

# **A Theological Appraisal of Pentecostal-Charismatic Preaching and Social Change in Nigeria**

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## Abstract

This study investigates the multifaceted influence of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity (PCC) and its distinctive preaching style in Nigeria, where this religious movement has gained considerable prominence. PCC is characterized by its emphasis on experiential faith and fervent preaching, focusing on phenomena such as speaking in tongues, divine healing, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The research examines the role of PCC preaching in shaping the worldview and identity of its adherents, its impact on their social and political engagement, and its response to contemporary challenges and opportunities in Nigerian society. Tracing the historical development of PCC in Nigeria, the paper highlights its transformation from a marginal religious movement at the beginning of the 20th century to a dominant and influential force today. Theological analysis evaluates the content, context, and consequences of PCC preaching, drawing from biblical and historical sources and relevant social theories. The study underscores that PCC preaching can positively and negatively affect social change in Nigeria, contingent on the theological orientation, ethical commitment, and contextual sensitivity of preachers and their audiences. This paper offers five actionable recommendations to enhance the constructive role of PCC preaching in promoting justice, peace, and development in Nigeria. These recommendations encompass the promotion of biblical literacy, ethical preaching, hermeneutical training, empowerment for

social engagement, and critical self-reflection within Pentecostal churches. PCC preaching has had a transformative impact on Nigerian society. While it has reinvigorated the Christian faith and promoted community engagement, it also faces challenges related to prosperity, gospel and materialism. By addressing these issues and adopting the recommendations, PCC can continue to shape the worldview of its adherents in a more balanced and socially responsible manner, contributing positively to social change in Nigeria. This research emphasizes the need for nuanced and reflective approaches to PCC preaching, aligning it with the nation's broader goals of justice, peace, and development.

## Introduction

Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity (PCC) is a global phenomenon that has snowballed in the past century, especially in the Global South. Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa and home to the most significant number of Christians on the continent is a crucial site for studying the impact of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity on society. PCC is characterized by its emphasis on the experiential dimension of faith, such as the baptism of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, prophecy, healing, and miracles. PCC also has a distinctive style of preaching that is often passionate, persuasive, and performative.

This paper aims to assess the significance of PCC preaching in social change in Nigeria. Social change transforms social structures, norms, values, and behaviors over time. The paper will explore the following research question: How does PCC preaching shape the worldview and identity of its adherents? How does PCC preaching influence the social and political engagement of its followers? How does PCC preaching respond to the challenges and opportunities of contemporary Nigerian society? The paper will adopt a theological perspective that analyses the content, context, and consequences of PCC preaching with biblical and historical sources and relevant

social theories. The paper will argue that PCC preaching positively and negatively affects social change in Nigeria, depending on the preachers' and their audiences' theological orientation, ethical commitment, and contextual sensitivity. The paper will provide some suggestions for enhancing the constructive role of PCC preaching in promoting justice, peace, and development in Nigeria.

### **Historical Development of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity in Nigeria.**

We have seen significant shifts in how Christianity is viewed and practiced in Nigeria and other parts of West Africa since around 1986. The most important transformation is connected to a type of spirituality that the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements helped to create. The Charismatic Renewal, a global revivalist movement within the Christian church, is the source of this new religious effervescence. By the 1990s, Pentecostalism had changed from its earlier incarnation as a sectarian religion in Africa at the beginning of the 20th century to one practiced publicly worldwide. As a result, it caught the interest of the media, the majority of Christians and non-Christians, and religious experts.

Nigeria, one of the most devout countries in the world, has a well-established Pentecostal landscape similar to none in Africa. The missionary disposition and spiritual rejuvenation, at least as perceived by Pentecostals in Nigeria, are substantial and significantly influence the Nigerian religious economy. According to functionalist theory, religion serves specific social tasks, such as giving a worldview for individuals who act on their impulses and injunctions.<sup>101</sup> Against this backdrop, Pentecostalism, right from its inception in Nigeria in 1914, has profoundly permeated the nooks and crannies of Nigerian

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<sup>101</sup> Neals, M.A. "The Comparative Implications of Functional and Conflict Theory as Theoretical Framework for Religious Research and Religious Decision Making" in *Review of Religious Research*, Vol. 21 (New York, 1979), 74

society and has radically transformed the religious economy of Nigeria in the sense that the existing orthodox churches founded by the European missionaries were profusely challenged by the Pentecostals of not being able to address the spiritual yearnings of the teeming numbers of their congregations, among other reasons<sup>102</sup>.

