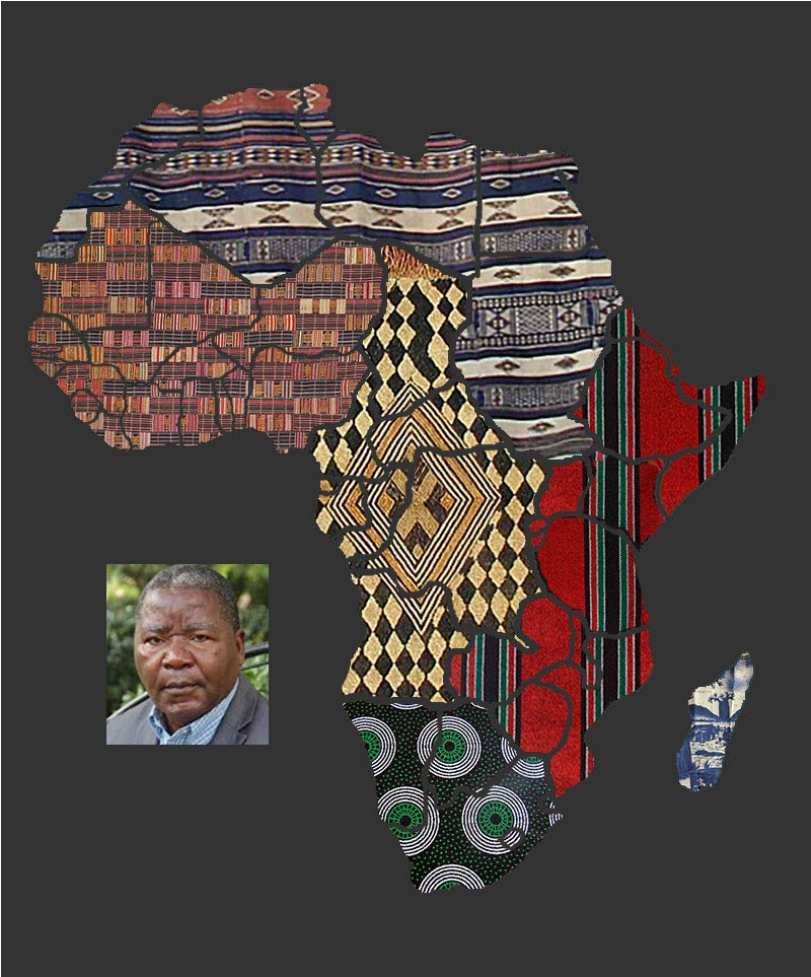


JOURNAL OF  
AFRICAN  
CHRISTIAN  
BIOGRAPHY

Vol. 7, No. 4 (Oct. 2022)

**Focus: Pentecostal Movement:**  
N. Bhengu (South Africa), B. Idahosa  
(Nigeria), E. Mrima (Kenya);  
Laurenti Magesa (Tanzania)



A publication of the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*

# JOURNAL OF AFRICAN CHRISTIAN BIOGRAPHY

**Vol. 7, No. 4 (Oct. 2022)**

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## JOURNAL OF AFRICAN CHRISTIAN BIOGRAPHY

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Cover photo: Laurenti Magesa

The DACB Executive Committee is happy to announce

## The Launch of

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\*The event took place on Sept. 28, 2022 at Oden House (New Haven, CT). The presentations from the launch of the Founding chapter of Friends of DACB can be viewed [here](#) (Nimi Wariboko, EC chair – Introduction to the DACB mission) and [here](#) (Michele Sigg, Director, DACB work snapshot).

# Editorial: Pentecostalism in Africa

By Kyama Mugambi, Contributing Editor<sup>1</sup>

It is four pm on a Saturday. Seven singers, and four instrumentalists crowd a small makeshift stage at the corner of a street next to Kibera informal settlement.<sup>2</sup> They are singing and dancing to Kiswahili gospel songs over a public address system which has seen better days. The distorted sound coming out of the sound system does not deter the musicians or the small crowd that is gathering. Most of those in the audience come from the nearby urban villages. The singers punctuate their songs with the announcement of an upcoming healing and evangelistic outreach led by a preacher. They promise miracles of health and financial provision. The eager crowd sings and dances to the songs which speak of hope in Christ.

After an hour of singing, the leader shifts the mood of the meeting. He introduces a time of prayer that continues for almost another hour as different people take turns leading. When this ends, the preacher takes the podium and says a brief prayer. By this time the crowd has filled the corner. The preacher belts out a sermon about sin and the need for the saving grace of Christ. The sermon is full of personal stories about God's provision, healing, and even deliverance from demonic oppression. The hour long sermon ends with a prayer for the audience to "give their lives to Christ." A dozen respond to the prayer but the preacher is not done yet.

He starts a new prayer session. Now he audaciously declares that God is present to heal all the illnesses and solve the problems of those who are present. Individuals in the crowd from the preacher's church break out into glossolalia. Some pray in English and others in Kiswahili. People with various needs come forward for prayer. Many claim to have received healing. Some even come up to the podium on the stage to declare in Kiswahili how they feel healed. Others tell the story of their healing some time ago. This outreach evangelism meeting is typical of many Pentecostal ministries all over Africa.

In 2020, there were 667 million Christians in Africa—about one half of the continent's population.<sup>3</sup> A third of these are Pentecostal-Charismatics who make up

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Kyama Mugambi is assistant professor of World Christianity at the Yale Divinity School. He researches ecclesial, social, cultural, theological, and epistemological themes within African urban Christianity. He is on the international editorial board of the DACB.

<sup>2</sup> Kibera is a low income residential area which began before Kenya's independence in 1963. This makes it one of the oldest informal settlements where some of the poorest in Nairobi live. It is also one of the most populous areas in Kenya where the urban poor live. The 2009 census put the population at 170,070. Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, *2009 Population and Housing Census* (Government Printer, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Gina A. Zurlo and Todd M. Johnson, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 3rd edition (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 4.

the single largest family of expressions.<sup>4</sup> Pentecostal-charismatic expressions inhabit every Christian tradition. Although Pentecostal-charismatic groups are mostly found among Protestants, they also exist in Catholic and even Orthodox churches. Here the term Pentecostal refers to Christian expressions that emphasize the imminent presence of the Holy Spirit and seek concrete manifestations of His work. Pentecostals remain aware of His role in mediating life and are sensitive to the connection between the seen and unseen. Frequent loud prayers and claims of faith healing accompany this highly oral form of Christianity.

By this definition, Pentecostal forms of worship in Africa predate the occurrences at Azusa Street. Allan Anderson and others make the case for a poly-genesis theory of Pentecostalism and argue that there were pneumatic expressions in multiple locations around the world before 1906.<sup>5</sup> Despite these early expressions and a half a century of Pentecostal studies, the study of the subject in Africa has only recently begun to gain momentum.<sup>6</sup> Pneumatic expressions, either within historic mission denominations or as independent churches, have largely remained on the periphery of mainstream scholarship.

What might explain this fact? To begin with, the leaders of these movements did not conform to the strictures of historic mission Christianity. The fact that these movements were seen to have broken away from the more established denominations earned them a place as protest movements or “independent” churches. This retained the focus of study on historic Christianity’s growth through foreign missionary outreach.

Another issue that discouraged the study of Pentecostal movements was their tendency towards heterodox theology. Pentecostal and charismatic movements did not conform to normative approaches to theology. In addition, their insistence on speaking in tongues, the emphasis on prophecy, and their confidence in faith healing drew sharp criticism from mainstream scholars in the fields of mission, theology, and religious studies.<sup>7</sup>

Thirdly, their oral worship diverged sharply from liturgical services in the long and storied traditions forged in the heart of Europe. Their free form expressions of worship proved difficult to study using the existing frameworks of Christian

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<sup>4</sup> Zurlo and Johnson, 8.

<sup>5</sup> Allan H. Anderson, *Spirit-Filled World: Religious Dis/Continuity in African Pentecostalism* (Switzerland: Springer, 2018).

<sup>6</sup> Anderson, *Spirit-Filled World: Religious Dis/Continuity in African Pentecostalism*; Wariboko, *Nigerian Pentecostalism*; Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*. Anderson; Nimi Wariboko, *Nigerian Pentecostalism* (Rochester, N.Y: University of Rochester Press, 2014); Johnson Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics: Current Developments Within Independent Indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana* (Leiden ; Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> See for example Paul Gifford, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa* (London: C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd, 2015); Charles Ng’ang’a Kamau, “An Examination of Preaching That Relates to Social Issues among Selected Kenya Assemblies of God Churches and Prosperity Preaching in Kenya” (PhD, Tennessee, Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009); Marius Nel, *The Prosperity Gospel in Africa* (S.l.: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2020).



scholarship. They required creative approaches and new methods that the scholarly elite was ill-equipped, reluctant, or sometimes unwilling to adopt.

One other impediment came from within the movements themselves. In their early years, Pentecostal movements tended to be anti-intellectual. In their reaction to the post-Enlightenment rationalism inherent in Euro-American Christian scholarship, they took a skeptical or suspicious stand against intellectual movements. Their response was a “Jesus only” approach. They decried the failure of rationalist Christianity to liberate the individual from sin and to grant access to pneumatic resources necessary for successful Christian living. This theme is common in Newer Pentecostal Charismatic Church (NPCC) sermons.

Despite the minimal or sometimes negative scholarly attention, Pentecostal movements continued to grow. The fastest growing branch of these pneumatic movements in Africa were the NPCCs. They began their meteoric rise to significance in the 1960s. Championed by bold charismatic leaders, these movements continued to increase their membership and plant numerous churches in the 1980s and the 1990s. The entrepreneurial streak of their leaders spurred growth through church plants as well as through schism.

In this issue of the *Journal of African Christian Biography*, we take a close look at this kind of Pentecostalism to better understand the role it plays in Africa. Three short biographies of Pentecostal leaders offer insights into some of the commonalities shared by Pentecostal churches. At the same time, these stories—one each from South, West, and East Africa—demonstrate the wide variety of influences and experiences that make up the complex network of expressions falling under the umbrella of “African Pentecostalism.”

Pentecostal churches are characterized by charismatic leadership. The biographies of three leaders—Nicholas Bhengu, Benson Idahosa, and Evans Mrima—will give a sense of the diversity even within the wider phenomenon of the Newer Pentecostal Charismatic Churches. Nicholas Bhengu (1909-1985) was a South African Pentecostal evangelist responsible for the proliferation of Assemblies of God style churches in South Africa.<sup>8</sup> As he traveled widely in Europe and North America, his eloquence brought African-driven Pentecostal evangelism to the attention of global Pentecostal mission circles. His insistence on locally funded missions spearheaded by Africans challenged the mission status quo of his day. Bhengu did not subscribe to the classical teaching on tongues as initial evidence of baptism in the Spirit.<sup>9</sup>

Benson Idahosa (1938-1998) was a Nigerian whose work had a deep impact on

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<sup>8</sup> Several pieces have been written about Bhengu. In this journal, we present an abridged piece from D. S. B. Lephoko’s excellent work on Bhengu and the Pentecostal work of Assemblies of God in South Africa. The DACB has one biography of Bhengu, reprinted with permission from *Malihambe - Let the Word Spread*, copyright © 1999, by J. A. Millard (Unisa Press, Pretoria, South Africa): <https://dacb.org/stories/southafrica/bhengu-nicholas/>

<sup>9</sup> See Albert Stephen Motshetshane, “Culture and Conflict in Pentecostalism: The Assemblies of God in South Africa, Nicholas Bhengu and the American Missionaries, and the International Assemblies of God (1917-1964).” (PhD Thesis, Durban, University of KwaZulu–Natal, 2016).

West African Pentecostalism.<sup>10</sup> He founded Church of God Mission International, which became a large church. From that base he launched Africa wide missions. His school of mission drew leaders from across the continent and trained them to reach their people with a distinctly Pentecostal message. His church sponsored numerous ministers from many countries who then joined the steadily expanding NPCC movement. His educational work dovetailed well with the Crusade Movement initiated by televangelists and carried forward by Africans.<sup>11</sup>

Evans Mrima (1948-1989) founded Gospel Outreach in 1977.<sup>12</sup> This Kenyan evangelist combined passionate sermons with healing, music, and the use of technology. While the format of his ministry was not very different from that of other NPCCs, what made it unique was its ability to attract and retain a younger congregation than other contemporary churches.

Newer Pentecostal Charismatic churches generally maintain evangelical theological priorities which fit Bebbington's quadrilateral.<sup>13</sup> They believe that the individual needs to be changed by conversion through a personal decision. They have a particular regard for the Bible, often applying its teachings literally. They stress the sacrifice of Christ and point to it as the source of religious power and the door to accessing the Holy Spirit. They are also committed to spreading the gospel (the "good news") through evangelism.<sup>14</sup>

They move beyond the evangelical commitments by adding a pneumatic emphasis. They believe in the real and efficacious presence of the Holy Spirit during their worship gatherings. For them, the speaking of tongues (glossolalia) is evidence of true conversion in Jesus Christ.<sup>15</sup> The churches also seek to experience concrete expressions of God's life giving presence in services that advertise the physical healing of diseases, deliverance from spiritual oppression, and the speaking of prophecy.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> We reproduce here the DACB biography and supplement it with a short piece written by Allan Anderson.

<sup>11</sup> For a fuller treatment of this see Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Kyama M. Mugambi, *A Spirit of Revitalization: Urban Pentecostalism in Kenya* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2020), 89–130.

<sup>12</sup> We present in this journal a new biography which draws from original sources including the subject.

<sup>13</sup> David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*, New Ed edition (London: Routledge, 1989).

<sup>14</sup> Bebbington, 2–3.

<sup>15</sup> Most of these churches take the classical position of this theology, that tongues are the initial evidence of the baptism of the Spirit. This is a further dimension of the conversion experience which occurs simultaneously or after the conversion experience. As we will see, not all Pentecostals hold this position. Nicholas Bhengu, for example, was one of those.

<sup>16</sup> Deliverance of individuals refers to the exorcising of spirits with diabolical intent which torment individuals to varying degrees. The giving of prophecies refers to a leader's foretelling of an individual's future. The nature and extent of these practices vary widely but these features could be largely held to be true to some measure in NPCCs.

African Pentecostal leaders maintain a strong evangelistic impulse. Their commitment to evangelism comes, in part, from an eagerness to draw people away from traditional religion. They argue that traditional religion with its regard for witchcraft and ancestor veneration fails to foster an individual's success in the world today. Pentecostal leaders encourage people to abandon traditional religion because it is unable to combat the diabolical forces mounted against the individual and the community. Pentecostal Christianity also casts itself as the viable alternative to historic mission Christianity that is impotent in addressing the issues facing Africans today.

Evangelistic impulse also prioritizes eschatological concerns because they believe that Jesus is coming back soon. The urgency of the pre-millennial return of Christ remains a motivational factor for leaders. Therefore Pentecostals remain actively involved in bringing everyone within their evangelistic reach into the fold. These communities organize scores of evangelistic meetings such as the one described at the beginning of this article. Whether the crowds are large or small, they continue to host evangelistic meetings often at a serious cost to themselves in terms of money and time.

