

# **Nigerian Pentecostalism and Civic Engagement: Mission in the Midst of Poverty and Violence<sup>1</sup>**

by

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## **1. Introduction**

In this article I want to explore the contributions of the burgeoning Nigerian Pentecostal movement to Christian mission, especially in relation to its record of civic engagement in the context of poverty and violence. The article draws upon the findings of a two-year research project which has included interviews with Pentecostal/Charismatic pastors and members, and observation of Pentecostal social initiatives in Lagos and Jos.<sup>2</sup> The term “Pentecostal” is used here to describe individuals who belong to mission-related Pentecostal denominations; those who belong to the older African-initiated churches (AICs); and those who belong to independent Pentecostal churches of more recent origin (neo-Pentecostal). The term “Charismatic” is used to describe Christians in mainline churches who satisfy one of the following criteria: (i) they describe themselves as “Charismatic” or “Pentecostal” Christians; or (ii) they say they speak in tongues. The term “civic engagement” refers to “people’s connections with the life of their community”<sup>3</sup> and involves activities designed to address issues of public concern, whether through social service provision or political action.<sup>4</sup>

Some scholars have accused Pentecostals of having a spirituality that withdraws from public life and concentrates on evangelism and church growth. In his book *Not by Might Nor by Power: A Pentecostal Theology of Social Concern in Latin America* (1996), Douglas Petersen criticises those Pentecostals who “use their divine empowering and faith building message for self-serving purposes” and “neglect the social responsibilities that should accompany this phenomenon”. He castigates western Pentecostals whose preoccupation with premillennial dispensationalism precludes them from active involvement in programmes of social concern, and who prefer rather to emphasise evangelism and conversion before Christ’s imminent return.<sup>5</sup>

Nigerian Pentecostal pastors are sometimes portrayed as prosperity preachers growing rich at the expense of their impoverished members. However, some pastors and churches, while retaining an emphasis on prosperity, are rebranding themselves as social and political campaigners contributing to the betterment of their communities. In a recent book entitled *Global Pentecostalism. The New Face of Christian Social Engagement*, Donald Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori refer to those with this particular orientation as “Progressive Pentecostals” because they no longer regard the world as a place to escape from but instead as a place they want to make better. The authors’ main thesis is that “some of the most innovative social programmes in the world are being initiated by fast-growing Pentecostal churches”.<sup>6</sup>

Nigeria currently has the largest Pentecostal constituency on the African continent, with approximately three-in-ten Nigerians identifying themselves as Pentecostal/Charismatic.<sup>7</sup> Pentecostalism arose early in Nigeria, initially as a renewal movement within the mainline mission churches during the first decades of the twentieth century. This first wave was associated with efforts to break free from Western missionary control and cultural dominance. It produced a proliferation of African-initiated churches (AICs), collectively known as Aladura (“praying”) or “prophet-healing” churches because of their emphasis on prayer, prophecy and healing.<sup>8</sup> From the 1930s, some of these AICs established formal links with Western Pentecostal missions such as the Apostolic Church and the Assemblies of God. The second major wave arose in the aftermath of the Nigerian civil war, initially among students and young people belonging to the mission churches (both mainline and Pentecostal) and the inter-denominational Scripture Union and university campus fellowships. It has generated a multiplicity of indigenous Pentecostal denominations, which together represent the dominant expression of Nigerian Christianity.<sup>9</sup>

The article begins by discussing some general features of global Pentecostal missions. It then introduces some examples of Nigerian Pentecostal civic engagement which are aimed at addressing problems associated with poverty and violence. These include development-oriented projects, rehabilitation programmes, peace initiatives, educational institutions, and political organizations. Finally, I suggest some issues raised by Pentecostal civic engagement in relation to mission in contemporary Nigeria.

## **2. Pentecostal Missions**

According to missiologist Grant McClung, “The very heartbeat of Pentecostal missions is their experience with the power and person of the Holy Spirit”.<sup>10</sup> This has not always been clearly articulated, as Pentecostal missionaries got on with the job in a hurry, believing that the time was short. Reflection about the task was not as important as action in evangelism. Their mission theology was a “theology on the move”,<sup>11</sup> and Pentecostals have only recently begun to formulate a distinctive Pentecostal missiology.