Although Pentecostalism could be said to have been imported into Nigeria, just two decades after the movement's emergence in the early 1900s in Los Angeles, it was effectively domesticated by Nigerians to serve its purpose. Starting from its modest origins in 1901, with just a small group of students at a Bible school in Topeka, Kansas, Pentecostals are currently the world's most prominent family of Protestants, with roughly five hundred million population.<sup>103</sup> Although the Pentecostal movement began in the United States of America, it owed much of its basic tenets to earlier British holiness and charismatic movements. The first Pentecostal churches in the world were started by the holiness movement, which was officially inaugurated in the United States in 1867 after the Civil War. After becoming Pentecostal, the movement retains some of its holiness teachings. Between 1867 and 1880, the Holiness movement gained momentum due to the increasing support from the Methodist churches and other denominations.<sup>104</sup> During this epoch, many holiness advocates felt that this movement might revive the churches and infuse new life into Christianity worldwide. To them, the Pentecostal revival, like the day of Pentecost, is not a one-off event but a continuous experience.

African Pentecostalism started in South Africa, and Its inception can be attributed to the efforts of John Graham Lake.

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<sup>102</sup> Ebebe, C.O *The Impact of Pentecostalism on the Catholic Church*, (Port Harcourt: Letatalk, 2004).

<sup>103</sup> Ayuk, A. "The Pentecostal Transformation of Nigerian Church Life" in *Asia Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, 180-204.

<sup>104</sup> Bloch-Hoel, M, *The Pentecostal Movement*, (Halden: Scandinavia University Books, 1964).

(1870-1935), who began his ministry as a Methodist preacher but later prospered in the business world as an insurance executive.<sup>105</sup> Although the Pentecostal movement was imported into Nigeria from 1914 to the 1920s, between the 1930s and 1960s, several American and European Pentecostal dominations visited the country and affiliated with some indigenous movements.<sup>106</sup>

In 1914, Sokari Garrick Braide, a Catechist in the Anglican Communion, pioneered a healing revival in the Niger-Delta area, causing an awakening, at least from the prism of Pentecostal evangelization strategy and this event was to have an impetus on church growth in the area. His activity centered on what he termed “divine healings” was uncommon during this era, particularly among the Orthodox churches. Eventually, at his death, the revival gave rise to the Christ Army church, which flourished in Eastern Nigeria.<sup>107</sup> In 1927, another revival called “the Spirit Movement” evolved among the Annang and Ibibio in the present-day Akwa Ibom State. This revival ultimately precipitated the Qua-Iboe mission’s expansion, culminating in their mission thrust into Igala land in 1936. In 1934, a revival was said to have occurred among some laymen in old Umuahia. That led to the founding the Assemblies of God church in Nigeria in June 1939. The activities of one Joseph Babalola in Ilesha were outstandingly influential in accelerating the development of Pentecostalism in Nigeria.<sup>108</sup> By February 1948, the Latter Rain revival started in North Battleford, Canada; by 1953, it had reached Nigeria, and from the country’s 1960s and 1970s charismatic revival emerged various independent and

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<sup>105</sup> Orogun, Daniel, and Jerry Pillay. "Between African and American Neo-Pentecostalism : An Examination of the Link, Influence, Merits and Demerits." 2021, <https://doi.org/10.25159/2412-4265/8550>.

<sup>106</sup> Dupree, S. *The African American Holiness Movement*. (London : Routledge, 1995)

<sup>107</sup> Kalu, O.U. *Embattled Gods: Christianization of Igboland, 1814-1991*. (Treaton: Africa world Press, 2003).