Their worship gatherings maintain a tension between projecting hope in the face of difficult realities in their lives and at the same time celebrating the joy of being in relationship with their Lord. The working out of this tension occurs in the context of exuberant worship in local languages. The creative use of modern technology and musical metaphors in these services creates a captivating experience that resonates deeply with many attendees.

Passionate and eloquent leaders further intensify the experience of music and worship in Pentecostal churches through the rhetoric of their sermons and prayers. Their demeanor and audacious prayers draw people towards their ministry where they find a sense of belonging within a Pentecostal environment. Mrima's ministry for example drew thousands of teens and young adults who identified with an indigenous outreach movement.

While the movements are averse to intellectualism, the speakers are often intellectuals in their own right. They are able to make strong arguments pleading a case for the faith in the midst of individual struggles. Bhengu's eloquence opened up numerous invitations to speak at conferences abroad.<sup>17</sup> He even received an invitation as a guest lecturer in Birmingham.<sup>18</sup> Many African Pentecostal leaders speak three or more languages fluently. Mrima, for example, spoke his native Chonyi as well as English and Swahili.<sup>19</sup> Pentecostal leaders are thus able to make their case in any of these languages and do so eloquently.

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<sup>17</sup> E. L. O. Kulbeck, "Nicholas Bhengu for World Conference," ed. Donald Gee, *Pentecost*, no. 43 (March 1958): 2.

<sup>18</sup> Lephoko, *Nicholas Bhekinkosi Hepworth Bhengu's Lasting Legacy: World's Best Black Soul Crusader*. Dan SB Lephoko, *Nicholas Bhekinkosi Hepworth Bhengu's Lasting Legacy: World's Best Black Soul Crusader* (South Africa: AOSIS, 2018).

<sup>19</sup> See for example *Africa, Arise and Occupy*, Youtube Video (Nairobi, Kenya, 1989), <https://youtu.be/VpZczku1h8w>.

The charisma of Pentecostal leaders is necessarily entrepreneurial. They initiate large campaigns by amassing financial and human resources. Therefore they are forthright in their vision as they set up structures to serve the mission. Bhengu organized an elaborate mission funding initiative through the women's and men's networks in the churches he helped plant.<sup>20</sup> Idahosa raised substantial financial resources locally for mission training through Church of God Mission International.<sup>21</sup>

However, their entrepreneurial leadership is accompanied by fissile tendencies. Even though the Pentecostal Church has the distinction of being the fastest growing Christian movement, it is also the most fragmented. Charismatic Pentecostal communities are prone to splinter. The disintegration of Mrima's Gospel Outreach less than ten years after his demise is testament to this well known characteristic. Some leaders, like Idahosa, sought to transform schismatic tendencies into more productive outcomes by hosting a steady stream of church planters. Nevertheless, problems of internal conflict always threaten the unity of the new churches planted. Bhengu's struggle to keep the African Pentecostal churches united faced this reality during and after the end of the apartheid era.<sup>22</sup>

Like many African Pentecostals, Bhengu, Idahosa and Mrima maintained links to North American Pentecostals. They were frequently invited to speak in the Global North and, conversely, they often invited their northern counterparts to come and address their own churches. The interactions were not limited to shared pulpits but also included a significant stream of contributions from the Global North.<sup>23</sup> Despite this, the leaders maintained a posture of African self-reliance following the principles of the three-self movement: they envisioned churches which were self-governing, self-propagating, and self-funding.

Despite the active relationships, and financial gifts from North American churches, leading Pentecostal figures hold Africa in high regard. They extol, in their sermons, the role of Africans pursuing their own destiny.<sup>24</sup> The leaders push for evangelistic outreach that is uncoupled from Euro-American missionary initiatives.<sup>25</sup> The leaders model this resolve through their own remarkable efforts in funding extensive local and international evangelistic campaigns.

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<sup>20</sup> Lephoko, *Nicholas Bhekinkosi Hepworth Bhengu's Lasting Legacy: World's Best Black Soul Crusader*.

<sup>21</sup> Allan H. Anderson, "The Newer Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches: The Shape of Future Christianity in Africa?," *Pneuma* 24, no. 2 (2002): 167–84.

<sup>22</sup> See Motshetshane, "Culture and Conflict in Pentecostalism: The Assemblies of God in South Africa, Nicholas Bhengu and the American Missionaries, and the International Assemblies of God (1917-1964)."

<sup>23</sup> Paul Gifford discusses this in great detail in his work. See Gifford, "A View of Ghana's New Christianity" in *Christianity, Politics and Public Life in Kenya* (London: C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd, 2009); Gifford, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa*.

<sup>24</sup> This is true of leaders of different types of Pentecostal Churches today such as David Oyedepo of Winners Chapel Nigeria, Mensah Otobil of International Central Gospel Church Ghana, Oscar Muriu of the Nairobi Chapel. This was also true of the subjects of our study in this journal.

<sup>25</sup> See for example Mrima's *Africa, Arise and Occupy*.

Pentecostal movements in Africa train their own leaders. Many of them establish mentoring relationships with younger leaders. Others like Idahosa's Church of God Mission International develop universities and education institutions primarily to train their own leaders but also as a contribution to society.<sup>26</sup> Their entrepreneurial impulse enables them to grow these education and health institutions which serve the needs of Africans. They are confident of the fact that Africans can and will do what is required of them to meet the needs of the continent.

The many emerging aspects of the phenomenon of Pentecostalism continue to invite new research. In this issue we offer full reviews of several important studies of Pentecostalism in Africa. Zimbabwean researcher Allan Anderson built a large body of work discussing Pentecostalism in Africa. His contributions to the field stand out in their fresh emic analysis of a phenomenon that continues to unfold.<sup>27</sup> Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu developed theological and ecclesial trajectories in the discussion of Pentecostalism in Africa. Drawing heavily from his Ghanaian context, Asamoah-Gyadu helped define some of the contours of the research which will continue to invite engagement in the future.<sup>28</sup> Another seminal work mentioned in the Book Notes was written by Nigerian scholar Ogbu Kalu before his untimely death in 2009. His book built on Hollenweger's work to establish a historical basis for African Pentecostalism as a legitimate genre for study in its own right.<sup>29</sup> Kalu's delineation of the different expressions produced a taxonomy that remains useful today.

My own book, *A Spirit of Revitalization: Urban Pentecostalism in Kenya*, highlights antecedent movements set against their historical, social, economic, and political contexts.<sup>30</sup> I consider how, in their translation of the gospel, innovative leaders synthesized new expressions of faith from elements of their historical and contemporary contexts. I use case studies of various leaders and churches to chart the remarkable journey of innovation, curation, and revision that attends to the process of translation and conversion in Christian history. The following excerpt from the book situates Newer Pentecostal Charismatic churches within their broader urban context and the Kenyan experience.

Taken together, these books on Pentecostalism in Africa have opened the way for other scholars to bring new perspectives to the table.<sup>31</sup> May the collection of articles

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<sup>26</sup> This impulse to sponsor universities is also true of other ministries such as Winners Chapel (Nigeria), Redeemed Christian Church of God (Nigeria), Christ is the Answer Ministries (Kenya)/

<sup>27</sup> Anderson, *Spirit-Filled World: Religious Dis/Continuity in African Pentecostalism*.

<sup>28</sup> J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit: Ghanaian Perspectives on Pentecostalism and Renewal in Africa* (Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock, 2015).

<sup>29</sup> Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*. Hollenweger was the first scholar to engage in serious scholarly work on Pentecostalism on a global scale. His work remains an important reference point for those studying Pentecostalism in the non-western world. See Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*.

<sup>30</sup> Kyama M. Mugambi, *A Spirit of Revitalization: Urban Pentecostalism in Kenya* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2020).

<sup>31</sup> Damaris Seleina Parsitau, "The Civic and Public Roles of Neo-Pentecostal Churches in Kenya (1970- 2010)" (PhD, Nairobi, Kenyatta University, 2014), <http://ir->

in this journal inspire a deeper critical analysis of the phenomenon of Pentecostalism in Africa and yield new research in the future.

To complete this issue, we honor the passing of a great father of African theology, Professor Laurenti Magesa, born in Tanzania, with an obituary by Nigerian Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator, SJ, and a history of his thought by Jean-Luc Enyegue, SJ, from French-speaking Cameroon.

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library.ku.ac.ke/handle/123456789/11920; Wanjiru M. Gitau, *Megachurch Christianity Reconsidered: Millennials and Social Change in African Perspective* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2018); Ebenezer Obadare, *Pentecostal Republic: Religion and the Struggle for State Power in Nigeria* (Zed Books, 2018); Mugambi, *A Spirit of Revitalization*.

## Excerpt from *A Spirit of Revitalization* by Kyama M. Mugambi: “ ‘New Paradigm’ Churches of the 1970s.”<sup>32</sup>

Newer Charismatic Pentecostal Churches validated John Gatutu’s controversial claims.<sup>33</sup> Young Charismatic leaders found the mainline denominations too benign for the fiery brand of Christianity kindled within the Christian Student Unions. In their twenties and thirties, Joe Kayo and Arthur Kitonga, among others, founded new Christian communities of faith. Their churches reflected a new, indigenous approach to Christianity, making more room for the miraculous within a spontaneous and oral liturgy. Workers living in Kenya’s emerging commercial centers became the leaders of these Pentecostal churches.<sup>34</sup> Over the next three decades, these churches became the fastest growing expression of Christianity in Kenya and on the continent.<sup>35</sup> Like the prevailing political mood of the time, the new Charismatic expression exuded a sense of independence and entrepreneurship.

This response to the urge for Christian spiritual self-determination did not come in liturgies, theological treatises, or conference deliberations. Instead, it came as praxis through what Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu calls a “new paradigm” African initiative in Christianity, the NPCCs.<sup>36</sup> NPCCs prided themselves on being independent of foreign missionary control.<sup>37</sup> They were their own missionaries and had a more aggressive evangelistic agenda than historic mission churches of the day. Emerging in the late 1960s, they exemplified Henry Venn’s three “self”-principles: “self-propagating, self-governing and self-supporting.”<sup>38</sup> There was not only an indigenous Christianity, but an intrepid one that spread a sense of promise in its followers.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Mugambi, *A Spirit of Revitalization*, 96–106.

<sup>33</sup> These were so named because of their recent emergence relative to *Spirit-Roho* churches, which could also be said to have been Pentecostal and Charismatic in liturgy and theology.

<sup>34</sup> Philomena Njeri Mwaura and Bernard Gechiko Nyabwari, “African Initiated Churches Originating in Kenya,” *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, accessed November 18, 2016, <https://dacb.org/histories/kenya-aic/>. One exception was the East Africa Pentecostal Church started around 1952 in Mombasa by Walter Olson, a Norwegian evangelist. He was assisted by a Kenyan called Jackson Silawa from Luo Nyanza. In 1960 the church expanded to neighboring Tanzania.

<sup>35</sup> Todd Johnson, “The Global Demographics of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal,” *Symposium: Global Perspectives on Pentecostalism* 46, no. 6 (2009): 479–83, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-009-9255-0>.

<sup>36</sup> J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, “We Are Here to Heal: Revitalisation Movements as Charismatic Communities in Africa,” in *Interpretive Trends in Christian Revitalization for the Early Twenty First Century*, ed. J. Steven O’Malley (Lexington, Ky.: Emeth Press, 2011), 263–74.

<sup>37</sup> J. B. Masinde, interview by Kyama Mugambi, May 3, 2017.

<sup>38</sup> For more on Henry Venn’s framework for missions see for example Wilbert R. Shenk, “Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn: A Special Relationship?” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 5, no. 4 (1981): 168–72.

<sup>39</sup> See this in more detail in Kyama Mugambi, “Audacity, Intentionality and Hope in the Churches of the Global South,” in *Southern Mission Movements: Missional Conversations*, ed. Cathy Ross and

This sense of hope was evident in the demeanor of the leaders and the congregation. With few exceptions, Pentecostal preachers spoke boldly about their audience's future state. Statements like "You shall be the head and not the tail," "You will inherit a double portion," and "You are blessed and highly favored" were common in their sermons and prayers.<sup>40</sup> Whenever the leader made such pronouncements, the congregation members together audibly voiced their affirmation with a "yes," "Amen," or "hmm."<sup>41</sup> It was an audacious Christianity which, in somewhat hyperbolic terms, portrayed God's power to intervene in the individual's troubled life. The preacher's high view of their audience's ability to overcome hardship dignified them in their marginalized state. Kathy Kiuna, an NPCC pastor, stated that in talking to her audience, her goal was to let them know that "God is able to raise you up and cause you to shine even in the midst of people that you do not even know."<sup>42</sup>

The congregations responded to these ennobling statements about them by carrying themselves with a self-esteem robbed from them by their circumstances. Sunday services became places where this group of people rehearsed how to view themselves with honor and self-regard despite the economic difficulties they faced in urban life.<sup>43</sup> Their dress and demeanor were confident and their conversation about their capabilities optimistic. The most common themes of their upbeat indigenous songs were those highlighting God's blessing upon the congregants' circumstances. As we shall see below, the NPCCs' holistic worldview connected the believers' spirituality to their concrete reality. When it comes to size, these communities "of more recent origin" lay on a spectrum.<sup>44</sup> On one end of that spectrum were the "small independent house churches," and on the other end there were "rapidly growing large church organizations."<sup>45</sup> Small independent house churches played an important role in the NPCC movement's growth, particularly in the development and use of spiritual gifts.<sup>46</sup> With urban congregations rapidly growing to several hundred attendees, Joe Kayo and

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Colin Smith (London: SCM, 2018), 147–55.

<sup>40</sup> These statements are typical in most NPCCs and are drawn from passages of scripture. The "You shall be the head and not the tail" comes from Deuteronomy 28:13. "You will inherit a double portion" is from Isaiah 61:7. "You are blessed and highly favored" is from Luke 1:28.

<sup>41</sup> This feature of agreement in prayer is an oral feature common in virtually all Charismatic renewal movements in Kenya, from the *Spirit-Roho* churches to the Pentecostal churches. It is conspicuously absent in the liturgical prayer of the historic mission denominations.

<sup>42</sup> Kathy Kiuna and Allan Kiuna, *Appointment with Destiny: A Moving Testimony of God's Love and Faithfulness* (Nairobi: Jubilee Publishers, 2006), 83.

<sup>43</sup> This is the case in many NPCCs. The idea is captured in the Full Gospel Churches of Kenya Imara Daima motto, which promises that this is the community "where everybody is somebody." A few outlier preachers go against the grain in this regard and have been known to belittle their congregation members. One example in Kenya is "Apostle" James Nganga.

<sup>44</sup> Allan H. Anderson, "Types and Butterflies: African Initiated Churches and European Typologies," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 25, no. 3 (2001): 107.

<sup>45</sup> Anderson, "Types and Butterflies," 107.

<sup>46</sup> Sergio Matviuk, "Pentecostal Leadership Development and Church Growth in Latin America," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 5, no. 1 (January 2002): 155–72.



Arthur Kitonga's churches quickly became larger than historic mission church congregations.