The remarkable growth of Pentecostalism, especially in the global South, has captured the attention of the academic community, including scholars from the different fields of theology, religious studies, missiology, sociology, anthropology and political science. In the USA, the Society of Pentecostal Studies (SPS), founded in 1970, publishes a journal called *Pneuma* and holds an annual conference attended by scholars from around the world.<sup>12</sup> In Europe, the European Research Network on Global Pentecostalism (GloPent),<sup>13</sup> in which scholars from four European universities (VU Amsterdam, Birmingham, Heidelberg and Uppsala) cooperate in the interdisciplinary study of global Pentecostalism, also publishes a journal called *PentecoStudies* and holds an annual conference. Other journals promoting scholarly research on Pentecostalism include the *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, published in England and edited by Church of God theologians in the USA, the *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, published from the Philippines, and the *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association*. In the Department of Theology and Religion at the

University of Birmingham, United Kingdom, there is a Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, which attracts a growing number of postgraduate students from around the world. The Department of Religious Studies at the University of Jos, in conjunction with several other theological institutions, has recently established the Nigeria Pentecostal and Charismatic Research Centre and soon plans to publish the first volume of the *Journal of Pentecostal Studies*.

The centrality of the Holy Spirit in mission has been a consistent theme in academic studies of Pentecostalism.<sup>14</sup> According to Allan Anderson, the Pentecostal movement from its inception was a missionary movement, made possible by the Holy Spirit's empowerment. Anderson refers to Pentecostal mission as "pneumatocentric", in comparison to the *Missio Dei* of older Catholic and Protestant missions and the "obedience to the Great Commission" of Evangelical Christocentric missions.<sup>15</sup> The main motivating force behind Pentecostal mission is the Spirit poured out at Pentecost.<sup>16</sup> Pentecostals tend to read the New Testament through the lens of Luke-Acts and regard the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 as a normative paradigm for every Christian to preach the gospel. One of the earliest Pentecostal missiologists was Paul Pomerville whose book *The Third Force in Missions* (1985) uses the Lukan account in Acts for a Pentecostal mission theology.<sup>17</sup> According to Pentecostal missiologist John Penney, Luke's primary interest in Acts "is the work of the Holy Spirit in initiating, empowering and directing the church in its eschatological worldwide mission".<sup>18</sup> Thus, Pentecostals tend to model their missionary strategies according to the pattern in Luke-Acts.

Perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of Pentecostal missions is the emphasis on "miracles" or "signs and wonders" (particularly healing) in the name of Jesus Christ to accompany and validate the gospel message.<sup>19</sup> Pentecostals often refer to this as the "full gospel" and see the role of healing as good news for the poor and afflicted. According to Candy Gunther Brown, divine healing practices "are an essential marker of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity as a global phenomenon".<sup>20</sup> For Brown, the emphasis on divine healing is the single most important factor behind the growth of the movement worldwide.<sup>21</sup> McClung regards divine healing as an "evangelistic door-opener" for Pentecostals, and "signs and wonders" as the "evangelistic means whereby the message of the kingdom is actualized in person-centred deliverance".<sup>22</sup> Pentecostals also place a strong emphasis on the role of Spirit baptism in mission. This has had a levelling influence on the Pentecostal movement. Every member is encouraged to be a witness based on their experience of Spirit baptism rather than gender, education, training or worldly rank. Anderson refers to this as the "democratization of Christianity" and suggests that the mass involvement of the laity is one reason for the success of the Pentecostal movement.<sup>23</sup>

Unfortunately, the emphasis on mission through evangelism and church growth has sometimes resulted in Pentecostals neglecting the social and political dimensions of mission and failing to address the social ills of society.<sup>24</sup> The Pentecostal theologian Steven Land insists that if we only do evangelism, we "deny the global care and providence of the Spirit" and fail to grasp "the personal, social and cosmic implications of Pentecost".<sup>25</sup> However, as I noted

earlier, there has been a recent shift within some sectors of the Pentecostal movement towards a more proactive engagement with social and political issues. Ogbu Kalu refers to the holistic mission of some African Pentecostal churches, which pays attention to both the spiritual and physical needs of people. He notes Pentecostalism's potential for "empathy and mission to the poor, marginalized and suffering, and that resources for theologizing such an orientation are available within Pentecostal spirituality".<sup>26</sup> In the following section, I will introduce some examples of Pentecostal initiatives in Nigeria which are seeking to address issues associated with the pervasive problems of poverty and violence.

### **3. Pentecostal Mission and Civic Engagement in Nigeria**

#### **3.1 Development-oriented Projects**

Nigeria's post-independence economic context has been characterized by overdependence on oil revenues, unequal distribution of wealth, and scarcity of goods and services for the majority of its citizens due to IMF-imposed structural adjustment and political corruption.<sup>27</sup> Writing in 1998, Julius Ihonvbere and Timothy Shaw described the country's oil-dependent rentier economy as a case of economic growth without development.<sup>28</sup> Despite recent economic reform and government attempts to diversify the economy, most Nigerians remain poor, lacking basic necessities and social services such as health care and adequate educational facilities.<sup>29</sup>

