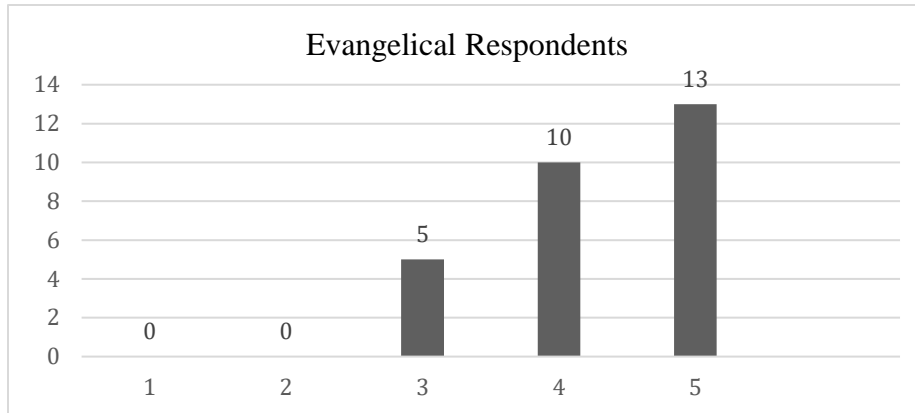


Figure A39. Possibility of negative resultant effects: Item 11

According to figure A39 above, 82.1 percent of evangelical respondents believe that most of the miracles performed by NNPs today are not real, but they do not exclude the possibility of genuine miracles. However, 17.9 percent of respondents neither agree nor disagree.

Item 12: “Is it true that some NNPs leaders are sexually assaulting their members?”

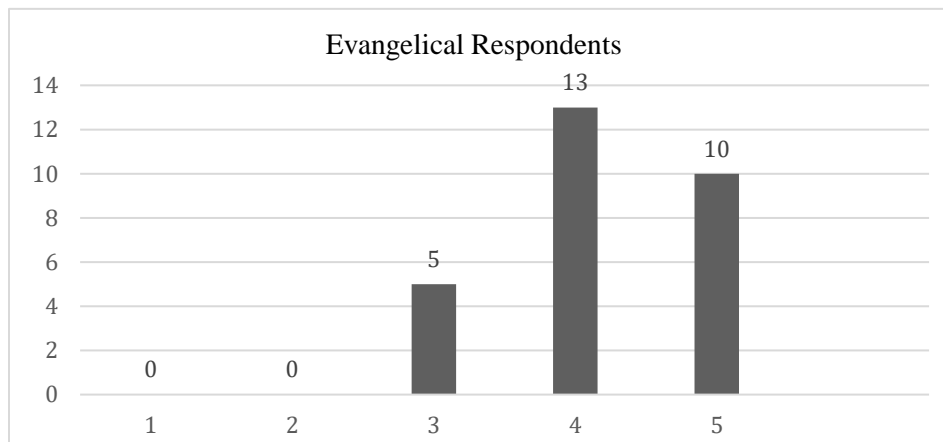


Figure A40. Possibility of negative resultant effects: Item 12

According to figure A40 above, 82.1 percent of evangelical respondents agree

that some NNP leaders are guilty of sexually assaulting their followers. However, 17.9 percent of respondents say nothing to oppose or support this assertion.

Item 13: “Is it true that some NNPs are living large with display of flamboyance?”

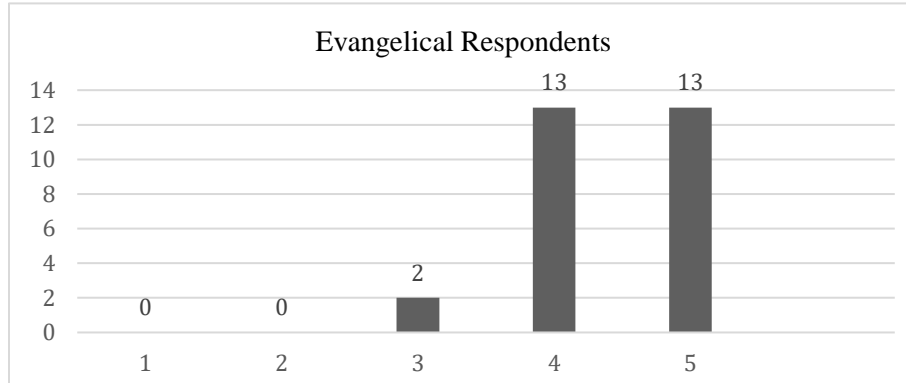


Figure A41. Possibility of negative resultant effects: Item 13

As seen in figure A41 above, the majority of evangelical respondents (92.9 percent) attest to the flamboyant living of some NNP leaders.