The NPCCs' origin was rooted in the Student Movement. After graduating from tertiary institutions, young Christian student groups reconstituted their meetings in urban centers as gatherings of youth and young professionals.<sup>47</sup> Their earlier experience in the multiethnic, cosmopolitan, Christian environments of the universities provided a natural training ground for urban church leadership. Within these youth groups, leaders rekindled their entrepreneurial leadership skills from their student days and channeled those skills into the formation of new churches. Joe Kayo, J. B. Masinde, and Mark Kariuki were founding members of one such youth group, the Young Ambassadors Christian Fellowship (YACF), in the late 1960s.<sup>48</sup> Building on their experiences within the Student Movements, leaders of the new youth movements were enterprising in their approach to spirituality, starting new churches to counter the perceived nominalism of the mainline denominations.<sup>49</sup>

Joe Kayo, born in Kisii in western Kenya in 1936, was an eloquent preacher.<sup>50</sup> He hailed from a poor background, having lost his mother at an early age. He obtained his early education at the Seventh Day Catholic and Pentecostal schools in the area.<sup>51</sup> His conversion to Christianity came after a serious illness when he lived in Mombasa. He narrates that Revivalists took him from the hospital to a T. L. Osborne evangelistic meeting in Mombasa in 1957.<sup>52</sup> His miraculous healing at the event left a lasting impression on him. In the early 1960s, Elim Pentecostal mission sent a young, enthusiastic Kayo to evangelize in Uganda.<sup>53</sup> There he met and built his friendship with fellow Kenyan Evangelists like Arthur Kitonga, Charles Muiu, and Paul Mutua.<sup>54</sup> Along with several others, Kayo started a YACF for the young people in Uganda when he came out of the Elim initiative. The YACF in Uganda formed a church, which they named the

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<sup>47</sup> Cephas Omenyo reports this same phenomenon in Ghana, West Africa. Here groups such as the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International and the Women's Aglow Fellowship international were founded by Christians as renewal movements in urban centers. Cephas N. Omenyo, "Charismatization of the Mainline Churches in Ghana," in *Charismatic Renewal in Africa: A Challenge for African Christianity*, ed. Mika Vahakangas and Andrew Kyomo (Acton Publishers, 2003), 5–26.

<sup>48</sup> Omenyo, "Charismatization of the Mainline Churches"; Damaris Seleina Parsitau and Philomena Njeri Mwaura, "God in the City: Pentecostalism as an Urban Phenomenon in Kenya," *Studia Historiae Ecclesasticae* 36, no. 2 (2010), <http://uir.unisa.ac.za/handle/10500/4631>.

<sup>49</sup> J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "'Born of Water and Spirit': Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity in Africa," in *African Christianity: An African Story*, ed. Ogbu Kalu (Pretoria: University of Pretoria, 2005), 399.

<sup>50</sup> Francis Manana, "Joseph Kayo, Kenya, Deliverance Church," *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, accessed November 18, 2016, <https://dacb.org/stories/kenya/kayo-joseph/>.

<sup>51</sup> Joe Kayo, "Father's Day Sermon" (sermon, Parklands Baptist Church, Nairobi, June 17, 2018), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Syq93z20ml8>.

<sup>52</sup> Kayo, "Father's Day Sermon."

<sup>53</sup> Manana, "Joseph Kayo, Kenya, Deliverance Church"; Masinde, interview.

<sup>54</sup> Masinde, interview.

Deliverance Church, in 1968. However, a tragic season of political upheaval and military coups in Uganda saw Kayo go back to Kenya that same year. In 1969 he started a YACF ministry in Nairobi. The evangelistic group quickly gained popularity in the multiethnic environments of high schools, colleges, and social halls in the cities.

In 1969 YACF began meeting in Nairobi on Mondays for prayer meetings, on Wednesdays for Bible study, and on Saturdays. They gathered first at Jevanjee Gardens, then at Kariokor Social Hall for what they called Holy Ghost Revival meetings.<sup>55</sup> The young adults engaged in Charismatic prayer, which was prayer “like Pentecostal young men—walking around, kneeling, others lying on the floor.”<sup>56</sup> They were innovative and used the public address technology from the large evangelistic meetings. Until this point microphones and speakers in Christian gatherings were only used for large evangelistic meetings. YACF became one of the first Christian groups to incorporate modern guitars into their worship music.<sup>57</sup> Their modern approach to worship and incorporation of technology attracted dozens of young people living in the Kariokor area east of Nairobi. Technology also made it logistically possible for YACF to convene in larger evangelistic meetings and later to accommodate larger churches.

After many had experienced spiritual high points during the weekday meetings and Saturday gatherings, the Sunday services of mainline churches did not meet the young adults’ needs that came with their newfound fervor. On November 20, 1970, a group of fifty-six young adults met under Joe Kayo’s leadership to start the Deliverance Church.<sup>58</sup> J. B. Masinde, Mark Kariuki, William Tuimising, and Samuel Gakuo were members of this group, each of whom later started new Deliverance Church congregations alongside Joe Kayo.<sup>59</sup> The Deliverance Church employed their musical prowess in the new Deliverance Explosion band attached to the YACF. The band drew big crowds during evangelistic campaigns in schools, colleges, and public parks. They used contemporary African *Benga* and *Pachanga* genres combined with Swahili lyrics for evangelism.<sup>60</sup> Unlike the Revivalists and early Student Movements, NPCCs formed an oral liturgy that jettisoned formal prayers, creeds, hymns, choir music, and liturgies in favor of a simple format extemporaneously delivered.

Typical of NPCCs, services at Deliverance Church began with a pre-service prayer meeting. A few members gathered in the main meeting hall to pray, focusing on

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<sup>55</sup> Samuel Gakuo, interview by Kyama Mugambi, February 19, 2020.

<sup>56</sup> Gakuo, interview.

<sup>57</sup> Gakuo, interview.

<sup>58</sup> Gakuo, interview.

<sup>59</sup> The following were the launch dates for Deliverance Churches in other parts of Kenya: 1982 Riruta, 1983 Nakuru, 1984 Umoja, 1988 Eldoret. Gakuo, interview; Damaris S. Parsitau, “Radical Christianity in Kenya. A Case Study of Deliverance Church in Nakuru District” (master’s thesis, Nairobi: University of Nairobi, 1995).

<sup>60</sup> *Benga* was an East and Central African style of music marked by an active bass, syncopated drums, and both solo and rhythm electric guitar overlays. *Pachanga* was a little slower with lighter percussion, incorporating a more acoustic sound, usually with two-part male vocals. *Pachanga*, *Benga*, and other East African styles popular in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s were similar to and possibly influenced by Caribbean music.

the main church service and invoking God's presence through the Holy Spirit. They also summoned God's power over spiritual enemies lined up against the success of the service. The service properly began with two musical sections. The first part included up to ten repetitive, upbeat Kiswahili songs sung extemporaneously and in rapid succession. This section of what are known as "choruses" (*pambio* in Kiswahili) could last up to half an hour, with vigorous singing and dancing.

The general message of the songs was that God can bless and has power over the individual's circumstances. The second section was markedly slower. Most of these songs were a medley of short Kiswahili ballads of adoration with an odd hymn or two added to the mix. The one-hour session ended with the congregation simultaneously praying loudly for ten minutes in English, Kiswahili, and glossolalia. A pastor came to the microphone and joined in the prayer—in either English or Kiswahili—signaling an end to this second musical section.<sup>61</sup> After ten minutes of various announcements regarding church activities, the offering was taken while the band played a song. The NPCC preacher of the day then came to the podium to deliver a one to two-hour sermon preached largely without notes. The sermon included personal, vividly descriptive stories of salvation and miraculous deliverance. It ended with an evangelistic call for salvation. This prayer also included appeals to the miraculous, where the leaders invoked the power of God to confront evil in the form of illness, financial difficulty, relational problems, and a myriad of other issues. Though the sermons encouraged the listeners to—with God's help—"take charge of their own destiny," the prayers tilted the burden of causality toward the spiritual dimension and away from the physical challenges directly accosting the believer.<sup>62</sup> The ever-popular overnight prayer meeting known as the *kesha* took the same form and was extended and repeated once or twice during the course of the night. These overnight meetings often included more than one sermon.<sup>63</sup>

The NPCC movements preserved the value of orality in their worship through the *ushuhuda*, the giving of testimonies. NPCCs created room in their meetings for believers' conversion narratives or miraculous "deliverance" experiences. Taking their cue from the Christian Unions, their testimonies were shorter than those of the Revivalists. Congregants limited their narratives to their story of conversion, a specific healing, or another miracle. These testimonies described Jesus as the hero who wrought victory in the individual, proving that Christian faith was superior to African Traditional Religion or nominal historic mission Christianity. In this sense it was a more personal, individualistic faith.

One can discern the overriding evangelistic goal of the NPCC congregants' sharing of testimonies. The preachers' *ushuhuda* drew the audience into this vibrant

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<sup>61</sup> Many historic mission churches began including within their formal liturgy a small section of music which carried these features.

<sup>62</sup> This includes such things as illness, death, joblessness, marital strife, and even political unrest. Some themes also find their way into the preaching of historic mission churches.

<sup>63</sup> The Kesha phenomenon is found among Student Movements, NPCCs, and even historic mission churches.

faith. They argued that an imminent, all-powerful God was a better option than the superstition of African Traditional Religion and the lukewarm faith of historic mission churches. The sermons included copious testimonies drawn from the preachers' lives and their congregants' experiences. These personal stories of faith encounters became a popular illustration device among preachers.<sup>64</sup> The sermons also became platforms that manifested the narrative's power. In the sermon the preacher became the object of illustration of the power of faith in Christ. The private nature of salvation went beyond the spiritual and into the practical implications in the believer's life. NPCC sermons often narrated how this power became available simply by believing and calling upon the name of Jesus. They sought to prove that God—through Jesus—was not distant, but rather present. Malevolent spirits, which could interfere with one's wellbeing, were no match for the power of Jesus. The preacher used their own life as an example of Jesus' power. Thus the preacher's narrative testimony became the proof of the efficacy of this faith.

The high value placed on the conversion narrative was a carryover from the Revivalists. This Revivalist influence filtered through to the Student Movement. The informal relationship between the Revivalists and the emerging Pentecostal /Charismatic groups was cordial. The Revivalists acknowledged that this could well have been God's answer to their prayers against nominalism among the youth in historic mission churches.

J. B. Masinde narrated an incident in the early 1970s where, on their way to St. John's church in Pumwani, four Revivalists found the YACF in prayer at the Kariokor Social Hall on a Saturday afternoon. The young leaders invited the older people to "share their testimony." The Revivalists recognized their likely relationship with these young Pentecostals through the common commitment to the *ushuhuda*. Moved by the fervor of the YACF's prayer, the Revivalists at that meeting remarked how "for a long time we've been praying that our young people shall come to know Jesus."<sup>65</sup> The Revivalists worried about the longevity of their own movement and the state of spirituality among urban young adults.<sup>66</sup> Though NPCCs valued the narrative and operated in a multiethnic environment, they differed from Revivalists in their approach to sermons.

Revivalists geared their sermons toward a broader, less literate audience, while the young adults found acceptance within college and university Christian Unions because of the intellectual content of their preaching. NPCC sermons applied logic and reasoning from the young adults' educational experiences. This hybrid sermon style—mixing propositional truth with personal narrative and faith healing—appealed to young adults. The speakers connected their audiences' circumstances with theological concepts drawn from scripture. In a sermon about the ark of the covenant in a 1985 meeting in Zimbabwe, in his Charismatic style, Joe Kayo made the connection between

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<sup>64</sup> See, for example, Kayo, "Father's Day Sermon."

<sup>65</sup> Masinde, interview.

<sup>66</sup> Though the Revivalists understood the need to incorporate the young adults, they did not have adequate strategies to reach them. See chapter 2.

the ark of the covenant and Jesus Christ as Immanuel, God Among Us.<sup>67</sup> He urged his listeners not to “talk about his absence, talk about his presence.” God’s presence through Jesus, he argued, provided comfort even when the price of a kilo of meat rose. The concrete nature of such sermons appealed to those listeners whose worldview envisioned continuity between the physical and metaphysical. This style, especially as it was employed among the NPCC preachers in the earlier churches, remained a key feature of Pentecostal preaching. Eager to experience the skillful synthesis they saw in this type of communication, the Christian Student Union at the University of Nairobi changed their strict rules governing the education level of speakers. This change allowed Joe Kayo and Johanna Muruka, non-graduate leaders of these emerging movements, to preach at the Christian Student Union meetings.<sup>68</sup> Kayo and Muruka’s approach to preaching appealed to a group of people not otherwise associated with Charismatic expression in worship: the college graduates and professionals. The emphasis of NPCCs on Bible studies and evangelical preaching satisfied the desire within young professional groups to deepen their Christian faith in ways that reflected their broader, multiethnic, increasingly literary worldview. Though widely accepted, not all were equally enthusiastic about the Charismatic nature of the NPCCs. Reservations emerged about the movements’ Charismatic expression and Pentecostal theology. David Gitari, for example, the General Secretary of the KSCF in the 1960s, maintained a guarded opinion on the NPCC movement, though he accepted it in principle. Pentecostal / Charismatic preachers appreciated the mutual respect accorded to them in many places, but they attributed the cautious attitude of some to the intellectualism typical of certain mainstream churches.<sup>69</sup>

NPCCs collectively created a wave of Pentecostal / Charismatic expression in secondary schools, tertiary colleges, and major cities of the country, beginning with Nairobi.<sup>70</sup> Though their eschatology was not as well articulated as the Western evangelical and Pentecostal evangelists with whom they interacted, NPCCs handled evangelism with a marked urgency.<sup>71</sup> They called for conversions at every opportunity, whether within the church or in evangelistic meetings. Their Achilles’ heel, however, was their lack of follow-up with new converts. Their response to a rapid influx of “new believers” was to form an entrepreneurial ecclesiology, which revolved around starting more churches. Their discipleship depended primarily on the sermon and to a lesser

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<sup>67</sup> Joe Kayo, “Preparing the Brethren: The Ark of the Covenant” (sermon, Evangelistic Meeting, Harare, Zimbabwe, 1985), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvqgkvAKDxU&t=16s>.

<sup>68</sup> Masinde, interview. Johanna Muruka was a leader at the Trinity Fellowship. This was a student and post-college movement founded in 1963 in Maseno by Cuthbert and Matilda Dawkins. Johana Muruka and Elijah Malenje were involved. Johana Muruka went on to found Happy Home, a children’s orphanage in the Kisumu area.

<sup>69</sup> This, Masinde reckons, would have been the case with Gitari. Masinde, interview.

<sup>70</sup> David Gitari, *Troubled but Not Destroyed: Autobiography of Dr. David M. Gitari* (BookBaby, 2014), 297; Gichinga, interview.

<sup>71</sup> We explore in more detail the import of Christianity on the African view of time in chapter 8. Suffice it to say here that one can expect that this certainty but lack of specificity may in part come from a less defined view of the future in this context.

extent the Bible study. The sermon's main goal was evangelism (see chapter 5). In addition to converted students, people from rural areas poured into Nairobi seeking work, ultimately increasing NPCC numbers. NPCCs continued to uphold the Revivalist and Student Movement tradition of holding Bible studies during the week or on Sundays after church. They used the pulpit to induct Christians into their movement. Preachers who engaged their audience intellectually, using a narrative method in their delivery, quickly rose to prominence. They appreciated African orality, never straying far from storytelling. NPCC preachers wove together Bible passages with personal stories and testimonies.