One theme that emerges from Pentecostal narratives is an emphasis on nation-building and development. For example, in an article published in *ThisDay* newspaper, one prominent Pentecostal pastor in Lagos called on Christians to discard their church-building mentality and "get involved in the restorative processes for National Transformation" by assuming positions of responsibility in every sector of society.<sup>30</sup> This focus on national transformation is influenced by the Nigerian Pentecostal pastor Sunday Adelaja in the Ukraine<sup>31</sup> and a version of "kingdom" or dominion theology, called "Seven Mountain" theology, associated with Peter Wagner's New Apostolic Reformation and the Religious Right in the USA.<sup>32</sup> "Kingdom" theology includes both the idea of sovereignty - God's present rule on earth through the church - and the insertion of so-called "kingdom" values, such as integrity, justice, respect for human life, and peaceability, into public space. One Nigerian Pentecostal initiative which has embraced this model is the Institute for National Transformation (INT), started in 2005 by former chemistry professor, Victor Anigbogu. The INT aims to train leaders of integrity for the various culture-molding areas of society, including the media, the entertainment industry, government, education, business, sport, the social services, and the religious sector.<sup>33</sup> Another example is Pastor Sam Adeyemi's Daystar Christian Centre, one of the largest churches in Lagos with approximately 25,000 members. The church runs a Leadership Academy for prospective leaders and hosts an annual leadership conference specifically geared towards raising leaders for national transformation. The 2010 "Excellence in Leadership" conference included sessions led by experts in the different fields of politics, education, social welfare, media, and business, among others.<sup>34</sup>

Several Pentecostal churches have started NGOs aimed at community transformation. These are partly a response to the failure of state interventions. One example is the Changing Your World Foundation, which was established in 2006 by Guiding Light Assembly (GLA), a large congregation located in the affluent Lagos district of Ikoyi. The senior pastor of GLA is Wale Adefarasin, the current General Secretary of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN). The Changing Your World Foundation's Obalende Project is geared toward improving the quality of life of the people in the adjacent district of Obalende, a densely populated area with high rates of poverty, unemployment, poor educational facilities and health services. The church has a multi-strategy approach to alleviating poverty through education, free healthcare, feeding programmes, environmental services, and civic enlightenment. Church members have renovated a large state-run secondary school. They also provide meals each week for 800 children and 70 widows. A team of doctors volunteer their services every two weeks in an existing health centre. The church has also built boreholes in six streets. Volunteers are careful not to create the impression that their services are contingent upon recipients attending church. However, the local government chairman in Obalende requested for someone from the church to preach to them each week. Currently, a sizeable number from the community attend GLA's Sunday services. Finance for the project has largely come from church members. One of the issues raised by this project is whether Pentecostals should build their own social institutions, such as schools and hospitals, or whether they should channel their resources into improving existing state institutions. GLA's pastor supports the latter approach because private schools and hospitals run by churches are often very expensive.<sup>35</sup>

### **3.2 Rehabilitation Programmes for Street Children**

Here I focus on two Pentecostal initiatives working with street children in Lagos: Habitation of Hope, run by the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), the largest Pentecostal denomination in Nigeria; and the Freedom Foundation, a NGO founded by This Present House, a congregation situated in downtown Lagos.

Habitation of Hope was started after a team of women belonging to the RCCG began to evangelize street children at Kuramo Beach. Kuramo Beach is situated on Victoria Island, a business hub of Lagos metropolis. It used to be a tourist attraction, but has now become an abode for child prostitutes, drug addicts and criminal gangs. During the day, boys from Kuramo Beach go out on to the streets of Lagos to hustle and scavenge for food in an attempt to scrape a living, only to return to the beach at night because they cannot afford accommodation. Girls as young as eleven ply their trade as commercial sex-workers under the sway of pimps who profit from their exploitation. In 2004, the RCCG evangelists brought a group of newly-converted boys to the RCCG's annual Holy Ghost Congress. At the end of the week-long event, the boys refused to return to the beach and were temporarily housed in rented accommodation paid for by church. Since then, Habitation of Hope has opened a residential rehabilitation centre. It has also opened several branches of the church, called "street parishes," specifically geared towards catering for the needs of children on the streets.<sup>36</sup>

Freedom Foundation was founded in 1999 as the social arm of This Present House, a large congregation in downtown Lagos. The outreach arm of Freedom Foundation is a church plant from This Present House called God Bless Nigeria Church. Every week a band of volunteers from the church evangelize those living on the streets and invite them to church. Some are then referred to the Freedom Foundation for inclusion in its rehabilitation programmes. Currently, the church owns two residential centres. Genesis House caters for street girls involved in challenging situations such as forced labour, drug addiction, and prostitution. House of Refuge caters for male drug addicts, many of whom are also living on the streets. Over 80% of the members of God Bless Nigeria Church are former area boys and prostitutes.<sup>37</sup>