### **Biblical Place of the Holy Spirit in Evangelism**

This section discusses respondents’ ratings of the following items as biblical purposes of power promised by Jesus in Acts 1:8.

Item 1: “The power is meant to promote evangelical task and zeal of the Church.”

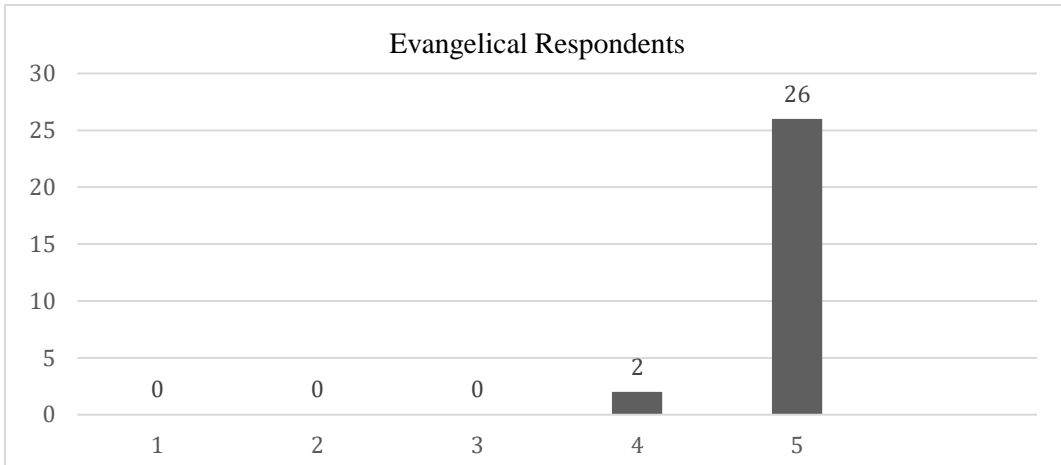


Figure A42. Biblical place of the Holy Spirit in evangelism: Item 1

According to figure A42 above, all evangelical respondents agree that the Holy Spirit promotes the evangelical task as well as zeal in the church.

Item 2: “The promised power is to arm believers as they go about witnessing For Christ.”

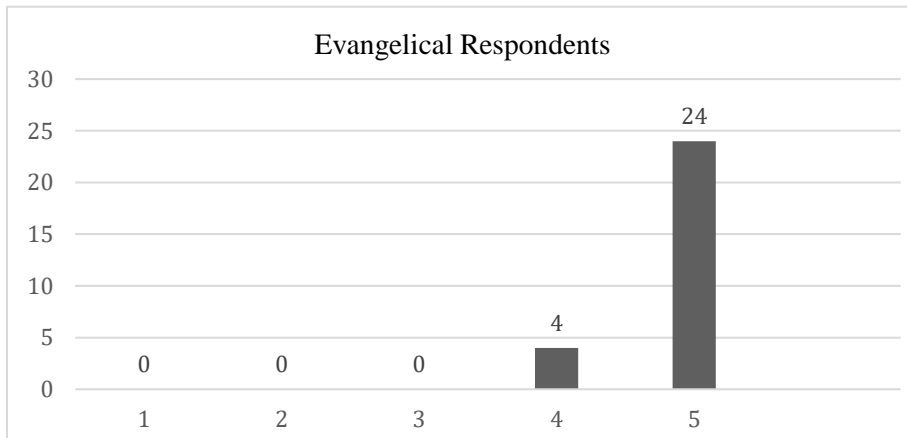


Figure A43. Biblical place of the Holy Spirit in evangelism: Item 2

According to figure A43 above, 100 percent of evangelical respondents agree that the power promised in Acts 1:8 is meant to arm (or equip) believers as they go about

witnessing for Christ.