NPCC theology stressed an immanent pneumatology. In their view, the Holy Spirit empowered the individual to live their Christian life with fervor and urgency. Influenced by classical Pentecostals, NPCCs also taught about baptism by the Holy Spirit. Along with prayer for healing and the miraculous, leaders prayed for people to receive the Holy Spirit and for the subsequent "initial evidence" of this receipt through speaking in tongues. NPCCs exhibited a pneumatology that leaned heavily on the miraculous.<sup>72</sup> Conspicuously absent from their worship liturgy were the creeds that safeguarded orthodoxy within historic mission churches. The omission of this traditional means of buttressing orthodoxy resulted in a wide variety of theological emphases being found in the preaching of different churches. These inconsistencies in theology contributed at least in part to the notion that "the lack of theology was one of the chief problems of African Christianity."<sup>73</sup> Two of the most consistent elements of NPCCs, however, were their Christ-centeredness and their high view of the Holy Spirit. The latter became their most prominent feature.

Initially, another distinct feature of NPCCs was the use of live translation for the sermons. In churches located in urban centers such as Joe Kayo's Deliverance Church or Arthur Kitonga's Redeemed Gospel Church, the preachers spoke in English and used a Kiswahili translator. Translation soon became a training opportunity for younger preachers. Before launching the Umoja branch of Deliverance Church, J. B. Masinde served as the translator for American televangelist Morris Cerullo at the Deliverance Church open-air evangelism meeting at the Railways grounds in Nairobi in 1973.<sup>74</sup> Belief in the democratization of the Holy Spirit's gifts provided a basis for congregations to actively engage in church activities. Hence NPCCs formed a strong volunteer movement. This included participation in church worship through music and ushering. Such active engagement in church activities revealed an interesting paradox. While the churches strongly encouraged participation of the laity in worship and church affairs, opacity and authoritarian practices clouded the witness of their senior leadership. These negative features of NPCC leadership persisted through the years as the churches

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<sup>72</sup> We revisit the role of the supernatural in NPCC Christianity below.

<sup>73</sup> Tite Tiénou recalled Byang Kato's contribution to the discussion at the second General Assembly of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa. Tite Tiénou, "The Theological Task of the Church in Africa," in *Issues in African Christian Theology*, ed. Samuel Ngewa, Mark R. Shaw, and Tite Tiénou (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1998), 3.

<sup>74</sup> Masinde, interview.

continued to grow. The leaders drew both from the Bible and their sociocultural contexts to assert their positions of responsibility over their churches. As the primary vision-bearers for their movements, church leaders claimed to possess the apostolic gift. Such a gift implied the divine call to start and lead churches. If one sensed the calling and possessed the necessary gifts, then they assumed God's mandate to lead their churches. Many leaders rehearsed this concept of entrepreneurial leadership during their involvement in the Student Movements. The primary difference between the leadership in the Student Movements and in the NPCCs was that Student Movement leadership was elective and rotational. NPCC leadership was perpetual, and reference was often made to Romans 11:29 that "God's calling and gifts are irrevocable" to support this position. Thus church leaders anticipated leading their movements for life. This "apostolic" mandate created leadership environments where leaders failed to be accountable for their use of money, time, and other church resources.

The prioritization of an individual's "calling" over accountability produced an organizational opacity that became characteristic of NPCCs. While their sermons and evangelistic events easily found their way into the public domain through the media, their organizational instruments and administrative practices were much less public. Constitutions, memoranda of association, and other documents outlining NPCC organizational structures were not freely available to members or the general public. Similarly, access to financial accounts and strategic planning documents remained in the hands of a few. Critical organizational information from NPCC communities flowed in one direction: from the leader with *upako* ("anointed") to the congregation. African society's high regard for hierarchical authority led to the acceptance of this approach to leadership and even reinforced it. The lack of transparency about internal information contrasted sharply with the very public communication of the NPCC mission agenda.

The growth of NPCCs in the 1980s allowed them to profoundly affect the public through the media.<sup>75</sup> Their approach to evangelism, vibrant worship, and openness to modern communication methods increased their appeal, particularly rapidly urbanizing young people.<sup>76</sup> NPCCs cultivated big vision goals and corralled large resource pools from their members to engage in extensive evangelism and church-planting programs, eventually incorporating reverse missions.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> See Toyin Falola, Nimi Wariboko, and Wilhelmina Kalu, eds., *African Pentecostalism*, vol. 1, *Global Discourses, Migrations, Exchanges and Connections: The Collected Essays of Ogbu Uke Kalu* (Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press, 2010), 179; Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 119; Asamoah-Gyadu, "'Born of Water and Spirit'"; Philomena Njeri Mwaura, "The Role of Charismatic Christianity in Reshaping the Religious Scene in Africa: The Case of Kenya," in *Christianity in Africa and the African Diaspora: The Appropriation of a Scattered Heritage*, ed. Roswith Gerloff, Klaus Hock, and Afe Adogame (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2009), 180–92; Zacharia Wanakacha Samita, "Family and the Church in New Christian Religious Movements," in *Responsible Leadership in Marriage and Family*, ed. Mary Getui (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2005), 109–27.

<sup>76</sup> Allan H. Anderson, *African Reformation: African Initiated Christianity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World, 2001), 182–186.

<sup>77</sup> Falola, Wariboko, and Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 230–40; Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 21;

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Donald E. Miller and Erin O'Connell, "The New Face of Global Christianity: The Emergence of 'Progressive Pentecostalism'," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project* (blog), 2006, <http://www.pewforum.org/2006/04/12/the-new-face-of-global-christianity-the-emergence-of-progressive-pentecostalism/>.



## Featured Biographies

### **Bhengu, Nicholas Benkikosi Hepworth**

**1909-1985**

#### **Assemblies of God**

#### **South Africa**

Nicholas Bhengu burst onto the world scene on September 5, 1909 at the eNtumeni Lutheran Mission Station. The mission is situated some 21 km northwest of Eshowe in KwaZulu-Natal.

The genealogy of Nicholas Bhekinkosi Hepworth Bhengu is, as follows: Nicholas ka Josia Khanda, kaYele, kaMuthi, kaQanda, kaHlangabeza, half-brother to kaNkungu, kaLamula, kaDlabazane kaMepho, kaNceyane, kaNgcolosi, kaMadladla kaBhengu, kaSibalukhulu who left for Swaziland after a royal dispute within the Zulu Kingdom.<sup>78</sup>

He was born into a poor family with strong Christian values. His father Josiah Khanda was an evangelist with the Lutheran Church, while his mother (née Nxele) was a woman of prayer who raised her children in the Christian faith despite their poor background: Jeconiah and Shadrack became ministers in the Lutheran Church, Jotham became a minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Nicholas and one of his two sisters, Bella, ministered alongside her brother as an evangelist in the Back to God Crusade after being trained at the Assemblies of God African Bible Institute in Witbank (now eMalahleni). The eldest of his five brothers, Simpson, was a secretary and interpreter to the Zulu King, King Solomon kaDimizulu, kaMpande, great grandfather to King Zwelithini.

Bhengu came to faith in 1930 as a result of the preaching of two young Americans from the Full Gospel Church. He was drawn to their eloquence and intonation in English, the simplicity of their interpretation of Isaiah 53 and the joy with which they proclaimed the message. He described how after his conversion he found himself incapable of smoking or drinking alcohol.<sup>79</sup>

Driven by poverty, Bhengu started looking for work quite early in life. His first job was with a white man in the area. His employer would often send him to buy meat for his dogs but never gave him any of the meat. Bhengu says he had grown up eating *izinkobe* [samp, maize meal] which he later hated and forbade his children to eat. He also developed an acute aversion for dogs so much so that he did not want to keep dogs. He worked as a health inspector at Makhathini Flats, a malaria-infested area. He later moved to Durban where he was employed as a court interpreter. Bhengu secured the

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<sup>78</sup> Translation – Nicholas son of Josia Khanda, son of Yele, son of Muthi, son of Qanda, son of Hlangabeza, half-brother to son of Nkungu, son of Lamula, son of Dlabazane son of Mepho, son of Nceyane, son of Ngcolosi, son of Madladla son of Bhengu, son of Sibalukhulu who left for Swaziland after a royal dispute within the Zulu Kingdom. The genealogy was submitted in writing to the author by Geoff Bhengu, Bhengu's nephew, son of Jeconiah.

<sup>79</sup> Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, 127.

job although the advert was for a typist. In his search for greener pastures, he migrated to Kimberley in the Northern Cape renowned for its diamonds.<sup>80</sup> No doubt Bhengu had hoped for a better life for himself and perhaps for his poverty-stricken family back at home in Zululand.

After he was converted in Kimberley, Bhengu returned home to eNtumeni and tried to give testimony of salvation to his own people but was rejected by his church. His testimony was not welcomed. The church accused him of teaching heresy because it said it was not possible to get saved on this side of the grave. When he tried to join the Salvation Army, he was refused membership by a white group on racial grounds.<sup>81</sup> At many conferences, Bhengu spoke about his rejection and the fact that even in his old age he was rejected from eNtumeni when he tried to build his retirement home there. On October 26, 1985, the Daily News used the caption “Death of a heretic” when reporting the death of Nicholas Bhengu. It said, “The Rev. Nicholas B. H. Bhengu who was labelled ‘heretic’ by his mission has died in Cape Town at the age of 76.”<sup>82</sup> The report is an indication of how Bhengu felt about his relationship with the Lutheran Church.

The rejection of Bhengu by his church was something that caused him trauma and anguish all his life. This is aptly illustrated in his funeral instructions. With regard to the announcement of his death on air and in the press he ordered it should read as follows:

Nicholas Bheka, son of Josiah Khanda, son of Yele Bhengu. Born on September 5th, 1909 at eNtumeni Mission Station, expelled twice for his faith by mission as a heretic, first as a young man, 21 years old. Came back to settle down in his father’s land, built a home and was forced to leave in 1973 and settled at Mtunzini. Died at so- and-so on so-and at the age of so-and-so. Nothing else should be said, absolutely nothing! No watch night services anywhere and no substitutes.<sup>83</sup>

Even though he experienced bitter rejection by his church, he still valued the influence of the Lutheran Church on his life. In his address on the National Church Thesis at the Assemblies of God Conference, Witbank (now eMalahleni) on Wednesday October 10, 1955, he said:

What we are today is the direct contribution of missionary enterprise and nobody else’s. I am personally indebted to the missionaries who brought about the conversion of my grandmother whose husband, my grandfather, had died. He was a Chief in the Pomery Area and had many wives. My father was brought up by the missionaries and finally became a worker for the Mission and crossed with the Norwegian Lutheran Missionaries to Zululand.

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<sup>80</sup> Dorothy & Constance personal communication, July 2, 2003

<sup>81</sup> Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, 127–28.

<sup>82</sup> “Death of a Heretic,” *Daily News*, October 26, 1985.

<sup>83</sup> Nicholas B. H. Bhengu, “Funeral Instructions” (n.p., January 27, 1984).

We were thus born in the Mission Station and educated and disciplined by the strong hand of the Norwegians as their own children.<sup>84</sup>

From the above, it is clear, therefore, that he received his primary education at the Lutheran Mission Station, although the level he reached at the mission station could not be established with any certainty.

One of the people who opposed Bhengu was Bishop Austrup, a Lutheran pastor on the station. He was opposed to Bhengu visiting houses of congregants, conducting prayers and preaching his new Gospel. Austrup accused Bhengu of bringing *imimoya emibi* [evil spirits] among the people. A case was brought against him at Eshowe Magistrate's Court. The magistrate dismissed the case and said to Bhengu, "Young man, go back to eNtumeni and preach so that people can stop drinking."<sup>85</sup>

## Training

After his conversion in Kimberley, Bhengu returned to Durban. Being assured of his call to ministry, he proceeded to KwaDumisa Bible School (now Union Bible Institute in Pietermaritzburg) where the Rev. Fred Suter served as the principal. According to Bond, Rev. Suter was the man Bhengu "loved better than his own father." Rev. Suter was one of the most outstanding evangelical Bible teachers of his time in South Africa. He was nicknamed "the man who loved the Zulus." He had been fellowshipping with the Full Gospel Church under which the American evangelists had been preaching when he was converted. Bhengu was at KwaDumisa from 1934 to 1936. He subsequently went to Taylor University in the state of Indiana (USA) to pursue a degree in theology which he unfortunately did not complete.

He had to return home when his wife became ill with tuberculosis. She was hospitalised in Port Elizabeth.

The following people were Bhengu's first associates: Job Chiliza (1886-1962) of the African Gospel League, Alfred Gumede (1910-1990), and Gideon Buthelezi (d.1957). They became directly involved in assisting Bhengu in ministry.

## Family

While Bhengu was conducting an evangelistic campaign around Pietermaritzburg, he met Mrs. Ndlela (née Mkhize), a devout woman of prayer. He told her that he wanted to get married and asked if she had a daughter that he could marry. She did have a daughter, Mylet, who had been educated at Inanda Girls Seminary in Durban North where she showed her leadership skills by captaining the school tennis club.<sup>86</sup> Bhengu had not yet met Mylet who, at that time, was training at King Edward VIII Hospital in

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<sup>84</sup> Bhengu, "National Church Thesis," 6.

<sup>85</sup> Ndabezitha personal communication, January 9, 2003.

<sup>86</sup> Dorothy & Constance personal communication, July 2, 2003.

Durban to become a nurse. When he found out about Mylet Ndlela, he asked her mother if he could marry her student nurse daughter.

In 1937, they were married. They had five children: Nomvuselelo Adelaide (first born), Fakazani, Ruth Waxy, Mvusi, and Dawn. After their marriage, Mylet never went back to complete her nursing diploma. Mvusi passed away on April 2, 2014.

According to Rev. Mogapi and Mrs. Ndlovu, Rev. Kenneth Spooner, a black missionary of the Pentecostal Church in the USA and the first missionary in Phokeng, Rustenburg, invited Bhengu and his wife Mylet to come and conduct evangelistic meetings for him in the area. It was during the preaching tour that their first child, Nomvuselelo, became ill and died on the road next to a farm. Bhengu asked the farmer if he could bury their child on the farm. The farmer agreed and was willing to give them some planks for a coffin. Instead Bhengu and his wife emptied their tin trunk and used it to bury their child along the side of the road.<sup>87</sup>

Mylet died on January 26, 1974. Three years after her death, Bhengu married Nokwethemba Mthethwa, a school principal, in Durban. She came from outside the Assemblies of God but was saved in Clermont Township in Durban during one of Bhengu's Back to God Crusades.

Nokwethemba was not well-known within Bhengus' work. She was nonetheless accepted and took over the leadership of the women's ministry. She was mentored by some of the stalwarts in the ministry: Mrs. Doreen Sikiti, Mrs. Hlubi Qina, Mrs. Dina Mofokeng, Mrs. Monica Tembe and others. These women had been trained and nurtured by Bhengu and Mylet over many years. Nokwethemba quickly adjusted although she was not fully accepted by some parts of the movement.