These initiatives raise a number of issues. Firstly, the focus on rescue, rehabilitation and reconciliation reflects the emphasis on individual and social transformation in Nigerian Pentecostal spirituality. Pentecostal responses to street children are shaped by conceptions of the family. While they acknowledge the importance of extended family structures, they believe that the nuclear family should take precedence. Thus, children who live outside their families, such as street children, are regarded as the deviant “other” in need of rescue, rehabilitation, and if possible restoration to their families of origin. In this regard, conversion is perceived as an essential “ritual of rupture”, enabling street children to make a clean break from their former lifestyles and addictions. Secondly, what sets these Pentecostal initiatives apart from government and other civil society initiatives is their emphasis on spiritual formation, empowerment and equipping for ministry as evangelists to their former companions on the streets. For example, God Bless Nigeria Church has a discipleship programme to socialize and empower new members recently “rescued” from the streets. The programme culminates in a “school of ministry” aimed at turning them into evangelists. Currently, its street ministry comprises mainly former street children who have gone through the discipleship programme. It is felt that their familiarity with street life enables them to reach out more effectively to those still living on the streets than other church members.

### **3.3 Peace Initiatives and Relief Work**

Pentecostal churches and members are also engaged in various peace initiatives in Northern Nigeria, geared towards bringing about reconciliation between Christians and Muslims in the context of religious conflict. Inter-religious tensions in Nigeria have escalated since the economic crisis of the 1980s, the upgrading in 1986 of Nigeria’s status as a full member of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and the increasing involvement of religion in politics. In 1999, the struggle for Islamic domination assumed more drastic dimensions with the introduction of sharia law in some northern states.<sup>38</sup> Thus, the contest between Pentecostal/Charismatics and Islamic revivalism has intensified in recent decades. One aspect of the conflict is the involvement of youths through their respective revivalist organisations, exacerbated by Nigeria’s high unemployment rate. A recent development is the Boko Haram terrorist insurgency, which has heightened tensions and insecurities in the country. My research

focused on the city of Jos, which has become the epicentre of ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria over the past decade.

One Pentecostal pastor at the forefront of attempts at conflict resolution is Revd. Yakubu Pam, Jos district superintendent of the Assemblies of God (AG) and the pastor of a congregation in Kwararafa, a Muslim-majority area close to the Central Mosque. When the Jos crisis kicked off in 2001, Revd. Pam was pastor of a church in Bukuru and was not directly affected by the violence. However, the church building in Kwararafa was destroyed in the riots. Following his transfer to Kwararafa, members of the church began to reach out to the community by providing food and clothing for the poor. Gradually, Pam began to establish relationships with local Muslims and discovered that many of them were opposed to the use of violence. One result has been that his Muslim neighbours have protected the church from being burned down on at least three occasions when youths from outside the area tried to destroy it. On another occasion he was able to dissuade Muslim and Christian gangs from fighting one another. In 2009, Pam founded the Young Ambassadors for Community Peace and Inter-Faith Foundation to engage the youth to be leaders in bringing peace to their grassroots communities. Among those involved in the programme are some of the leading perpetrators of violence in Jos. Because of the relationship he has developed with them, Pam's peace-building initiative has helped to reduce levels of violence in the city.<sup>39</sup>

Another Pentecostal/Charismatic response focuses on providing practical help to Christians affected by the crisis. This approach is usually based on images of Christians as victims of religious persecution. One initiative is the Stefanos Foundation, an NGO founded by Mark Lipdo, a Charismatic member of Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN) in Jos. The Stefanos Foundation aims to serve persecuted Christians and help victims of violence in Nigeria by adopting a multi-strategy approach: relief and reconstruction of buildings, microfinance funding of businesses, rehabilitation and trauma counselling, advocacy, and media awareness.<sup>40</sup> Another initiative is the Nehemiah Project, started by Prophet El-Buba, a prominent Pentecostal minister based in Jos, who is also a close adviser to the Governor of Plateau State, Jonah Jang. El-Buba's strategy for the "transformation" of Plateau State is to hold evangelistic "crusades" geared towards conversion and revival, provide relief for Christian victims of violence, and rebuild Christian communities affected by the violence along the lines of gated communities.<sup>41</sup>

### **3.4 Educational Initiatives**

Education is another manifestation of Nigerian Pentecostal civic engagement. The contemporary context for Christian education in Nigeria is increasing demand for education, dwindling government resources, and a strong moral discourse.<sup>42</sup> Traditionally, Nigerian Pentecostal educational institutions have favoured practical ministerial training over academic preparation. Increasingly, however, they are offering degree programmes and seeking affiliation with government universities. A recent trend is the rise of private Pentecostal universities, founded by educational entrepreneurs with a strong sense of civic responsibility. In Nigeria, the inter-religious dimension is also important as Islamic associations compete with