<sup>108</sup> Adeboye, A.B. "Effect of Pentecostalism on Ecclesiastical Architecture in Nigeria." In *International Journal of Science and Research*, (Vol. 3 No.6, 2014).

trans-denominational charismatic ministries, which metamorphosed in the 1980s into fully-pledged neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches. Thus, the initial surge of evangelical growth came across the country during the 1970s. American groups such as Scripture Union and some denominational missions run by the Baptists and the Assemblies of God.<sup>109</sup>

According to Jonathan Ayuba, the foundation of the 1970s Pentecostal movements and the “born again” (spiritual rebirth) phenomenon that swept through Nigeria was laid during the civil war of 1967 to 1970. Politically, Christians in Eastern Nigeria were upset because the federal government supported traditional Christian European countries, notably Britain, against the secessionists.<sup>110</sup> Anti-western type Christianity began to develop, and local people began to frequent new prayer houses that sprung up during the Civil War to seek solutions to their social and economic conditions, accentuated by the war. Given this prevailing situation, new prayer houses were established in rural areas in eastern Nigeria to cater for refugees fleeing the war. With the war’s end in 1970, an exponential growth in evangelical movements and prayer groups was recorded, primarily supported by student groups throughout eastern Nigeria.<sup>111</sup>

In northern Nigeria, a revival occurred among Ilorin Technical Training School students in 1969. Before this period, the centres of Pentecostal revivals were mainly based in the east and west, from where they spread to northern Nigeria. In 1972, the activities of the charismatic renewal spread to Gindiri, Jos and Gboko, Benue State. In the same year, some laymen in the Saminaka area of Kaduna state came into contact with the

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<sup>109</sup> Dupree, S

<sup>110</sup> Ayuba, J.M. “*Prophets and Profits: Pentecostalism as the New Face of Nigeria’s Multi-National Corporations,*” in *Mandyeng, Journal of Central Nigeria Studies*, University of Jos, 2012, 107.

<sup>111</sup> Ayuba, J.M, 108.

revival movement.<sup>112</sup> Then, in 1976, another wave of revival spread among some students in Takum; in 1977, among the Gbagyi; in 1980, in Igalaland; from 1981 to 1985, among the Bassa in Kogi; and later in 1991, among the Bassa in Nasarawa State.

## Theological Appraisal of Pentecostal-charismatic preaching in Nigeria

Phillips Brooks, a well-known American preacher of the 19th century, defined preaching as “the communication of truth. It has in it two essential elements: truth and personality. Neither of these can it spare and still be preaching.”<sup>113</sup> He described preaching as the outflow of life, the sifting of divine truth through human personality.<sup>114</sup> This definition emphasizes the importance of truth and personality in preaching, and it suggests that effective preaching involves conveying biblical truths and doing so in a way that reflects the unique personality and experiences of the preacher. This personal element can make the message more relatable and impactful for the audience.

Preaching can be defined as an event that fundamentally declares the message of Scripture, not simply repeating it. There has to be an interaction between Scripture and the present time and situation. Preaching seeks to do today, for the current congregation, what the passage did for the original listeners/readers.<sup>115</sup> This definition highlights the dynamic

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<sup>112</sup> Ukachi, A. *Pentecostal and Charismatic Revivals in Nigeria and Their Impact on Nigerian Christianity* (London: Broadman and Holdman Publishers, 1996), 21.

<sup>113</sup> Tucker, Austin B. "What Do You Mean "Truth through Personality"? The Phillips Brooks Definition of Preaching in Historical Context." 2004, <https://core.ac.uk/download/58820995.pdf>.

<sup>114</sup> Phillips Brooks, *Lectures on Preaching: The Yale Lectures on Preaching, 1877*. Extracted from [www. Archive.org](http://www.archive.org). on 14<sup>th</sup> October, 2023.

<sup>115</sup> Richard Lischer, *A Theology of Preaching: The Dynamics of the Gospel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001).

nature of preaching. It is about repeating the Scripture and making those messages relevant to today's context. This involves understanding what God, through this Scripture, wants to do for, with, and through this particular congregation. This definition underscores the importance of understanding one's audience and current situation when preaching.

Preaching can be classified into two broad classifications: hermeneutics and homiletics. Hermeneutics, derived from the Greek word for "interpret", refers to the theory of interpretation.<sup>116</sup> More comprehensively, hermeneutics concerns the interpretation of texts and other forms of oral and written communication and fundamental issues of the nature of language, meaning, communication and understanding.<sup>117</sup> Homiletics can be defined simply as the art of preaching, which involves communicating the truth of the Scripture.