In September 1974, Bhengu and Nokwethemba went to Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham where he was a visiting professor in Mission and Evangelism. According to Nokwethemba, Bhengu attended other professors' classes to broaden his knowledge of religion. This was confirmed by Bhengu himself in a letter to me: "I lecture and do research work extensively. I also attend classes of other professors. It was a bit difficult at first as I lecture to graduates mostly but the Lord is helping me through. I wish you could have had this opportunity, as you are younger. There is nothing much I can do at my age."<sup>88</sup>

It was not easy for Nokwethemba to step into Mylet's shoes. Mylet and her husband had started the Mothers' Ministry. It was therefore not easy to adjust to working with women who had been led by a charismatic and gifted person such as Mylet.

Nokwethemba worked with other women who were already key and capable leaders in the work: Doreen Sikiti, who was secretary during Mylet's time, H. Qina, B. Nodada, Monica Tembe, N. Bafo and D. Mofokeng. Sikiti took over the chairmanship after Mylet's death with Qina becoming secretary. Nokwethemba became chairperson of this work after the death of Sikiti. Sikiti, Nododa, and Bafo have since passed on.

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<sup>87</sup> Mogapi personal communication, February 16, 2009

<sup>88</sup> Bhengu and Lephoko personal communication, November 12, 1974

Nokwethemba also testified to Bhengu's simple lifestyle. He would not spend the church's money on himself. All the money had to go towards mission and evangelism to bring people back to God. He lived in a four-room matchbox house in the township among his people. He warned his ministers not to live beyond their means. Bhengu did not have children with Nokwethemba.

And so it came to pass that the South African world of black theology was blessed with one Nicholas Bhenkinkosi Hepworth Bhengu – a towering religious revolutionary who carved a neat saintly niche for himself within the parameters of human failings.

When the old pied piper of the pulpit was laid to rest at his Pietermaritzburg home a few weeks ago at the ripe old age of 76, it brought to a close the fading reign of an evangelical enigma. Nicholas Bhengu had all the material and psychological rearing that was to catapult him into his role as an international evangelist with some of the stature of a homespun Billy Graham. He learned life lessons as the son of an authoritarian Lutheran pastor whose pronounced limp goaded him to devise unorthodox means of not sparing the rod, a strict Zulu tradition of authority. He was also shaped by something that is never strange to black rural families – poverty.<sup>89</sup>

D. S. B. Lephoko

**Source:**

Abridged from - Lephoko, D.S.B., 2018, "A lasting legacy," in *Nicholas Bhekinkosi Hepworth Bhengu's Lasting Legacy: World's Best Black Soul Crusader* (HTS Religion & Society Series Volume 4), pp. 277–306, AOSIS, Cape Town. Used with permission.  
<https://doi.org/10.4102/aosis.2018.BK86.12>

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<sup>89</sup>Tutu, *Twilight of the Struggle (and Other Articles)*, 112–13.

**Idahosa, Benson Andrew**  
**1938-1998**  
**Church of God Mission**  
**Nigeria**

As a young Christian, I once heard my pastor say during a morning service that Christians could raise the dead in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believed it with all my heart. And flying around on my bicycle in those days, I went through the city of Benin in search of a dead person to raise to life. After about five hours of hard searching I found a compound where a little girl had died a few hours before. The corpse had been cleaned and prepared for burial. I walked boldly up to the father of the dead child. "The God whom I serve can bring your baby back to life," I told him. "Will you permit me to pray for the child and bring her back to life?" The man was startled, but he agreed. With great enthusiasm, I walked into the room and up to the bed. The child was cold and dead. With strong faith in the Lord, I called on the Lord to restore the child back to life. I turned to the corpse and called it by name, "Arise in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." Oh Glory to God! The corpse sneezed, heavily, alas. The child had come back to life! (Benson Idahosa)

**Benson Idahosa's Childhood**

Benson Andrew Idahosa was born in Benin City on September 11, 1938 of poor pagan parents. He was a sickly infant who was always fainting. As a result of his constant illness his father ordered the mother to throw him in the dust bin. When he was eighteen months old he was left on a rubbish heap to die. He was rejected by his father, sent to work on a farm as a servant and was denied education until he was fourteen years old. His education was irregular due to the poor financial status of his parents. He later took correspondence courses from Britain and the United States while working in Bata Shoe Company.

His conversion was dramatic and his calling supernatural. He was converted by Pastor Okpo on a football field one Sunday afternoon while playing soccer with his teammates. Thus, young Benson became the first Bini member of Pastor Okpo's small congregation. As a young convert he became very zealous in winning souls and in conducting outreaches in villages around Benin City.

He was called to the ministry in a night vision from the Lord. "I have called you that you might take the gospel around the world in my name, preach the gospel, and I will confirm my word with signs following," said the voice from heaven. The room was filled with the presence of God as Benson fell to his knees beside the bed: "Lord, wherever you want me to go, I will go." He prayed on through the night, renewing his vows to God and interceding for his people who were yet to hear the message of salvation.

After his call, Benson launched into ministry work preaching in village after village the gospel of Jesus Christ with great power and anointing. More people confessed Christ as their Savior, and more healings occurred as he prayed for the sick.

Benson Idahosa, the archbishop and founder of Church of God Mission International Incorporated with its headquarters in Benin City, Nigeria established over 6,000 churches throughout Nigeria and Ghana before 1971. Many of the ministers he supervised pastored churches of 1,000 to 4,000 people. In addition to filling the position of archbishop of Church of God Mission, he was also president of All Nations for Christ Bible Institute, president of Idahosa World Outreach and president of Faith Medical Centre. He held positions in numerous organizations including the college of bishops of the international communion of Christian churches and the Oral Roberts University in Oklahoma.

Idahosa earned a diploma in divinity from Christ for the Nations Institute in Dallas, Texas, which he attended in 1971, a Doctorate of Divinity in 1981 from the Word of Faith College, New Orleans and a Doctor of Laws degree from Oral Roberts University in March 1984. He also received other degrees from the International University in Brussels, Belgium.

Archbishop Benson Idahosa and his wife Margaret Idahosa were blessed with four children.

Soul winning was Idahosa's primary concern. With a motto "Evangelism our Supreme Task," he worked towards this goal of reaching the unreached in Nigeria, Africa and the rest of the world with the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. As a black African, he found the doors of African countries were wide open and he ministered in over 123 countries all over the world.

Crusades played a major role in his ministry. He was involved in at least one crusade per month. A record crowd of nearly one million people a night attended his Lagos Crusade in April 1985. He established the Redemption Television Ministry with a potential viewing audience of 50 million people.

According to Mrs. Gordon Freda Lindsay, president of Christ for the Nations Inc., Dallas, Texas, U.S.A.:

I know of no young black in all of Africa who is reaching millions as Benson is—in crusades with hundreds of thousands in attendance, in his weekly nationwide telecast, in his Bible School, training eager students from several nations. He also conducts campaigns in Sweden, Singapore, Malaysia, Korea, Australia, and the United States, where he often appeared on national religious telecasts. His burden for souls, his ministry of healing and miracles, even to the raising of several dead, demonstrates he is especially called of the Lord in these end times.

Dr. Ben Akosa remarked:

Benson Idahosa is sought after by everyone in his state, from government officials to beggars. When they posed questions and explained their problems to this man they received instantaneous miracle solutions, just as people did in

Bible days with God's prophets. And the people get miraculous answers from this mighty leader of God's people.

Said Daniel Orris:

Benin City respects and salutes this great man of God, even at death. I have been with him on visits to many officials, to the governor, to the powerful Benin tribal kings. He moved with God and his people know it. His great miracle cathedral (his headquarters) seats over 10,000 (1981). His Bible School attracts upper class people from different African nations. And they also come from Maurice, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Singapore, Philippines, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, the Middle East, Europe and other nations of the world—a truly International Bible Training Centre of dynamic faith. People know that Bishop Idahosa preached what he practiced. Dr. Idahosa's evangelistic ministry has reached nations around the world. He was the first black African evangelist to shake Australia in a massive crusade that got national attention. His seminars have affected Christians and church leaders in many countries. I sincerely salute this man because he practiced among his own people what he preached to the world. Benson Idahosa was a man who believed God's promises and that God's miracle provision applies to Africans as well as to Americans. He believed that Africa has a part in God's work, and Africa will reap God's blessings.

Evangelist T. L. Osborn, from Tulsa, Oklahoma remarked:

Many who follow Idahosa's teaching have been saved from poverty and have learned to plant out of their desperate need and to look to God as their divine source thereby becoming prosperous Christians in their own land. Idahosa rose from the rank of an ordinary man to world leadership as a pastor, builder, counsellor, prophet, teacher, apostle, evangelist,—a man of godly wisdom and of Christ-like compassion, whose ministry has blessed millions the world over. Idahosa was the greatest African ambassador of the apostolic Christian faith to the world.

Idahosa operated in faith and he had a robust faith. He believed and trusted God with a childlike faith. He once said that living a daily life of absolute faith in God is the only secret to great success. He believed God for everything. "All things are possible to him that believes." He spent quality time in prayer and in the study of God's Word. He said that if someone spends time studying the Bible and acting on it, people will come looking for that person for life solutions. Idahosa also spent time studying the works and lives of other successful people both in the gospel ministry and other fields of human endeavors and he applied the principles he learned about these successful people to his life and ministry. He was very energetic and hardworking. One of the ministers who served under him said that he had never seen a person who worked as hard as Benson Idahosa. He was committed and consistent and he had confidence in himself. He was very humble and full of godly wisdom.



Benson Idahosa was said to be the leader of over seven million Jesus people worldwide before he went to be with the Lord in February 1998.

Ben Akosa

**Source:**

Ben Akosa, *God's Generals from Nigeria*, Vol. 1. (Lagos, Nigeria).

"Heroes of the 20th Century Church" in *Triumphant March*, Vol. 1, No. 2.

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## **Benson Idahosa Biographical Extract**

One of the first NPCs, in Africa and probably the most influential, is the Church of God Mission International of Benson Idahosa (1938-98), founded in 1972. Idahosa had some 300,000 members in 1991 and a headquarters in Benin City, where a "Miracle Center" was erected in 1975 seating over 10,000, to which thousands flock every week to receive their own personal miracles. Idahosa, who became one of the best known preachers in Africa, attended the Christ for the Nations Institute in 1971 in Dallas, Texas. His stay there was short-lived, however, and he returned to Nigeria after three months with an increased "burden" for his people. He began the first of many mass evangelistic crusades for which he was so well known. He received considerable financial support from well-known independent Pentecostal preachers in the United States, including his mentor, Gordon Lindsay, healing evangelist T. L. Osborne, and the televangelist Jim Bakker. As part of the Miracle Center, Idahosa's church runs the All Nations for Christ Bible Institute, probably the most popular and influential Bible school in West Africa, from which hundreds of preachers fan out into different parts of the region, often to plant new churches. Idahosa became a bishop in 1981 and later took the title of archbishop. He had formal ties with other NPCs throughout Africa, especially in Ghana, where he held his first crusade in 1978. When Idahosa died suddenly in 1998, his wife, Margaret Idahosa, who had shared ministry and leadership with her husband since the church began, took his place as head of the Church of God Mission.

Allan H. Anderson

**Source:**

Anderson, Allan. "The Newer Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches: The Shape of Future Christianity in Africa?" in *Pneuma*, 2002, Vol.24 (2), 173.

**Evans Mrima**  
**1948-1989**  
**Gospel Outreach**  
**Kenya**

Evans Mrima remains one of the most iconic Pentecostal leaders from the 1980s era of the Newer Pentecostal Charismatic Churches (NPCCs). His charisma, innovation and pragmatic approach to Pentecostal ministry contributed to a new wave of youth focussed Pentecostal ministries.

Mrima was the last child of Nzivo Kosholo and Nimwande Nzivo born in Kilifi county Kenya on September 14, 1948. They belonged to the Chonyi community among the Mijikenda people from the coastal region. Their family home was in Mbuyuni, less than ten kilometres from Ribe where the first Methodist mission to Kenya began.<sup>90</sup> This would explain his initial affiliation with the Methodist church. He eventually left the Methodist Church early after his conversion in 1968.<sup>91</sup>

His formative years spanned the infamous Emergency period of the independence struggle.<sup>92</sup> The coastal region where Mrima grew up did not suffer the brutality of the colonial government in the same way as Central Kenya. Nevertheless, in his early life, Mrima experienced racial prejudice and condescension. He spoke against this later in life.

Mrima's conversion and exodus from the Methodist Church coincided with the rise of the student movement in the country. Students in high schools and colleges formed groups within a multi-ethnic setting. Mrima joined the Christian union at Kenyatta University College during his high school years.<sup>93</sup> It was there he had a quiet conversion experience on his own in his room.<sup>94</sup> His initial socialization into energetic Christian expressions occurred during membership at the Christian Union in Kenyatta University College (KUC). During the 1960s, as Kenya gained independence, student movements like the one at KUC rose to prominence as an important factor in the development of Christianity in the country.<sup>95</sup> Student movements were characterized by vibrant volunteerism and aggressive evangelism among young people—features which became hallmarks of Mrima's Pentecostal ministry.

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<sup>90</sup> Nthamburi, "A History of the Methodist Church in Kenya: 1862-1967," 45–73, 255.

<sup>91</sup> *Bishop Evans Mrima's Teachings: The Mountain of Sacrifice*.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vKVIRzoVEc>

<sup>92</sup> The Emergency period refers generally to the decade before Kenya's independence, 1950 to 1960 when freedom fighters in the Mt Kenya area mounted an armed resistance to the colonial government. The term derives from the state of Emergency declared between 1952 and 1957 when movement was restricted and the colonial government used force to clamp down on African freedom fighters. See Mugambi, *A Spirit of Revitalization*, 45, 57.

<sup>93</sup> Daniel Mutungi, interview.

<sup>94</sup> Mrima, interview.

<sup>95</sup> See Karanu, "Fellowship of Christian Unions: University Based Revitalization in Kenya"; Mugambi, *A Spirit of Revitalization*, 72–87.

After serving in several churches, he eventually settled, if only briefly, in the newly formed Deliverance Church in 1974.<sup>96</sup> Joe Kayo founded Deliverance Church (DC) in Nairobi in 1970 after his abrupt exit from Uganda in the late 1960s.<sup>97</sup> Kayo brought together a community of young people who coalesced around his evangelistic ministry initially under the name Young Ambassadors Christian Fellowship (YACF).<sup>98</sup> The ministry attracted young people in high school college and young adults in Nairobi. A passionate Kenyan Christian young adult like Mrima would have naturally gravitated towards such a ministry.<sup>99</sup> Groups like YACF provided an interface for young people in the cities and continuity with the charismatic experience for those in student movements.

His pastoral ministry began in the Deliverance Church in 1974. During that time the church had already secured a meeting venue in Nairobi and was meeting regularly under Kayo's leadership.<sup>100</sup> The church's vibrant ministry took them to colleges, universities, and high schools around the country.