Item 3: “The divine power is meant for the Church’s discipleship program in the context of the Great Commission.”

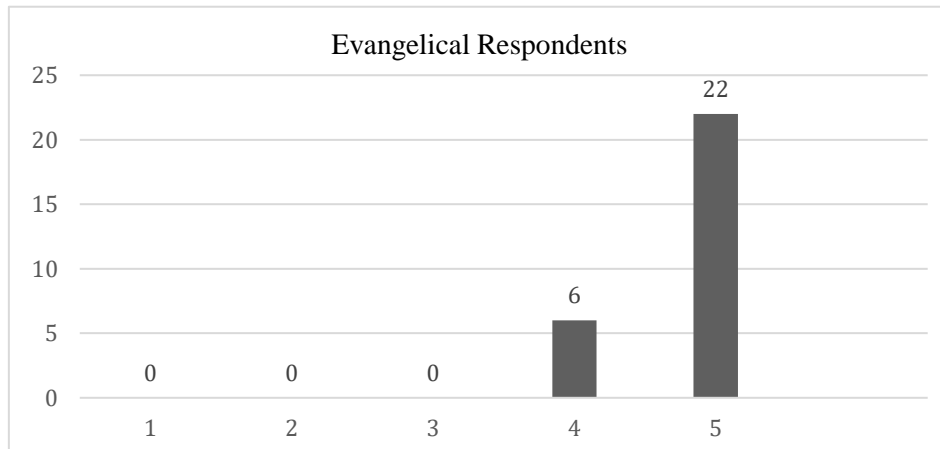


Figure A44. Biblical place of the Holy Spirit in evangelism: Item 3

As seen in figure A44 above, all evangelical respondents agree that the divine power promised in Acts 1:8 is meant for the church’s discipleship program in the context of the Great Commission.

Item 4: “The promised power is to enable believers to stand and suffer for the truth at the face of severe persecution.”

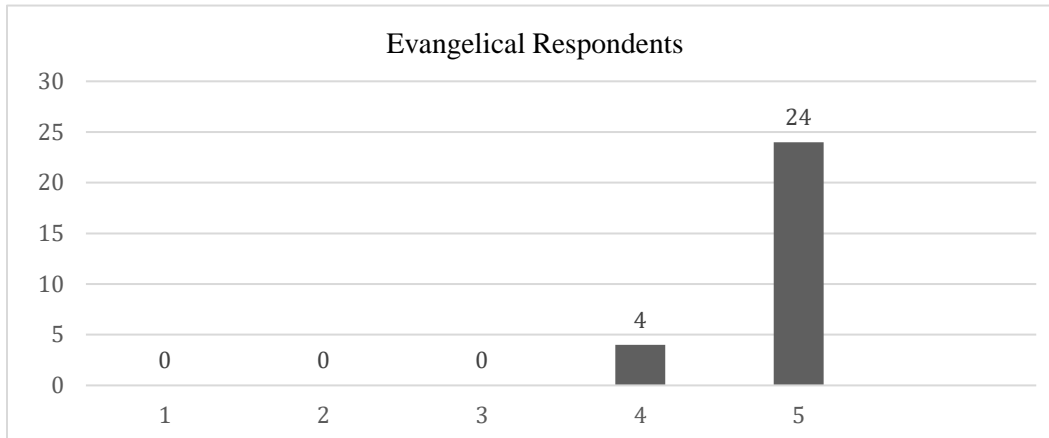


Figure A45. Biblical place of the Holy Spirit in evangelism: Item 4

According to figure A45 above, all evangelical respondents believe that the coming of the Holy Spirit imbues believers with power to stand and endure suffering for the truth of the gospel when facing persecution.

Item 5: “The power is to create a conducive environment for the Church to thrive.”