#### Analysis of Pentecostal Preaching from the lens of Pentecostalism

The researcher advocates objectivity in the discourse of Pentecostalism and preaching because, considering through the lens of evangelicalism alone, there are tendencies of high criticism against Pentecostalism. Preaching from a Pentecostal perspective is peculiar due to their theology and emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in every preaching engagement. Preaching had a substantial impact on the early days of Pentecostalism. in spreading the Gospel message and bringing its hearers to seek God wholeheartedly and with complete abandonment. Pentecostal preaching was characterised by its spontaneity and fervour. Men, women and even children would speak with conviction as God moved upon them. Messages came straight from God and penetrated the hearts of

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<sup>116</sup> A.C Thiselton, "Hermeneutics," in *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. S.B. Ferguson and D.F. Wright, Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1988, 293.

<sup>117</sup> Thiselton, 293.

listeners.<sup>118</sup> Often, manifestations of God's power and presence accompanied the preaching. Signs and wonders were commonplace. Frank

Bartleman stated, "Men would fall all over the house like the slain in battle, or run en masse, to seek God".<sup>119</sup> Bartleman explains one of his preaching experiences in Indianapolis as follows:

The Lord blessed me much at Indianapolis. I was so glad I had obeyed him and gone there. I was there by his invitation purely. But I seldom, if ever, had felt such a wonderful flow of the Spirit before. The message seemed to be fairly drawn out of me in preaching. I felt almost drawn off the platform by the hungry desire of the people. I could not talk as rapidly as the thoughts came and almost fell over myself, trying to speak fast enough. At one meeting, when I was through, the slain of the Lord lay all over the floor. I looked for the preachers behind me, and they lay stretched out on the floor.<sup>120</sup> One of them had his feet tangled in a chair, so I knew they had gone down under the power of God.<sup>121</sup>

How might one begin to define this type of preaching, its scope and dynamics in both the congregation and the preacher?

C. Peter Wagner has suggested a definition of Pentecostal preaching in his book *What Are We Missing?* He writes, "Pentecostal preaching is not intellectual, but emotional; it is not exegetical; but allegorical; it is not doctrinal, but practical;

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<sup>118</sup> Excerpts from Frank Bartleman's, *How Pentecost Came to Los Angeles- As it was in the Beginning (1925)*, cited in Lischer, *Theories in Preaching*, p. 321

<sup>119</sup> Lischer, *Theories in Preaching*, p. 322.

<sup>120</sup> The Life And Ministry Of Frank Bartleman | Zion Christian Ministry.  
<http://www.zionchristianministry.com/azusa/the-life-and-ministry-of-frank-bartleman/>

<sup>121</sup> Lischer, *Theories in Preaching*, p. 325.

it is not directed as much to the head as to the heart. The result of hearing Pentecostal preaching is not that you learn more, but rather that you feel better”.<sup>122</sup> While some might agree with this definition, it starkly contrasts what is revealed in at least some of the extant sermons and publications of early Pentecostals.

Ray Hughes argues that Pentecostal preaching is not different from the ‘normal’ understanding of what preaching is. Although he does not specify what these everyday understandings constitute, he states that Pentecostal preaching means a type of message and a style of delivery characteristic of Pentecostal worship. Pentecostal preaching is the best of one’s study and meditation, warmed by the Spirit of God and made to glow in the heart by the anointing of the same Holy Spirit.<sup>123</sup> Hughes adds that Pentecostal preaching must be seen in the context of the New Testament book of Acts, which suggests at least three emphases for the preaching task. First, Pentecostal preaching centres on the Scripture, which is central to life practice and doctrine and Second, it must exalt Jesus Christ and remain grace-focused. Finally, Pentecostal preaching is directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit. This Holy Spirit dynamic enables one to be “more sensitive and open to the Spirit’s leading”.<sup>124</sup> Beyond these emphases, Hughes notes three dimensions of Pentecostal preaching. The first is that Pentecostal preaching is ‘precise, exact in meaning, relevant, always being carried out in a certain degree of refinement’.<sup>125</sup> This dimension addresses areas such as serious study, prayer and Spirit-birthing messages. At the same time, it includes knowing and understanding the listeners, establishing preaching goals and

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<sup>122</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *What are We Missing?* (Carol Stream, IL: Creation House, 1973), 117-118.

<sup>123</sup> Ray Hughes, “Preaching, A Pentecostal Perspective”, in Burgess, McGee and Alexander (eds.), *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, p. 722. Hughes has previously used the word “message” as opposed to “sermon” to convey that Pentecostal preaching brings “word from God”.