During his tenure at DC, Mrima married Fanny Mwachola (1953-2021), a young nurse-in-training in 1975.<sup>101</sup> Fanny came from the Taita community in the coastal highlands, south west of Kilifi where Mrima came from. The Mrimas went on to have five children, Joel, Jimmy, Joy, Joses, and Jerry. Fanny focused on raising the children, and later on joined active ministry.

Mrima was asked to leave Deliverance Church in July of 1976.<sup>102</sup> His exit from Deliverance Church left him without a job. Under pressure to provide for his young family he found a job placement as the head of accounts in a department within Bamburi cement factory company. The assignment did not last because, in his words, he could not lead an accounts department if he wasn't good at mathematics.<sup>103</sup> Later in 1977, he left Bamburi to lead his church.

Gospel Outreach, Mrima's new church, received its registration in January 1977.<sup>104</sup> Mrima became the bishop of the church. Through his itinerant evangelistic ministry he gained notoriety as a passionate communicator. During this period he recruited Robert Mdzomba as his assistant. Mdzomba would frequently be seen by his side as his translator. Other young passionate leaders joined the fledgling church. They include the Joshua Mulinge who left the Salvation Army to join this new church.

Mrima cast his ministry as a vibrant, Spirit-filled alternative to historic mission churches. While he did not disparage these denominations, his view was that his Pentecostal Church had more to offer the young people within the city. He argued that

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<sup>96</sup> *The Mountain of Sacrifice*; Mrima, interview.

<sup>97</sup> Kayo, "Fathers Day Sermon"; Manana, "Joseph Kayo, Kenya, Deliverance Church."

<sup>98</sup> See Mugambi, *A Spirit of Revitalization*, 98.

<sup>99</sup> Gichinga, interview.

<sup>100</sup> Masinde, interview; Gichinga, interview.

<sup>101</sup> Married in 1975 Fanny Gibson Koronge Mwachola (1953 – 2021).

<sup>102</sup> *The Mountain of Sacrifice*.

<sup>103</sup> *The Mountain of Sacrifice*.

<sup>104</sup> *The Mountain of Sacrifice*.

Pentecostal approaches to prayer were crucial to winning the cosmic struggle that affected people's lives in the urban context he operated in.

Historic mission church hymns did not, in his view, inspire an engaged faith.<sup>105</sup> Gospel Outreach Centre hosted a vibrant music group known as the Revival Flames Band.<sup>106</sup> Like many Deliverance Church pastors, Mrima was a gifted singer who could play the guitar. His wife Fanny and his young children would also participate in the singing on occasion. His musical gift combined with his eloquence at the pulpit was an attractive combination that drew many young people at the time.

The Gospel Outreach preaching style combined vivid stories from life with propositional lessons drawn from the Bible. Mrima often repeated key words during sermons or prayer to emphasize concepts for his audience. Reminiscent of Joe Kayo's preaching style, Mrima preached from the King James version. He held the classical Pentecostal view that tongues (glossolalia) were the initial evidence of salvation. Like his contemporaries he would model glossolalia from the public during his public prayer.

The church was also known for its healing ministry. Mrima encouraged prayers for healing for those who needed it during the service and at the end of the sermons. This commitment to faith healing became the trademark feature most associated with Mrima's ministry, which distinguished it from other Newer Pentecostal Charismatic churches.

Like other contemporary preachers, Mrima spoke in his native language (Chonyi) and was also fluent in both English and Swahili. Mrima also made use of live translation during his services and evangelistic meetings. Offering his sermons in two languages made them more accessible to those in urban centres who could only speak Kiswahili. Live translation during sermons was a common feature in urban Newer Pentecostal Charismatic Churches. In the late 1990s and early 2000s live translation gave way to the presentation of separate services in English and Kiswahili.

The existing technology of the day featured prominently in Mrima's passionate evangelistic campaigns. His messages were recorded on cassette tapes for distribution among the members and beyond. Mrima also gained access to radio broadcasting regularly on Kenya's only station, the Voice of Kenya (VoK).<sup>107</sup> This broadened his reach to the entire country before the liberalization of the airwaves in 1990.

The sermons featured a concrete approach often associated with NPCCs. He infused his sermons with stories about the challenges of living an urban life. Narratives about struggles within relationships formed the context in which much needed encouragement was drawn from scripture. Conflict among people was cast as part of the cosmic battle which Christians needed to confront. He explained that conflict in his own life and ministry was part of what God wanted him to experience in order to come out victorious.

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<sup>105</sup> Mrima, interview.

<sup>106</sup> As a student of Kayo, Mrima's strategy to integrate a band in evangelism is similar to Deliverance Church's Deliverance Explosion band. See Mugambi, *A Spirit of Revitalization*, 100.

<sup>107</sup> This is known today as Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC).

Gospel Outreach was one of the early pioneers of the idea of adopting places of entertainment for churches. He rented Shan Cinema as the base for his ministry. Shan Cinema was in Ngara, an area zoned in the colonial period for Asians from the Indian subcontinent. The cinema originally served people in the Ngara area. Mrima repurposed the hall for services on Sundays. He held two services on Sunday mornings when the cinema was not in use. Mrima so prioritized evangelism that after the morning services he dispatched the congregation to do outreach. His members would go to hospitals and prisons to preach. In addition to these places, Mrima conducted his prolific outreach meetings in any place where people gathered. These included Eastleigh market, Mathare, Juja Road, Kariobangi, and Kamukunji grounds.

On Sunday afternoons he held gatherings for young people at Shan Cinema. He famously invited a young dancer who had converted to perform a routine while the band played.<sup>108</sup> The mixing of “secular” popular dancing with gospel music was unheard of at the time and this invitation caused a stir among other churches, both historic mission and Pentecostal churches. Mrima’s outreach innovation along with his charismatic preaching bore fruit among the hundreds who attended the services at Shan Cinema.

Mrima was cautious about the intellectualism he saw in the society and the historic mission churches. Together with his peers he valued the personal call to ministry over theological training.<sup>109</sup> His ministry influences came from diverse sources, largely outside academic theological training. These eclectic influences came from Joe Kayo, some televangelists of the day, and assorted works of literature. He brought these together with his sharp intellect, expressive style and pragmatic approach to outreach to create a highly effective ministry.

Although somewhat anti-intellectual, Mrima recognized the value of theological training to enhance outreach effectiveness. He enrolled in Bethel College in California in 1988 to pursue theological training. With characteristic pragmatism, he reasoned that it would help improve his outreach initiatives on the continent. In the short time he was there he challenged Bethel’s training material, suggesting that it was outdated for the needs of his day.

African agency was important to him. He emphasized independence of African churches from Western funding, especially for ministry. He taught that Africa had everything it needed to be self-reliant. Mrima held a high view of the African continent and what Africans could achieve. “Africa is blessed,” he said.<sup>110</sup> He advocated for self-reliance for African economies, and even more so for African Christian evangelistic ministries. In the last conference he addressed, he taught that Africa could sustain itself and run its own Christian missions independent of the Global North.

Mrima died tragically on a road accident on September 5, 1989. Controversy surrounded the grief-stricken members of his church. At the time of his death he was

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<sup>108</sup> Mrima, interview.

<sup>109</sup> Mrima, interview.

<sup>110</sup> *Africa, Arise and Occupy*.

referred to as the bishop of Gospel Outreach. The local news reported that various members of the congregation kept a three-day vigil to pray for his resurrection.

A lack of clarity regarding his succession saw key members of the church establish new communities with loose affiliations to Mrima's church. Stephen Macharia took up leadership of Gospel Outreach. In 1991, Robert Mdzomba founded the Gospel Revival Centre. Joshua Mulinge formed God's House of Miracles International Church. Mrima's son Joel became a pastor at Gospel Outreach World evangelism where Fanny Mrima was a bishop.

Despite the fractious aftermath of his ministry, Mrima left a lasting impression among leaders in Nairobi. These include Kinoga of Bible Way Restoration Ministries, Allan Kiuna of Jubilee Christian Centre, and Teresia Wairimu of Faith Evangelistic Ministries. Mrima's charismatic preaching had few parallels in his day. His use of cassettes and radio to attract young people gave him a wide reach. The peak of his ministry just before his death coincided with a season of televangelist crusades in Kenya.<sup>111</sup> Mrima's outreach focus on young people along with the crusades served as catalysts to evangelism-oriented ministries that eventually morphed into churches in the late 1990s.<sup>112</sup> These churches continued to focus their outreach on young people in the 2010s.

### Kyama Mugambi

This biography, received in 2022, was written by Dr. Kyama Mugambi, assistant professor of World Christianity at the Yale Divinity School. He researches ecclesial, social, cultural, theological, and epistemological themes within African urban Christianity. He is on the International Editorial Board of the DACB.

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<sup>111</sup> The televangelists included Reinhard Bonnke, Benny Hinn, Morris Cerullo, Joyce Meyer, Cecil Stewart, Emmanuel Eni, and Simon Iheanacho. See Mwaura, "The Role of Charismatic Christianity in Reshaping the Religious Scene in Africa: The Case of Kenya."

<sup>112</sup> These include Jesus is Alive Ministries, Maximum Miracle Centre (also known as Kuna Nuru Gizani), Faith Evangelistic Ministries.

# Obituary: Laurenti Magesa

By Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator<sup>113</sup>

*A giant of African theology, he rose from humble origins to become an exemplary teacher, whose insight, originality and analysis redefined the meaning, significance and practice of inculturation.*

Laurenti Magenti, one of Africa's greatest theologians, died on 11 August 2022. To many, Magesa was a father (*Baba*) and grandfather (*Babu*); a friend and a mentor; a brother and a teacher. In some African cultures, towering personalities are likened to a giant tree in the forest. Their demise is aptly expressed with the metaphor of a fallen tree. A Jesuit colleague announced Magesa's death with the words: "Our brother, friend and priest, and giant of Africa has gone to the Lord." Magesa's pilgrimage from humble origins to global renown as one of the giants of African theology tells the story of a faithful pastor, humble scholar, beloved teacher and exemplary Christian.

I first met Magesa in Musoma, Tanzania in 2004, where he was doing pastoral ministry in a rural parish. His book *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in Africa* (Orbis, 2004) was in preparation for publication. He gave me a galley proof to read. The significance of that book was instantaneous and unmistakable: Magesa had written the Magna Carta of African theology of inculturation. The combination of his penetrating insight, engaging originality and evidence-based analysis redefined the meaning, significance and practice of inculturation.

Magesa was born in Musoma, northern Tanzania in 1946. He attended primary school in Musoma and secondary and high school at St Mary's Seminary, Mwanza, Tanzania. He studied theology at Makerere University, Uganda before earning an MA and PhD from Saint Paul University, Ottawa and the University of Ottawa. From 1985 until 2000, he served as a parish priest in Catholic parishes in the diocese of Musoma. Magesa authored, co-authored and co-edited several groundbreaking books, including *What Is Not Sacred? African Spirituality* (Orbis, 2013), in which he brilliantly explored the beauty of the spirituality of African religion and its enduring gift to Christianity as a light, not a shadow, as it had tended to be portrayed by those who were either ignorant or biased against its true nature. Earlier, he had published the first comprehensive account of the moral theology of African religion, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (Orbis, 1997). In his usual style, he developed a compelling narrative of the importance of life as understood in African religion, not

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<sup>113</sup> Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator SJ is president of the Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar.

only as a biological phenomenon, but more importantly as a moral category for making and evaluating public and private ethical choices and conduct.

The final work Magesa published was a contribution to *A Pocket Companion to Synodality: Voices from Africa* (African Synodality Initiative, 2022). In “Journeying Together in Service and Harmony: The African *Jamaa* as a Model for a Synodal Church,” Magesa explored the meaning and practice of synodality from the cultural perspectives of Africa. He pointed out that “what is intended by the synod as a whole is unity in thought, word, and deed of all the faithful who as a body and beyond the purpose of *jamaa* – which is primarily social self-preservation – are on the road toward the objective of their salvation and the redemption of humankind.”

Magesa was a consummate learner and a compassionate teacher.” Starting in the late 1970s and continuing for many years, he taught theology at various institutions, including Kipalapala Major Seminary, Tabora, Tanzania; Tangaza University College and Maryknoll Institute of African Studies – both in Nairobi, Kenya. He was a pioneer lecturer at the then Catholic Higher Institute of Eastern Africa (CHIEA), Nairobi, which later became the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA). From 2009 to 2021, he lived and taught theology at the Jesuit School of Theology, Hekima University College, Nairobi.

His professional career as a theologian also took him to several institutions as a visiting scholar and fellow, notably the Woodstock Theological Center at Georgetown University in the United States; Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham, United Kingdom; Maryknoll School of Theology in New York; the Xavier University at Cincinnati; the Jesuit Institute South Africa; and DePaul University in Chicago. The last of these awarded him an honorary doctorate in 2014.

Magesa practised the art of theologising with grace, candour and integrity. He respected his students and always made a point to remind them that he, too, was a learner. A man of humble demeanour, he was not given to self-aggrandisement. His thinking was always lucid, original and inspiring. He provoked constructive thinking and shunned ideological controversies and intellectual artificiality aimed at damaging the reputation of his trade or the position of those who held a contrary view. Magesa’s scholarship, research, writing and publications gave a distinctively African face to inculturation theologies, liberation theologies and Catholic theological ethics. Strikingly, he put his theological convictions, ideas and principles into action in his everyday living. During his teaching spell at Hekima University College, he created and led inculturated Eucharistic liturgies that drew on the best traditions and values of African cultures and religion in dialogue with the Gospel.

I last met Magesa on his seventy-sixth birthday, the day before his death, in the Aga Khan Hospital in Dar es Salaam. The pancreatic cancer that finally ended his earthly life had taken a devastating toll on his body. Surrounded by his beloved brother and primary caregiver, Professor Evaristi Cornelli Magoti of the University of Dar es Salaam, and his relatives, Magesa remained the humble and amiable Christian that he always was. As we gathered around his bed and expressed our emotions of sadness and grief, he muttered, “Don’t do that ... this [suffering and death] is part of life.” His imminent death did not rob him of his graciousness, warmth and respect for people.



The belief is strong in many parts of Africa that the status of an ancestor is reserved for people who have made a transformative and enduring contribution of service to their community. By his life of service as a pastor, the depth of his scholarship and the example of his life as a Christian, Magesa now qualifies to join the ranks of the ancestors of the Church in Africa and the universal Church.