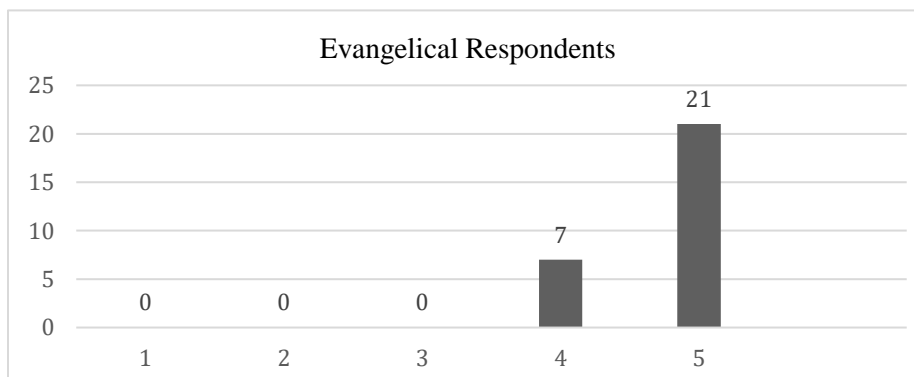


Figure A46. Biblical place of the Holy Spirit in evangelism: Item 5

As seen in figure A46 above, 100 percent of evangelical respondents agree that the promised power of the Holy Spirit is intended to create a conducive environment in

which the church can thrive.

Item 6: “The promised power enables signs and wonders to follow the believers’ evangelistic task; but not for the believers to be seeking after signs and wonders.”

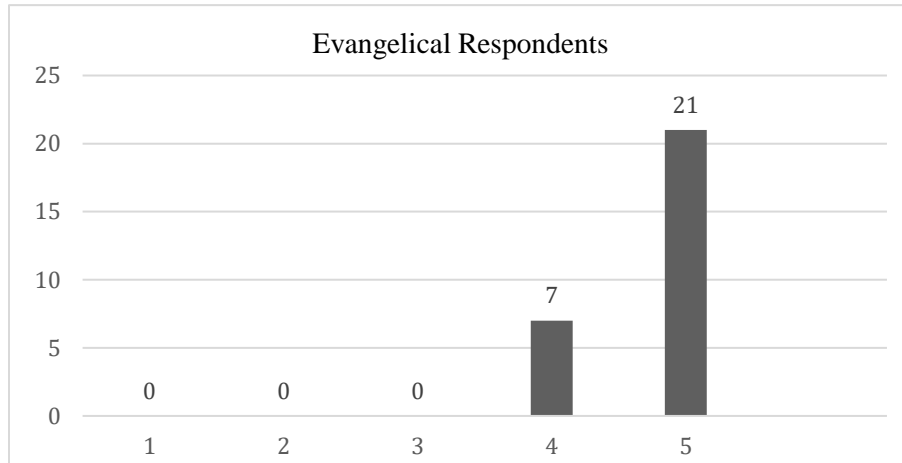


Figure A47. Biblical place of the Holy Spirit in evangelism: Item 6

According to figure A47 above, all evangelical respondents agree that the promised power of the Holy Spirit enables signs and wonders to follow after believers’ witnessing for Christ, but believers should not seek after such signs and wonders.



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## ABSTRACT

### THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE PRACTICE OF EVANGELISM AMONG NIGERIAN NEO-PENTECOSTALS

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Jesus Christ, in part of his send-forth message to his disciples just before his ascension, emphatically stressed, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses . . .” (Acts 1:8). If an evangelistic activity is going to be fruitful, it is very important to know and receive this power that comes only through the Holy Spirit.

Just as it is very important to receive this power before embarking on evangelism, it is also important not to have a misconstrued meaning of this power. The focus of this thesis centers on how some Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals perceive the power of the Holy Spirit in relation to regarding their practice of evangelism. Notably, a misconception of Acts 1:8 can lead to a proclamation of another gospel that is not the gospel of Jesus Christ. On this terrain of understanding, I delve into the common misappropriations of the work of the Holy Spirit in the gospel proclamation activities among some Nigerian Neo-Pentecostals and the effect such misappropriations have on the Nigerian church as a whole.

Keywords: Holy Spirit, Nigeria, Neo-Pentecostalism, evangelism, power, anointing, prosperity, faith, breakthrough, success, healing, generational curses, miracles, signs, wonders.

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