<sup>124</sup> Hughes, “Preaching”, p.722. Objectively at this point of Hughes there is no divergence between Pentecostal preaching.

<sup>125</sup> Hughes, “Preaching”, p.723.

aiming to convert sinners, inspire saints, comfort, teach, correct, motivate and guide in worship.<sup>126</sup>

A second dimension relates to the 'prophetic nature of Pentecostal preaching. It refers primarily to "forth-telling". Truth put in the preacher's heart by the Holy Spirit is proclaimed. They speak the Word of God. The final dimension concerns the results of Pentecostal preaching. It should produce the same effects as found in the Book of Acts. These would include conviction of sin, increased faith in God, confronting demonic powers, godly fear and reverence, manifestation of spiritual gifts, and signs and wonders.<sup>127</sup> Classical Pentecostal preaching found its context within the worship service encompassing lively singing, exuberant worship, spontaneity, testimonies of God's power, manifestations of God's presence and a high expectation for the miraculous.

Contemporary Theological issues with Pentecostal Hermeneutics.

There are lapses in the Pentecostal approach to hermeneutics, especially in recent times, which serve as a flaw in the essence of Pentecostalism in the Nigerian church, and these lapses are built on wrong theology and ideology, which is discussed in this section. Firstly, Lack of familiarity with hermeneutical principles.<sup>128</sup> Hermeneutics involves three primary approaches: the author-centered, text-centered, and reader-centered methods.<sup>129</sup> The author-centered approach primarily emphasizes discovering the author's intended meaning, asking, "What did the author intend for readers to glean from this text?" In contrast, the text-centered approach concerns the

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<sup>126</sup> Hughes, "Preaching", p.723.

<sup>127</sup> Hughes, "Preaching", p.723-24

<sup>128</sup> John O. Enyinnaya, "Pentecostal Hermeneutics and Preaching: An Appraisal," *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 13, no. 1 (2008): 144-153.

<sup>129</sup> Tremper Longman II, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation*

uncertainty of authorial intent and focuses on examining the text as the most reliable source of meaning.<sup>130</sup> On the other hand, the reader-centered approach disregards the author and the text, highlighting the reader's needs at the present moment as the key to understanding a text.

Let us agree that the true purpose of the hermeneutical process is to uncover the meaning intended by a writer for their original readers and only then seek its relevance for contemporary readers. It becomes evident that the most influential interpretation path combines elements of both the author-centered and text-centered approaches. However, if one opts for the reader-centered approach, it implies that the Bible lacks inherent meaning and instead derives its significance from the individual reader's experiences and current circumstances.

Pentecostal hermeneutics tends to lean toward the reader-centered approach due to its strong focus on personal experiences, particularly the exaltation of visions and dreams above the Bible. In this perspective, instead of Scripture serving as the ultimate benchmark for all doctrinal matters, experience takes precedence, with the Bible primarily serving as a means to validate those experiences.

Interpreters commonly differentiate between descriptive and prescriptive elements in Scripture. Descriptive portions merely narrate events as they occurred, while prescriptive sections outline what should be considered normative for all periods and circumstances. In the case of Pentecostal hermeneutics, their literal approach often leads to interpreting what was initially intended to be descriptive as normative.<sup>131</sup> The misunderstanding arises due to a lack of acquaintance with

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<sup>130</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996).

<sup>131</sup> Matthews Ojo, "The Nigerian Baptist Convention and the Pentecostal Resurgence, 1970-2000: Critical Issues for Ecclesiastical Dynamics" in *Ecclesiastics*, ed. Ishola and Ayegboyin, Ibadan: Sceptre Prints, 2006, 335.

crucial hermeneutical principles, weakening and impairing the Pentecostal hermeneutical approach.