*Laurenti Magesa, priest, theologian and teacher, born Musoma, Tanzania, 10 August 1946; died Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 11 August 2022.*

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Tribute:  
“To Make the Church in Africa Really African”: A Perspective  
of a Church Historian on the Endless Quest of Laurenti  
Magesa, 1946-2020<sup>114</sup>

By Dr. Jean Luc Enyegue, SJ<sup>115</sup>

Why publish a new book in honor of Laurenti Magesa if one was just written six years ago? In 2014, Acton published a collection of essays in honor of Magesa.<sup>116</sup> A mere six years later, I was asked to collaborate on a similar project. The reason, I initially thought, was Catholics catching up on re-appropriating one of their most prominent African theologians. Yet, as I went through this excellent book, edited by J. N. Kanyua Mugambi and Evaristi Magoti Cornelli, I quickly realized that, with the exception of the first chapter, which is auto-biographical and from which the book's title is borrowed, no contribution effectively and comprehensively situates Magesa and his theological quest in the long history of African Christianity, from his birth in 1946 to 2014 (when the book was published). If Magesa himself coined his theological journey and vocation as the “Endless Quest” of a theologian, the driving question behind this quest was how “to make the church in Africa really African.”<sup>117</sup> And Magesa's most succinct response to that question was fostering “genuine inculturation,” that is, “a pilgrimage of return home, back to familiar waters of God's primordial presence in African culture.”<sup>118</sup>

To articulate my thesis, I will situate Magesa in three historical periods of the theological quest in Africa. First, the period that gave birth to him as a human being. While there is certain agreement among African theologians that the date of birth of African theology is 1956, with the publication of *Les prêtres noirs s'interrogent*,<sup>119</sup> this first part attempts an archeological investigation of pre-historical African theology, from

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<sup>114</sup> Jean Luc Enyegue, “‘To Make the Church in Africa Really African’: A Perspective of a Church Historian on the Endless Quest of Laurenti Magesa, 1946-2020” In *African Theology in the 21st Century*, edited by Elias O. Opongo and Paul Bere, 19–46. Nairobi: Paulines, 2021. ISBN: 9966-60-224-4. Reprinted with permission.

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<sup>116</sup> J. N. Kanyua Mugambi and Evaristi Magoti Cornelli, eds., *Endless Quest. The Vocation of an African Christian Theologian. Essays in Honour of Laurenti Magesa* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2014).

<sup>117</sup> Laurenti Magesa, “Toward a Genuine African Church,” *Platform*, n.d., 281. Located in the archives of the Jesuit Historical Institute in Africa [JHIA], non-classified.

<sup>118</sup> Laurenti Magesa, *What Is Not Sacred? African Spirituality* (New York: Orbis, 2013). re-edited by Acton in 2014 and quoted here, p. 194.

<sup>119</sup> A. Abble, *Des prêtres noirs s'interrogent*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Cerf, 1957). Re-edited by Léonard Santedi, ed., *Des prêtres noirs s'interrogent: Cinquante ans après* (Paris: Karthala, 2006).

1946 to 1956. Is it anything there that might have shaped and influenced Magesa's own theological journey?

Secondly, I will situate Magesa among his contemporaries as a theologian, with his time of training inclusive, from 1956 to the late 1970s, and onward till the end of the twentieth-century. I argue that Magesa's quest for a genuine African church is to be understood in the context of a movement that shaped African Christianity in the 1970s, and through the official church, forced Catholic pioneers into the margins. The movement is known as *moratorium*. Its basic affirmation is rooted in the Three-Self Theory pioneered by Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson, with Presbyterian John Gatu as its African pioneer: for the church in Africa to really be African, moratoriumians believe, it has to be self-governing, self-sustaining, and self-propagating.

Finally, I will analyze the theology of Mature-Magesa beyond the main focus of his intellectual field as a teacher and scholar, which has been Christian Ethics and his interest to human rights in the context of Africa's democratization, to reach what I would call Magesa's theology of history. It is the latter that opens a window into Magesa's understanding of history without which his theological journey would lack direction, and basic historical ground. With his theology of history, one best understands Magesa as a liberation theologian whose ultimate aim is the inculturation of the church in Africa.

### **Magesa and the Pre-Historical Quest of a Church Genuinely African, 1914-1957**

In his above-mentioned auto-biographical essay, Magesa confesses that he had received different theological perspectives from the seven (eight in 2020) different popes under whose guidance he has lived as a priest. In this pre-history of African theology, Pope Pius XII (r. 1939-1958) would be the pontificate to examine, not only to analyze the impact of this pontiff on the determination of the future of an African church genuinely African, but also to evaluate the concretion of his African agenda and African reception of/reaction to it later, in the 1970s, when Magesa was ordained to the priesthood and published his first theological works.

Speaking himself of Pius XII, Magesa focuses on the worst tragedies of the mid-twentieth century: World War II, the persecution of the Jews, the pope's reaction to the horrors of the holocaust, and the international frictions caused by the Cold War. Pius XII's pontificate, therefore, helps explain Magesa's own interest in human rights. He might have been oriented toward the study theology by his bishop, instead of his favorite field of study which was psychology, yet the number of publications related to human rights indicates that Magesa was a son of his time and, as theologian, strove to respond to the fundamental quest of his contemporaries: imagining a world without mass tragedies and with greater appreciation of human dignity and life.

Magesa's appreciation of Pius XII, however, fails to mention this pope's extensive missionary literature. Without those missionary encyclicals, it would be impossible to fully understand the post-Vatican II African church, including the rise of the African clergy and hierarchy, the character of someone like Marcel Lefebvre who

was the most prominent prelate in pre-Vatican II Africa and who played a role in defining the African church during this historical period, as well as the role of women and the laity.

As far as the rise of an African clergy and hierarchy are concerned, all Roman Catholic popes from Benedict XV (r. 1914-1922) on contributed to laying the ground for the emergence of a church in Africa truly African. In *Maximum Illud* (1919), Benedict XV urged missionaries to train an “indigenous” clergy in order to fasten the implantation of the church in their land.<sup>120</sup> Demand was also made that the missionaries have an excellent knowledge of “indigenous” languages which, according to Gambian historian Lamin Sanneh, later helped translate the gospel message,<sup>121</sup> promote and preserve African cultures by reducing some of those into written forms. Those efforts also helped raise an intellectual elite, both male and female, which contributed to the development of African nationalism. The rise of this African nationalism often went together with claims about Négritude and African authenticity, even within Christian churches.

With *Rerum Ecclesiae* (1926), Pope Pius XI (r. 1922-1939) praised the success of *Maximum Illud*. And, to support the ongoing development of “indigenous” churches, Pius XI put in place a financial infrastructure to accompany the work of missions.<sup>122</sup> Further, he made the creation of an “autochthonous” clergy a necessary condition for the true implantation of the church, and urged missionaries to create seminaries to train “indigenous” Christians for the priesthood, “indigenous” catechists, and to help create “indigenous” religious congregations.<sup>123</sup>

By the time Magesa was born, in 1946, and during his youth under the pontificate of Pius XII (r. 1939-1958), there was already an African clergy and a rising African hierarchy in several African countries, including prominent bishops such as Laurean Cardinal Rugambwa (1912-1997) of his own Tanganyika, Joseph-Albert Cardinal Malula (1917-1989) of Congo, and Paul Etoga (1911-1998) of Cameroon. And Magesa was only two years old, in 1948, when Father Louis Durrieu, Superior General of the White Fathers, wrote to his missionaries in French Africa informing them that the Vatican wanted “to assure the foundation of indigenous churches as soon as possible.”<sup>124</sup> He was only five when Pius XII, again, published *Evangelii Praecones* (1951) in which he highlighted the creation of an “indigenous” clergy as the ultimate goal of mission.<sup>125</sup> In the same encyclical, the pope also urged the respect of autochthonous “civilizations,”

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<sup>120</sup> Benedict XV Pope, “Maximum Illud. De Fide Catholica per Orbem Terrarum Propaganda,” *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* [henceforth *AAS*] 11 (November 30, 1919): & 7.

<sup>121</sup> Lamin O. Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1989).

<sup>122</sup> New organizations included l’Union Missionnaire du Clergé, les Oeuvres Pontificales Missionnaires, Propagation de la Foi, Sainte Enfance, and Saint Pierre-Apôtre. Pius XI Pope, “Rerum Ecclesiae,” *AAS* 18 (February 28, 1926): 65–83: & 33.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, && 35-41.

<sup>124</sup> Elizabeth Ann Foster, *African Catholic: Decolonization and the Transformation of the Church* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019), 155.

<sup>125</sup> Pope Pius XII, “Evangelii Praecones,” *AAS* 510 (1951): 497–528, && 57 and 60.

using a word which Western scholars had yet to apply to African cultures. Those civilizations, the pope argued, had their proper values. The church, he urged, should change its approach toward autochthonous people and their culture and encourage the development and use of indigenous religious art.<sup>126</sup>

As historian Elizabeth A. Foster would say, missionary ecclesiastics like Marcel Lefèbvre “had their work cut out for them to fulfill these Vatican aspirations.”<sup>127</sup> Lefèbvre, Apostolic Vicar of Dakar, had been a very close collaborator of Pius XII who made him Papal Legate for all Francophone Africa and Madagascar. Before going to Dakar, he had worked as rector of a major seminary in Gabon where he focused on training African clergy. In 1962, on the eve of the Vatican Council, he was elected Superior General of the Holy Ghost Fathers.<sup>128</sup> It is during the same Council that, increasingly worried about a liberal takeover of the church following World War II,<sup>129</sup> he rejected the major conclusions of the Second Vatican Council and his movement was declared schismatic.<sup>130</sup>

In contrast to the likes of Lefèbvre, Magesa, however, was growing with the spirit of the *Aggiornamento* championed by the council, and supported by the majority of bishops worldwide. Conciliar documents such as *Ad Gentes* (n. 22) and *Gaudium et Spes* (n. 53) had already pushed for the inculturation of the gospel.<sup>131</sup> And he was on the winning side of this brief history. The Vatican’s move to establish local churches enjoyed popular approval; it was global, and all the same with local implications for African churches.

In 1955, amidst persecutions and the rise of Chinese nationalism, Pius XII, who had just appointed Thomas Tien Ken-sin, SVD, as the first Chinese Cardinal, prayed for a future when China would no longer need the help of foreign missionaries to govern its own church. Yet, he also warned, even when the Chinese clergy became self-sufficient to the point that it did not need the aid of foreign missionaries, “the Catholic Church in your nation, *as in all others*, will not be able to be ruled with ‘autonomy of government,’ as they say today.”<sup>132</sup> Instead, it would still be “completely submitted to the Supreme Pontiff, Vicar of Christ on earth, and be strictly united with him in regards to religious faith and morals.”<sup>133</sup> Therefore, they are not Catholic and cannot bear a Catholic name, those who adhere “to the dangerous principles underlying

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, && 69-71.

<sup>127</sup> Foster, *African Catholic and Decolonization*, 156.

<sup>128</sup> Paul Coulon, “Le Courage de l’histoire,” *Histoire et Missions Chrétiennes* 10 (Juin 2009): 4.

<sup>129</sup> Bernard Tissier de Mallerais, *The Biography. Marcel Lefebvre* (Kansas City, MO: Angelus Press, 2002).

<sup>130</sup> Bernard Sesboué and Florian Michel, *De Mgr Lefebvre à Mgr Williamson. Anatomie d’un Schisme* (Paris: Lethielleux/DDB, 2009).

<sup>131</sup> Cf. Austin P. Flannery, ed., *Documents of Vatican II*, 7th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1984).

<sup>132</sup> Pope Pie XII, “Lettre Encyclique *Ad Sinarum Gentem*,” *AAS* 47 (1955): 5–14, && 9-10. “As in all others” is underlined by me.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, & 11.

the movement of the ‘Three Autonomies,’ or to other similar principles.”<sup>134</sup> These people are “anathema” because they want to establish “national” churches and so negate the “universality” and “catholicity” of the church as intended by Christ her founder.<sup>135</sup>

### The Three-Self Theory and the African Moratorium

Maybe African seminaries had not paid close attention to a papal encyclical primarily directed to the Chinese people and clergy. If they had, and had Magesa taken the teachings of his seminary professors to heart, maybe he would have become cardinal himself. The point is, in Magesa’s theology, the Three-Self is a prerequisite for the establishment of a church genuinely African in Africa. Pioneers of this theory were Anglicans Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson, who believed that the ultimate goal of the mission is to establish a church that is self-governing, self-supporting, and self-expanding.<sup>136</sup> And some “euthanasia” of the mission (as by foreign missionaries) was necessary for a self-governing, self-sustaining, and self-propagating church.<sup>137</sup>

In Africa, Henry Venn himself organized the visit of Samuel Crowther to England to meet the Queen and organize the Niger-Expedition of 1854, and apply the Three-Self theory to Yorubaland.<sup>138</sup> And while the mission ended with Crowther being deposed by white missionaries, this early effort gave birth to a movement called Ethiopianism that claimed “Africa for Africans.”<sup>139</sup> Leaders like Crowther and James Johnson became the leaders of national churches, and pioneers of Nigerian nationalism and Pan-Africanism.<sup>140</sup>

By the time Magesa was ordained priest, in 1974, the Three-Self movement had taken hold in both East and Western Africa. For instance, Kenyan Presbyterian John Gatutu called for the moratorium,<sup>141</sup> and Cameroonian Eboussi Boulaga for the “dé-mission.”<sup>142</sup> In Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya, Anglican churches developed an African episcopacy; and Tanzanian Lutheran bishop Stefano Moshi had been a leader of his

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., & 21.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., & 22.

<sup>136</sup> Henry Venn, *To Apply the Gospel: Selections from the Writings of Henry Venn* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1971); Wilbert R. Shenk, “The Missionary and Politics: Henry Venn’s Guidelines,” *Journal of Church and State* 24, no. 3 (1982): 525–34.

<sup>137</sup> J. F. A. Ajayi, “Henry Venn and the Policy of Development,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 1, no. 4 (December 1959): 334.

<sup>138</sup> Andrew F. Walls, “The Legacy of Samuel Ajayi Crowther,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, January 1992, 19.

<sup>139</sup> E. A. Ayendele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914. A Political and Social Analysis* (London: Longman, 1966), 178.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 187-197 and 277.

<sup>141</sup> Robert Reese, “John Gatutu and the Moratorium on Missionaries,” *Missiology: An International Review* 42, no. 3 (2014): 245–56; John G. Gatutu, *Joyfully Christian and Truly African* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2006); John G. Gatutu, *Fan into Flame. Rev. Dr John G. Gatutu, an Autobiography* (Nairobi: Moran Publishers, 2016).

<sup>142</sup> Fabien Eboussi Boulaga, “La Dé-Mission,” *Spiritus* 56 (Mai-Aout 1974): 276–87.

church for more than a decade.<sup>143</sup> As Magesa later confessed, he and his pastor, Tarcissius Sije, facing extreme poverty in rural parishes of Musoma, conversed around “building the local church as self-governing, self-ministering, and self-supporting.”<sup>144</sup> For “as long as the theology, the planning, and the thinking remain foreign, Africa cannot boast of a church genuinely African. It will always appear ‘colonial’ even when ‘ecclesiastical decolonization’ is fully achieved.”<sup>145</sup>

Magesa might have spoken here from the experience of Pius XII’s last missionary encyclical, against which the Catholic moratorium was reacting. According to Foster, *Fidei Donum* [1957], that focused on the continent, acknowledged and celebrated the fact that Africa was on the cusp of self-determination. It “nonetheless called for Europeans to redouble their missionary efforts in Africa by sending any money and clergy they could spare, betraying his fears that the window for ‘civilizing’ was closing.”<sup>146</sup> Foster also discusses the challenges of the African church as she transitioned from mission to local. African bishops like Joseph Faye (1905-1987) of Senegal,<sup>147</sup> or Raymond-Marie Tchidimbo (1920-2011) of Guinea-Conakry had to wrestle with ecclesial neo-colonialism as well as African political leaders willing to rule unchallenged.