Christian denominations in the educational sphere, echoing the rivalry between Protestant and Catholic missions during the colonial era. Currently, there are at least six Pentecostal universities. The most successful is Covenant University in Lagos, founded by David Oyedepo, presiding Bishop of Living Faith Church Worldwide (also known as Winners' Chapel). The university currently has about 7,300 students and is regarded as one of the best tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Its social vision is to raise leaders of integrity, who will bring about a gradual change in the institutions they lead and the penetration of Christian values into Nigerian society. When I visited in 2011, I was staying at Lagos State University (LASU) so was able to compare the two institutions. Covenant University's strong Christian ethos and its emphasis on spiritual formation and moral discipline contrasts sharply with LASU's secular status and its record of staff corruption, strikes and student indiscipline. However, Covenant University's high tuition fees compared to government-owned institutions make it difficult for most church members to attend. This has caused resentment among some pastors and members because most of the finances for the university buildings have come from within the church. Also questions have been raised regarding Oyedepo's excessive control over the running of the university, which has caused tensions within the faculty.

### **3.5 Political Engagement**

Historically, Nigerian Pentecostals have adopted a variety of political postures in response to changing contexts, ranging from the apolitical to the more politically engaged. During the 1970s, they were characterized by political acquiescence due to their location on the margins of society, their preoccupation with evangelism, their focus on the personal rather than structural effects of sin, and their radical holiness ethic which generated a perception of politics as a dirty business tainted by its associations with traditional religion and "occult" forces, and linked to corruption and violence.<sup>43</sup> The increasing politicization of Pentecostalism since the 1980s is partly due to the perceived threat of Islamization, the struggle for sustainable democratization, and the failure of state modernization programmes. Currently, Pentecostals employ various means to influence the political sphere. These include conventional methods such as participation in the electoral process alongside more implicit strategies such as prophecy and prayer. Here I mention two initiatives, one at the level of civil society; the other at the level of political society.

In 2009, President Yar'Adua travelled to Saudi Arabia for medical treatment of a serious illness that later claimed his life. His failure to hand over power to the Christian Vice-President Goodluck Jonathan plunged Nigeria into a constitutional crisis that threatened national cohesion. One of the leading voices calling for the transfer of power was Pentecostal pastor Tunde Bakare of the Latter Rain Assembly in Lagos. His Save Nigeria Group (SNG) became the main vehicle for political agitation, organising street protests in Lagos and Abuja which eventually forced the National Assembly to declare Jonathan the acting President. Jonathan later became the substantive President, following the death of Yar'Adua. The scale and nature of the SNG-led protests marked a significant departure for Pentecostals. Since then

the SNG has become one of the leading civil society groups in Nigeria, earning Bakare the popular *Newswatch* magazine's "Man of the Year" award for 2010.<sup>44</sup>

Another development is for Pentecostals to field candidates for political office. One reason for this is discontent over the calibre of existing candidates. One Pentecostal initiative specifically geared towards training leaders for political office is Governance 500, started by Pentecostal businessman Leke Alder and Poju Oyemade, senior pastor of Covenant Christian Centre in Lagos. Governance 500 describes itself on its website as a "training and networking programme for those involved in governance, those who wish to hold political office or participate in the political process in other capacities".<sup>45</sup> Each year it aims to raise 500 people for various levels of governance. Apart from Pentecostal pastors, speakers at its 2010 training programme included two former politicians and a Muslim Presidential aspirant.<sup>46</sup> Several members of Governance 500 went on to contest the 2011 elections, including Kemela Okara, one of the pastors of This Present House, who ran for the governorship of Bayelsa State on the platform of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN).

#### **4. Issues Raised by Nigerian Pentecostal Mission Initiatives**

##### **4.1 Developing Human, Financial and Spiritual Capital**

One of the strengths of the Pentecostal church movement is its internal organization which is designed to mobilize the laity. Miller and Yamamori refer to this as "giving ministry to the people" and suggest that it is a feature of the relatively flat organizational structure characteristic of many successful Pentecostal churches, where the role of the pastor and his or her associates is not to "do the ministry of the church, but to enable others to do this work."<sup>47</sup> Nigerian Pentecostal churches seem to fit this pattern, with their combination of strong leadership at the top and a highly active laity. In some cases, this has enabled them to generate considerable human capital. Many of those engaged in Pentecostal social ministries are lay volunteers rather than pastors or missionaries. As we have seen, some Pentecostal churches are also seeking to generate human capital through leadership training schemes and private universities. This is based on a broader understanding of Christian vocation which includes ministry in the workplace. In this case, Christians are trained to carry Christian values into the different sectors of society such as politics, business, media, education, and so on.