Furthermore, Inadequate Appreciation of the Authority of the Bible.<sup>132</sup> Evangelical theology emphasizes a fundamental doctrine – acknowledging the Bible’s authority.<sup>133</sup> Evangelicals firmly believe that the Bible is divinely inspired and, as a result, constitutes the ultimate foundation of authority in matters of faith and behavior. However, Pentecostals deviate from this doctrine by prioritizing personal experiences and wholeheartedly accepting dreams, visions, and spontaneous prophetic revelations above the teachings of the Bible. In doing so, they undermine the Bible’s authority. Clements has pointed out that a robust belief in the Bible’s inspiration is the safeguard against regressing toward adopting human-centered theological approaches rooted in rationalism and mysticism.<sup>134</sup>

Another area for improvement with Pentecostal hermeneutics is the problem of ignorance of hermeneutical tools. Eyinnaya posits that deciphering the meaning of a biblical text is a meticulous endeavor that demands a methodical and disciplined exegetical process to unearth its genuine significance. The rigor of this process arises from the fact that contemporary readers find themselves as outsiders in the communication that transpired within the text, given that they neither authored it nor were its original recipients. This challenge is compounded by temporal, cultural, and historical gaps separating the biblical text from the contemporary reader.<sup>135</sup><sup>136</sup> To bridge these gaps and discern the text’s meaning, interpreters must journey back in time to explore the author’s background, the context of the original readers, and

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<sup>132</sup> John O. Enyinnaya, 149.

<sup>133</sup> Roy Clements, “Word and Spirit: The Bible and the Gift of Prophecy Today” in *Hear the Word*, ed. John White, et al, Leicester: IVP, 1990, 107

<sup>134</sup> Roy Clements, 104.

<sup>135</sup> John O. Enyinnaya, 150.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Chika Ossai, *Contextual Exegesis*, Jos: Stream Christian publishers, 2001, 1-6.

the cultural and historical milieu surrounding the text. Fortunately, Christians have been diligently studying the Bible for over two millennia, resulting in a wealth of resources available to aid in this endeavor. These resources encompass background materials, linguistic references, historical and cultural insights, and commentaries and analyses provided by others throughout the centuries.

### Contemporary Theological Issues with Pentecostal Homiletics in Nigeria

Since preaching is mainly two-sided and the other brother of hermeneutics is homiletics, it becomes vital to consider its appraisal within the Nigerian context. The Nigerian Pentecostal churches are changing the syllabus of the gospel to suit their selfish interest and prerogative, which is against the earliest form of Pentecostalism (classical). The study of hermeneutics and its application in sermon delivery, particularly within the Pentecostal tradition, reveals a dichotomy between packaging and content.<sup>137</sup> Hermeneutics, the process of interpreting a text, is a critical component in sermon preparation. However, it is often observed that Pentecostal preachers place a greater emphasis on delivering or packaging the sermon, often to the detriment of hermeneutical accuracy. This imbalance can result in sermons that are engaging and dynamic in presentation but lacking in substantive content.<sup>138</sup>

The importance of effective sermon delivery should not be underestimated, as it significantly influences the reception of the message by the congregation. Many Pentecostal preachers excel in this area, delivering sermons with charisma and energy. However, the ultimate goal should be a harmonious integration of compelling delivery and rich, accurate content. A related issue is the tendency for sermons to prioritize

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<sup>137</sup> Adam G. White, "Pentecostal Preaching as a Modern Epistle: A Comparison of Pentecostal Preaching with Paul's Practice of Letter Writing," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 25, no. [1 \(2016\): 123-149](#)

<sup>138</sup> Adam G. White, 140.

entertainment over spiritual enrichment. While an entertaining delivery can captivate the audience, it should not overshadow the primary purpose of preaching - spiritual edification. Sermons that primarily appeal to emotions may lack the depth necessary to facilitate meaningful changes in attitudes and behaviors.<sup>139</sup>

Furthermore, there is a discernible trend among some Pentecostal preachers to tailor their sermons to align with the preferences of their congregations. This approach, driven by a desire to retain and attract church members, often results in messages catering to what people want to hear rather than what they need to hear. This listener-friendly approach raises questions about the integrity and authenticity of such sermons.<sup>140</sup> In conclusion, while effective sermon delivery is crucial for engaging congregations, it should not compromise content quality or detract from listeners' spiritual enrichment. The challenge for Pentecostal preachers is to balance delivering entertaining and spiritually nourishing sermons while remaining true to sound hermeneutical principles.

### **Societal Impact of Pentecostal-Charismatic Preaching in Nigeria.**

The societal impact of Pentecostal-charismatic preaching in Nigeria can be categorized or structured into various strata, varying from economic, religious, and political. The section will address the tendencies of the impact and how it is interrelated to the degree of social change, which may be positive and negative. The section begins with a relatively negative impact.