Equally important is financial capital. Some of the larger Pentecostal churches are able to generate considerable financial resources through their mandatory system of tithing and the generosity of their more prosperous members. While prosperity teaching has been rightly criticized for encouraging materialistic lifestyles and diverting attention from the structural causes of poverty,<sup>48</sup> some prosperity churches are channeling their financial resources into social projects in the wider society. Most of the Pentecostal social initiatives I studied are financed internally from within their church or denomination rather than externally through national or international donors. In this sense, they fit the pattern of Henry Venn's self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating indigenous churches. However, some Nigerian Pentecostal NGOs do receive external financial support which has exposed them to criticisms over mixed motives and misuse of funds. This is especially the case in the field of HIV/AIDS,

which has received a significant influx of funds from international donor agencies. In the Nigerian context, where many are struggling with unemployment or low-income jobs, starting a NGO can be an attractive option.

Finally, Pentecostal churches place an emphasis on developing the spiritual capacity of their members so that they are empowered to influence society. While members may not always undergo formal theological training, they are exposed to regular preaching and Bible teaching and encouraged to participate in discipleship programmes. Equally important is their emphasis on religious experience. When Pentecostals speak about reaching out to people “with the love of God” they are referring to a quality with divine origins and with the potential to energize altruistic behaviour towards others. In their study of Pentecostal faith-based social ministry, Margaret Poloma and Ralph Hood refer to this as “godly love” and link it to Spirit baptism and the exercise of spiritual gifts.<sup>49</sup> According to these authors, godly love is the experience of “a loving God through glossolalia and the spiritual gifts that accompany it”, which in turn “empowers compassion and loving behaviour”.<sup>50</sup> Nigerian Pentecostals refer to Spirit baptism as a pivotal event in their Christian experience, enabling them to be more effective in ministry. An important context for encountering the energizing love of God is the experience of individual and collective worship, which Miller and Yamamori regard as the root of Pentecostal social engagement, empowering people to help their neighbours and engage in community-building activities.<sup>51</sup> Nigerian Pentecostals devote considerable time and energy to communal prayer and worship, and their social initiatives are usually preceded by prayer and supported by prayer teams. This is based on the belief that social ills are caused not only by structural failures of government but also by the activities of evil spiritual forces.

#### **4.2. Images and Interventions**

The way we imagine, think and talk about our enemies, about those from other religions, and about those engaged in immoral lifestyles (such as prostitution and crime), will affect the way we respond to them. For example, if we portray area boys in Lagos or youth gangs in Jos simply as criminals or religious fanatics we will treat them accordingly, maintaining our distance and supporting the use of state violence against them. But if we imagine them as victims of adverse circumstance, as fellow human beings with the potential to make a positive contribution to society, we will be more likely to find ways to help and rehabilitate them, to respond to them in love rather than retaliation, and to seek to introduce them to the love of God. If we believe in the transformative power of the gospel, then we will also seek to involve them in the life of the local church.

Pentecostal responses to street children are based on images of street children as victims in need of rescue, rehabilitation, and if possible restoration to their families of origin. This is reflected in the mission statement of Habitation of Hope: “to help street persons make Heaven; to help them become useful to the society; to raise evangelists out of street persons; to settle and reunite them with their family.”<sup>52</sup> In the case of God Bless Nigeria Church, each Sunday, buses go to different areas of Lagos to bring those living on the streets to the church, where they are given free medical check-ups, food and clothing before attending a discipleship

programme and the main worship service. The combination of physical care and spiritual empowerment is intended to restore a measure of human dignity and purpose to their lives.

Pastor Yakubu Pam's ministry of reconciliation in Jos began when he experienced a paradigm shift in his thinking regarding the conflict and his Muslim neighbours. When the Plateau crisis began in 2001, he regarded himself as a Christian radical. He did not believe there could be peace between Christians and Muslims, and advocated retaliation as a legitimate response. However his thinking gradually changed as he developed relationships with Muslim neighbours and leaders from the Muslim community, taking time to listen to their grievances. He also came to understand that retaliation only serves to prolong the cycle of violence and impede development.<sup>53</sup>

#### **4.3 Economic Empowerment and Engagement in Christian Mission**

It is important to provide alternative avenues for those involved in anti-social and criminal behavior, especially the youth, to channel their energies. For example, it is not enough simply to provide street children with food and clothing, to help them to break free from drug addiction and immoral lifestyles. It is also necessary to provide them with the skills and means to make a living through legitimate employment. Pentecostal rehabilitation programmes usually include vocational training and micro-finance schemes to enable participants to gain the skills and the necessary finance to start their own businesses. They also provide scholarships to enable children to attend school. For example, the RCCG's Habitation of Hope has a vocational centre which provides training in farming, shoe-making, block-making, tailoring, and IT/computer skills. It has also a school for those children who wish to attend. Some who have passed through these programmes have gone on to gain employment or to study at university; others have married and have children of their own.