Undeniably, Pentecostalism is experiencing a robust expansion in Nigeria, primarily due to its urban appeal. It has successfully

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<sup>139</sup> Motsepe L. Mogoane, Malan Nel, and Yolanda Dreyer, "Pentecostal preaching and Christology: An empirical study," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 79, no. 1 (2023)

<sup>140</sup> Charles T. Crabtree, *Pentecostal Preaching* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2003)

established itself as a religious movement that predominantly attracts the lower and middle classes, spreading from urban centres to rural areas. It has a particular appeal to younger individuals and women, with women making up two-thirds of the total membership in many Nigerian Pentecostal congregations.<sup>141</sup> This trend can be contextualized against the backdrop of the pervasive poverty in Nigeria, especially during the Structured Adjustment Program initiated under military rule. In response to these challenging circumstances, Pentecostal churches have strongly emphasized prosperity, success, and economic empowerment to fuel growth and sustainability.<sup>142</sup> These churches have been critical of mainline churches, accusing them of being unnecessarily inactive and conservative in addressing the needs of their congregants. Pentecostals argue that some of these mainline churches are remnants of colonization and Western culture. They contend that the missionaries from these older churches failed to address the unique issues raised by the African context: poverty, witchcraft, demon possession, protective charms and talismans, sorcery, and traditional forms of worship at shrines.<sup>143</sup>

The missionaries tended to dismiss these concerns as ignorance from a pre-scientific mentality. This mindset was seized upon by the Pentecostals, who sought to transform it through their religious experience. They posited that a church where theology and spirituality do not address these yearnings and does not consider these positions and impulses or articulate them practically and functionally renders the Christian faith ineffective. In their view, such a faith could be discarded as a vestige of Western influence.<sup>144</sup> Francis Cardinal Arinze noted

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<sup>141</sup> O. Adebayo, *A Comparative Study of Pentecostal Challenges in Africa and Latin America*, Research Paper.

<sup>142</sup> K.U Ogbu, 15.

<sup>143</sup> L. Mbefo, *The True African: Impulses for Self-Affirmation* (Onitsha: Spiritan Publications, 2001), 107.

<sup>144</sup> F. Arinze, *The Challenges of the Sects or New Religious Movements: A Pastoral Approach*, General Report, (Vatican City: Rome, 1991).

that many new religious movements, including Pentecostals, are highlighting the pastoral shortcomings of the Catholic Church. They bring an infectious dynamism and remarkable commitment, contrasting Catholics' perceived lukewarm and indifferent attitude. Pentecostals foster small communities where individuals feel valued, appreciated, and assigned meaningful roles, unlike in larger, impersonal parishes where laymen often feel marginalized.<sup>145</sup>

The narrative underscores the fact that the emergence of Pentecostalism in Nigeria has revitalized many Christians' enthusiasm for the Christian life and a broad desire to understand Scripture as God's divine word. Pentecostalism has rekindled a sense of community, fraternity, charity, and care, fostering a sense of belonging among its adherents. Contrary to the hierarchical ecclesiastical structure of some mainline churches where pastoral authority is exclusive to the clerical state, Pentecostalism essentially dismantles this structure. It promotes what could be termed "the universal priesthood of all believers."

However, the ostentatious lifestyle of many Pentecostal pastors and their excessive desire for material wealth, sometimes even at the cost of prescribed Christian ethics and morality, raises serious concerns and has become a significant issue for the Christian community in Nigeria. The deliberate focus on prosperity or material gain appears at the heart of most Pentecostal teachings. For example, Sam Adeyemi, a successful businessman and founder of Daystar Christian Center in Oregun, Lagos, who also pastors one of the fastest-growing Pentecostal churches in Nigeria, is reported to have said, "We discovered after a few years of running our church, that it was not enough to tell people to be Christ-like. There are scripture principles for enjoying multiplication from God. That was how we realised that we could add tremendous value to the lives of

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<sup>145</sup> C.O. Ebebe, *The Impact of Pentecostalism on the Catholic Church* (Port Harcourt: Letatalk, 2004).

our members by teaching them how to use money.”<sup>146</sup> This conviction has led to Adeyemi’s Sunday sermons focusing primarily on entrepreneurial development, similar to what is taught in the nation’s universities, where entrepreneurial development is a core course in the Department of Business Administration and a general course for all departments.