Recipients of social ministry need to be involved in the mission of the church. As already noted, God Bless Nigeria Church's street ministry (Gideon's Army) comprises mainly former street children who have completed the discipleship programme. Similarly, the boys rescued by Habitation of Hope are encouraged to become workers in one of its "street parishes" and to participate in its "Pulpit in the Street" ministry. In Jos, Yakubu Pam seeks to engage Christian and Muslim youth as peace ambassadors in their local communities. Both Christian and Muslim youth, who were formerly enemies, are now involved in organizing peace rallies, football tournaments, and film evenings, which are helping to build sustainable relationships between the two communities.

#### **4.4 Long-term Mission Strategies**

Formerly, Pentecostals in Nigeria were preoccupied with evangelism because they believed in the imminent return of Christ. During the 1970s Pentecostal revival, young men and women became itinerant evangelists rather than settle down to married life and secular employment. However, the contemporary emphasis on leadership training, education and political engagement reflects a growing concern for sustainable development and national transformation. Increasingly, Pentecostal leaders and churches are investing their energies and

money into building a better Nigeria for future generations due to their conviction that the Nigerian church and nation has an important leadership role to play in the twenty-first century. Some Pentecostal leaders regard cultural reformation as one of the keys to national development. In a recent book, entitled *The Nigeria of My Dream*, Pastor Sam Adeyemi of Daystar Christian Centre sets out a blueprint for national transformation. His stated aim is to challenge Nigerians to examine their culture and change the values and beliefs that are impeding their progress and development.<sup>54</sup> The culture of criminality and corruption that permeates every strata of Nigerian society is partly explained by the tendency to focus on the short-term objectives of personal enrichment rather than the long-term objectives of national development.

## 5. Conclusion

The shift to social and political engagement within the Nigerian Pentecostal constituency is a significant development which belies its image as a movement preoccupied with prosperity teaching, evangelism and church growth. Some of the most innovative social programmes in Nigeria are being initiated by Pentecostals in response to human problems associated with poverty and violence. These include development-oriented projects, rehabilitation programmes, peace initiatives, and educational initiatives. The movement's rapid expansion, its emphasis on spiritual and economic empowerment, its culture of generosity, and the upward mobility of some of its members, have generated a potential reservoir of human and financial resources for civic engagement. However, more research is needed to assess the long-term effects of these initiatives. Their efficacy will also depend upon the ability of Pentecostals to address some of the structural problems that have created the conditions that allow poverty, social injustice and violence to remain endemic in Nigerian society. This will require them to be "progressive" in the political sense of the word by seeking to engage with issues of human rights, poverty alleviation, social injustice and reconciliation at the level of governance and public policy. For this to occur, Nigerian Pentecostals will need to find ways of attaining positions of political influence, which will not be easy in a political system dominated by corruption and clientelism.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Michael W. Foley and Dean R. Hoge, *Religion and the New Immigrants. How Faith Communities form our Newest Citizens*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

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- <sup>6</sup> Donald Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism. The New Face of Christian Social Engagement*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 29-30, 6.
- <sup>7</sup> The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *Spirit and Power. A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals*, Pew Research Centre, 2006, p. 86.
- <sup>8</sup> Harold W. Turner, *African Independent Church*, 2 Vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967; J. D. Y. Peel, *Aladura: A Religious Movement among the Yorubas*, London: Oxford University Press, 1968.
- <sup>9</sup> See Matthews A. Ojo, *The End-time Army. Charismatic Movements in Nigeria*, Trenton, NJ.: Africa World Press, 2006; Richard Burgess, *Nigeria's Christian Revolution. The Civil War Revival and its Pentecostal Progeny (1967-2004)*, Carlisle: Regnum/Paternoster, 2008; Ruth Marshall, *Political Spiritualities. The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria*, Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009.
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- <sup>11</sup> McClung, *Azusa Street*, p. 47.
- <sup>12</sup> See <http://www.sps-usa.org/>.
- <sup>13</sup> See <http://www.glopent.net/>.
- <sup>14</sup> Paul Pomerville, *The Third Force in Mission*, Peabody: Hendrickson, 1985; John Michael Penney, *The Missionary Emphasis of Lukan Pneumatology*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997; Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; Allan Anderson, "Towards a Pentecostal Missiology for the Majority World", *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, 8:1, 2005, pp. 29-47; M. A. Dempster, B. D. Klaus, and D. Petersen (eds.), *Called and Empowered: Global Mission in Pentecostal Perspective*, Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991.
- <sup>15</sup> Anderson, "Towards a Pentecostal Missiology", p. 31.
- <sup>16</sup> Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, p. 207.
- <sup>17</sup> Pomerville, *Third Force*.
- <sup>18</sup> Penney, *Missionary Emphasis*, p. 15.
- <sup>19</sup> Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, p. 211.
- <sup>20</sup> Candy Gunther Brown, "Introduction: Pentecostalism and the Globalization of Illness and Healing", in Candy Gunther Brown (ed.), *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 3.
- <sup>21</sup> Brown, "Introduction", p. 14.
- <sup>22</sup> McClung, *Azusa Street*, p. 74.
- <sup>23</sup> Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, p. 217.
- <sup>24</sup> Paul Gifford, *African Christianity. Its Public Role*, London: Hurst & Company, 1998, p. 111.
- <sup>25</sup> Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality. A Passion for the Kingdom*, Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 1, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993, p. 207.
- <sup>26</sup> Ogbu U. Kalu, *African Pentecostalism. An Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 135.
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- <sup>30</sup> Tony Rapu, "Where Will We Be in 15 Years?", *ThisDay*, June 2006.
- <sup>31</sup> Sunday Adelaja, *Church Shift. Revolutionizing Your Faith, Church, and Life for the 21st Century*, Charisma House, 2008.
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<http://www.charismanews.com/opinion/31851-the-new-apostolic-reformation-is-not-a-cult> (accessed 1 January 2013).