Adeyemi is not the only one advocating this new gospel. David Oyedepo, founder of the Living Faith Church Worldwide (also known as Winners’ Chapel), is well-known for his sharp messages on prosperity. A staunch advocate of wealth, Oyedepo instructs his congregation that “poverty is a sin that should not be tolerated; money answers all things and possessing it is a form of defense.”<sup>147</sup> Similarly, Chris Oyakhilome, founder and pastor of Christ Embassy, gained recognition and wealth through his distinctive miracles. His church has business interests in various sectors, including banking, publishing, broadcasting, entertainment, and hospitality.<sup>148</sup> This emphasis has led many to get wealth at all costs and to the detriment of the gospel message.

Positively, the Pentecostals have influenced the Nigerian context and the church in some relevant areas. Pentecostalism is noted for encouraging a spirituality that abhors confinement and standardization while provoking an intimate experience of the Holy Spirit.<sup>149</sup> Many Nigerians are now after a spirituality that is manifested in power since a breaking of the divine in the ordinary is proof of the validity and authenticity of the religious life of an individual. In this context, Achunike observes, “People are looking for men of God and Spiritual masters and the results their encounter with these men of God will yield for

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<sup>146</sup> J.O. Adeyi, *Human Development in the Catholic Church* (Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2012), 109.

<sup>147</sup> J.O. Adeyi, 109.

<sup>148</sup> J.M Ayuba, 110.

<sup>149</sup> H.C Achunike, *The Influence of Pentecostalism on Catholic Priests and Seminarians in Nigeria*, Africana First Publishers Limited, Onitsha 2004. 95-96.

them.”<sup>150</sup> To this end, religious pragmatism is becoming a feature of spirituality and prayer in Nigeria. Recommendations

1. Promote Hermeneutical Training: Encourage Pentecostal preachers and congregations in Nigeria to prioritize hermeneutical training, ensuring that their interpretation of Scripture aligns with sound principles and helps maintain the integrity and authority of the Bible.
2. Balance Sermon Content and Delivery: Emphasize a balance between compelling sermon delivery and substantive content. Encourage Pentecostal preachers to prioritize spiritual enrichment and the depth of their sermons while retaining engaging delivery styles.
3. Prioritize Scriptural Authority: Advocate for a stronger emphasis on the authority of the Bible within Pentecostalism. Encourage Pentecostal churches to ground their teachings in scriptural principles rather than elevating personal experiences or visions above the Bible.
4. Promote Responsible Prosperity Preaching: While recognizing the importance of addressing economic empowerment and prosperity, urge Pentecostal pastors to convey these messages responsibly without compromising the fundamental tenets of the gospel.
5. Foster Community and Belonging: Highlight the positive impact of Pentecostalism on building a sense of community, fraternity, and care among congregations. Encourage other Christian denominations to learn from Pentecostalism’s success

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<sup>150</sup> H.C Achunike, 99.

in fostering a sense of belonging and active participation among believers.

### **Conclusion**

This academic exploration of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity (PCC) in Nigeria reveals a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. PCC has undoubtedly played a pivotal role in reshaping Nigeria's religious and social landscape, especially in the past century. Its emphasis on the experiential dimension of faith, characterized by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, prophecy, healing, and miracles, has drawn a significant following across the nation.

The impact of PCC preaching on Nigerian society is a subject of paramount importance. This study has sought to assess the significance of PCC preaching in driving social change in Nigeria, focusing on the impact on its adherents' worldview and identity, their social and political engagement, and their responses to contemporary societal challenges and opportunities. As the analysis has demonstrated, the influence of PCC preaching on social change is far from uniform. It is contingent on various factors, including the theological orientation, ethical commitment, and contextual sensitivity of preachers and their audiences. While PCC has contributed to a sense of empowerment, community, and social engagement among its members, it has also faced criticism for some church leaders' excesses of prosperity gospel preaching and ostentatious lifestyles.

Several recommendations state to address these challenges and enhance the constructive role of PCC preaching in promoting justice, peace, and development in Nigeria. Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity has had a profound and enduring impact on Nigerian society. Its role in shaping the religious and social landscape is undeniable. A thoughtful and balanced approach is necessary to fully harness the potential of PCC preaching for positive social change. By addressing the

identified challenges and adopting the suggested recommendations, PCC can continue to influence and transform Nigeria while contributing to the nation's broader objectives of justice, peace, and development.

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