<sup>33</sup> Interview, Dr Victor Anigbogu, 25 May 2012; *Institute for National Transformation* brochure.

<sup>34</sup> Interview, Pastor Sam Adeyemi, 7 October 2011.

<sup>35</sup> Interview, Pastor Wale Adefarasin, 22 September 2011.

<sup>36</sup> Interview, Pastor Grace, 3 December 2010.

<sup>37</sup> Interview, Sister Nneke, 19 December 2010.

<sup>38</sup> Rosalind I. J. Hackett, "Managing or Manipulating Religious Conflict in the Nigerian Media", in Jolyon Mitchell and Sophia Marriage (eds.), *Studies in Media, Religion and Culture*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2003, pp. 47-64; Cyril Imo, "Evangelicals, Muslims, and Democracy: With Particular Reference to the Declaration of Sharia in Northern Nigeria", in Terence O. Ranger (ed.), *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Africa*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 37-66.

<sup>39</sup> Interview, Pastor Yakabu Pam, 8 May 2012; Yakuba Pam and Katrina Korb, *Fighting for Peace. Learning from the Peace Heroes Among Us*, Jos: FAB Educational Books, 2011.

<sup>40</sup> Interview, Mark Lipdo, 18 May 2012.

<sup>41</sup> Interview, Prophet Isa El-Buba, 17 May 2012.

<sup>42</sup> Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, p. 129.

<sup>43</sup> Burgess, *Nigeria's Christian Revolution*, pp. 266-67.

<sup>44</sup> Interview, Pastor Tunde Bakare, 2 October 2011.

<sup>45</sup> <http://governance500.com/about/> (accessed 10 April 2012).

<sup>46</sup> Interview, Pastor Poju Oyemade, 26 September 2011.

<sup>47</sup> Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism*, pp. 184-86.

<sup>48</sup> Daniel Jordan Smith, "'The Arrow of God': Pentecostalism, Inequality, and the Supernatural in South-Eastern Nigeria", *Africa*, 71.4, 2001, p. 602; Paul Gifford, "Prosperity: A New and Foreign Element in African Christianity", *Religion*, 20, 1990, pp. 373, 382; Ruth Marshall, "Power in the Name of Jesus: Social Transformation and Pentecostalism in Western Nigeria 'Revisited'", in Terence O. Ranger and Olufemi Vaughan (eds.), *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth-Century Africa*, London: Macmillan, 1993, pp. 229-30.

<sup>49</sup> Margaret M. Poloma and Ralph W. Hood, JR., *Blood and Fire. Godly Love in a Pentecostal Emerging Church*. New York and London: New York University Press, 2008, pp. 2, 65-70.

<sup>50</sup> Poloma and Hood, *Blood and Fire*, pp. 115-16.

<sup>51</sup> Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism*, p. 133.

<sup>52</sup> *Habitation of Hope* magazine, Special Christmas & New Year Edition, 1.2, 2009, p. 6.

<sup>53</sup> Pam and Korb, *Fighting for Peace*.

<sup>54</sup> Sam Adeyemi, *Nigeria of my Dream*, Lagos: Pneuma Publishing, 2010.

<sup>55</sup> Clientelism refers to a relationship of exchange, whereby a patron provides material resources, security and opportunities to a client in exchange for loyal political support. See Goran Hyden, *African Politics in Comparative Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.