Moreover, African clerics were still the minority in their own church. In 1958, a year after the publication of *Fidei Donum*, there were 127 African priests in the whole of West-Africa, and 794 Europeans.<sup>148</sup> The latter often remained deeply loyal to their Western-based and Rome-centered congregations. And yet, for the first time, African-born bishops, though still a minority among the bishops representing their own continent, contributed significantly to the deliberations of the council.<sup>149</sup>

On the other hand, especially in France, African students in the diaspora such as Alioune Diop, were pushing for a Catholic Négritude led by the laity.<sup>150</sup> Diop was the founder of *Présence Africaine* and mentor of the Catholic intellectual elite in Francophone

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<sup>143</sup> Paul V. Kollman and Cynthia Toms Smedley, *Understanding World Christianity. Eastern Africa* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2018), 74–75.

<sup>144</sup> Mugambi and Magoti Cornelli, *Endless Quest. The Vocation of an African Christian Theologian. Essays in Honour of Laurenti Magesa*, 12.

<sup>145</sup> Magesa, “Toward a Genuine African Church,” 282.

<sup>146</sup> Foster, *African Catholic and Decolonization*, 14. Also see: Pope Pius XII, “Fidei Donum. Encyclical on the Present Condition of the Catholic Missions, Especially in Africa,” *AAS* 49 (April 21, 1957): 225–48.

<sup>147</sup> Elizabeth Foster, “A Mission in Transition: Monsignor Joseph Faye and the Decolonization of the Catholic Church in Senegal,” in *In God’s Empire: French Missionaries and the Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 257–77.

<sup>148</sup> Foster, *African Catholic and Decolonization*, 171.

<sup>149</sup> Jean-Paul Messina, “Contribution de l’Eglise d’Afrique Au Concile Vatican II (1959-1965) : Le Cas Du Cameroun” (1993).

<sup>150</sup> Foster, *African Catholic and Decolonization*, 271. Also: Elizabeth Foster, “Entirely Christian and Entirely African: Catholic African Students in France in the Era of Independence,” *The Journal of African History* 56, no. 2 (2015): 239–59.

Africa – Magesa was only one year old when *Présence Africaine* was created in 1947.<sup>151</sup> Rising African scholars such as Engelbert Mveng, Meinrad-Pierre Hebga, Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Théophile Obenga or Alphonse M'Bwaki published with him.<sup>152</sup> Diop is also credited to have pushed for an African Council during the Second Vatican Council, and to shape the writing of *Populorum Progressio*.<sup>153</sup> Mveng, Joseph Cardinal Malula of Kinshasa, and Eboussi Boulaga all continued pushing for an African Council.<sup>154</sup> They all considered the creation of a church genuinely African a right, a matter of African self-determination and dignity.<sup>155</sup>

### **An African Church with Rights, Dignity, and a Church of Women**

Further, the anathema directed by Pius XII toward those who embraced the Three-Self theory is rebuked by Magesa in his discussion of the “rights” in the church. Magesa, who was born two years before the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), grew up in the context of African decolonization, independence, post-independence Africanization, and democratization. In his contribution to *The Church in African Christianity* (1990), he discussed the situation of human rights at two levels as far as the African church is concerned. There is, Magesa then argued, the right of the African church as a local church in her relationship with Rome, and, on the other hand, the rights of individual members within this local church. Speaking of the right of the local church, Magesa acknowledged the afore-discussed progress in the area of leadership Africanization, arguing that “for all practical purposes, the Church in Africa is self-governing.”<sup>156</sup> Yet, he also denounced the “unhealthy relationship between the African

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<sup>151</sup> Alioune Diop, “Niam n’goura Ou Les Raisons d’être de Présence Africaine,” *Présence Africaine* 1 (December 1947): 7–14; Mukala Kadima-Nzugi, “Alioune Diop, Présence Africaine et La Modernité Africaine,” *Présence Africaine* 181/182 (2010): 171–77.

<sup>152</sup> Alioune Diop et al., “Table Ronde Sur l’Enseignement de l’Histoire En Afrique Noire / Round-Table on the Teaching of History in Black Africa,” *Présence Africaine*, no. 81 (1972): 49–132; P. Meinrad Hebga, “Christianisme et Négritude,” in *Des Prêtres Noirs s’interrogent*, Rencontres 47 (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1956), 189–203; E. Mveng and V. Megang, “Rapport Général Colloque Alioune Diop,” *Présence Africaine* 125 (1983): 374–78.

<sup>153</sup> Fabien Kange-Ewane, “Alioune Diop à Travers Son Commentaire de l’encyclique ‘Progressio Populorum’ (Rome 1968): Le Développement Solidaire de l’humanité,” *Présence Africaine* 125 (1983): 310–25.

<sup>154</sup> Engelbert Mveng, “Le Synode Africain, prolégomènes pour un Concile Africain?,” *Concilium* 239 (1992): 149–69; Fabien Eboussi Boulaga, “Pour Une Catholicité Africaine (Étapes et Organisation), Recommendations,” in *Civilisation Noire et Eglise Catholique* (Paris/Dakar: Présence Africaine, 1978), 331–73.

<sup>155</sup> P. Meinrad Hebga, “L’homme vit aussi de fierté: Vers la perte de l’identité africaine?” *Présence Africaine* 99/100 (1976): 19–40.

<sup>156</sup> Laurenti Magesa, “Human Rights in the Church in Africa,” in *The Church in African Christianity. Innovative Essays in Ecclesiology*, ed. Laurenti Magesa and J. N. Kanyua Mugambi (Nairobi: Initiatives, 1990), 97.



Church and Rome”—a diagnosis that was necessary to cure the “disease and its symptoms.”<sup>157</sup>

Magesa singled out “fear” as the main characteristic of this relationship. Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo of Zambia had been ousted unceremoniously, without, in Adrian Hastings’ words, an “impartial investigation,” and with the silent complicity of his Zambian peers frightened by Rome. Prior to that, and following the African Synod of 1974, Joseph Cardinal Malula of Kinshasa presented the “autonomy” of the African church as the best cure to eliminate this fear, arguing that “political colonialism was as much to be abhorred and eliminated as religious colonialism.”<sup>158</sup>

This autonomy meant taking seriously the contribution of Africans themselves in the field of theology and liturgy. The introduction of African songs into the liturgy was discussed in the 1940s,<sup>159</sup> and faced certain opposition from missionary bishops like Lefèbvre. Noting the discrepancy between what the church professed and how it acted, Magesa argued that true unity in diversity and collegiality would emerge only if structures were created that guarantee the rights of local churches and individual members within those. The church needed a certain dose of democracy in the church which would balance the “authoritarian, strictly hierarchical and extremely individualistic model of church government by individual bishops” promoted by some theologians like Joseph Ratzinger.<sup>160</sup> This hierarchical model is medieval, and is not really welcome in today’s democratic world.

Establishing a healthy and just relationship with Rome would also lead to creating a healthy and just relationship among individual members of local churches. According to Magesa, the affirmation of the rights of Catholics in their church finds sound theological ground for the inherent rights received during baptism, and is to be understood in the broader discourse on universal human rights. Unfortunately, Magesa believes, the African contribution to the revised version of the Canon Law which guarantees those rights was negligent, its historical and cultural background “almost entirely non-African.”<sup>161</sup> Reforming the church would therefore imply fuller participation of all the faithful, men and women, and rolling back mechanisms that reinforce undiscerned secrecy.

Among those primarily affected by individual rights within the African church are women. There is historical evidence of the impactful contribution of women in the development of the church, including in Africa. Rodney Stark has shown that Christianity appealed to women because women enjoyed higher status in the church

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 97-98.

<sup>159</sup> Van de Castele, “Musique Indigène, Musique Religieuse,” *Revue du Clergé Africain* 3 (September 1948): 392-96; Pascal Idohou, “Musique Indigène et Musique Sacrée,” *Revue du Clergé Africain* 3 (1948): 209-14; Ignace Faly, “Musique Indigène, Musique Religieuse,” *Revue du Clergé Africain* 4 (January 1949): 34-37.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 104.

than they did in the Greco-Roman world.<sup>162</sup> Likewise, there is ample historical evidence showing the growing influence of women in African Christianity.

In 1872, American and British women missionaries already shared the belief that empowering women was key for the development of Africa: “The longer I remain here,” Mrs. Brushnel, who was a missionary in Fernando Po said, “and the more I know of the people, the more strongly am I convinced that the elevation of society here depends mainly upon the women. If they are educated and truly converted, their influence will be very great.”<sup>163</sup> Some of these African women, like in Congo Brazzaville, had gone to Europe for further studies to return as teachers, nurses, and evangelizers in their own villages.<sup>164</sup> Not surprisingly, the church in Africa, despite its “undemocratic” hierarchical and patriarchal inclinations, became the place for women’s emancipation.<sup>165</sup> For instance, “Although women missionaries educated and trained the Cameroonian woman in reading the Bible, hygiene, and Western standards of child care and homecraft, it might be an overstatement to suggest, as Mrs. Margaret Johnston did in 1920, that the American woman missionary was taking the African woman into a new world of greater ideas and achievement.”<sup>166</sup> The church in Africa is rightly considered, even today, a church of women.<sup>167</sup>

In recent history, Barbara Cooper has shown that after the post-WWII period, women were outnumbering men in the mission field.<sup>168</sup> Quoting mission historian Dana Robert,<sup>169</sup> Cooper talks about some paradoxes faith-based missionaries faced that put in place a women’s movement in the Church: “having rejected the ethic that celebrated ‘woman’s work for woman’ in favor of an emphasis on evangelization, these women found themselves in fact performing exactly those feminized social tasks in a context where they were explicitly devalued.”<sup>170</sup> Moreover, women found in the mission field opportunities for self-actualization that were closing down for them at

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<sup>162</sup> Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997), 95.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. Missionary Newsletter: *Women Working for Women [WWW]*, May 1872, p. 55.

<sup>164</sup> Phyllis Martin, *Catholic Women of Congo-Brazzaville: Mothers and Sisters in Trouble Times* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 145.

<sup>165</sup> Dorothy L. Hodgson, “Engendered Encounters: Men of the Church and the ‘Church of Women’ in Maasailand, Tanzania, 1950-1993,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41 (October 1999): 759.

<sup>166</sup> Charles W. Weber, *International Influences and Baptist Mission in West Cameroon: German-American Missionary Endeavor under International Mandate and British Colonialism* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 3.

<sup>167</sup> Dorothy L. Hodgson, *The Church of Women: Gendered Encounters Between Maasai and Missionaries* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005).

<sup>168</sup> Barbara MacGowan Cooper, *The Anatomy of a Riot: Single Women and Religious Violence in Niger* (Boston, MA: Boston, MA: African Studies Center, Boston University, 2002), 109.

<sup>169</sup> Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social Theory of Their Thought and Practice* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997): 189-254.

<sup>170</sup> Cooper, *The Anatomy of a Riot: Single Women and Religious Violence in Niger*, 109–11.

home.<sup>171</sup>

In Cameroon, the work of historian Jean-Paul Messina on the institution of *Sixta* shows that its goal was to “multiply” Christian families and give them a “solid” foundation. But by the 1960s, the *Sixta* was gradually replaced by household schools, then by girls’ primary and secondary schools. The first woman Congregation in Cameroon, the Filles de Marie, aimed at Africanizing the church by using all African women’s resources available such as piety, love, fidelity, solidarity, and hospitality.<sup>172</sup> The evidence of women’s importance in the Cameroonian Catholic Church is obvious. With 51% of women making up the general population of the country, Messina shows, 75% of Christians were women in 2005.<sup>173</sup>

Studying Congo Brazzaville’s women’s conversion to Roman Catholicism, Phyllis Martin found that “women were drawn to the church by a range of priorities and aspirations, and together as sisters they engaged in a search for not only community but also spiritual communion through devotional meetings, Catholic action groups, and, in the later twentieth century, tightly organized associations.”<sup>174</sup> The fast growth of women in Congolese Christianity are also the result of the increasing feminization of the French church that evangelized Congo, beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Once in Congo, French missionaries replicated the ongoing movement at home, naming churches after women saints, promoting Marian devotions, as well as Congolese women’s vocation to consecrate life. As a result, a century after the arrival of Spiritan missionaries in Congo, “the urban church of the later twentieth-century became mainly a church of women, who actively recruited other women in their neighborhoods.”<sup>175</sup> And Martin continues, describing a reality that is still so common for parish priests across Africa: “It was women who supported the priests, maintained the buildings, did social work, and turned out for parish activities. At a popular level, women were active in furthering the transition from a missionary church to an African church and used their religious affiliation to channel their own search for community and spiritual empowerment.”<sup>176</sup>

Among the Maasai, Dorothy Hodgson shows how women persevered against all kinds of opposition from men, and are now the majority of practicing Catholics. Maasai women, she argues, “took advantage of the opportunity provided by the boma approach to meet missionaries, hear the Christian message, and convert to Catholicism.”<sup>177</sup> Moreover, Maasai women’s unique gender-based spiritual connection to Eng’ai was

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Jean-Paul Messina and Jaap Van Slageren, *Histoire du Christianisme au Cameroun des origines à nos jours* (Paris: Karthala/Clé, 2005), 177.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 354.

<sup>174</sup> Martin, *Catholic Women of Congo-Brazzaville: Mothers and Sisters in Trouble Times*, 6.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Hodgson, “Engendered Encounters: Men of the Church and the ‘Church of Women’ in Maasailand, Tanzania, 1950-1993,” 769.

central to their sense of identity as Maasai, as women, and, eventually, as Catholics.<sup>178</sup> It was also a domain of their lives where they experienced and expressed significant power—the power of procreation, of responsibility for mediating between Eng’ai and humans, and of upholding the moral order.<sup>179</sup>

In Nigeria for example, J. P. Peel has talked about the feminization of the Yoruba church.<sup>180</sup> A more detailed work on Nigerian Pentecostalism by Asonzeh Ukah shows that, although having faced strong resistance from men who believed women should do housework, women still form the majority of the membership of most Pentecostal churches.<sup>181</sup> Between 65 and 70 per cent of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) members are women. John Baur’s *200 Years of Christianity in Africa* has two pages (480-2) with the title, “Women’s decade.” That decade started with the proclamation by the United Nations of Women’s Decade (1975-1985). Its immediate effect consisted of African theologians (Accra 1977) confessing to have neglected women theologians. Their reaction followed the 1974 Synod of bishops.<sup>182</sup>

### African Church and Democratization

The democratization movement in Africa in the 1990s led to renewed discussions about church-state relationships. In the context of the Conférences Nationales Souveraines (CNS) in French-speaking Africa, the “revanche du peuple” (the people’s revenge) was living proof that Africa’s political independence did not end colonialism, neither did it improve the human rights situation of its people. It created instead a new form of “clientélisme” (patronage) and totalitarianism “au nom du peuple”<sup>183</sup> (“for the people”). Africans remained trapped in Bénin or Congo-Brazzaville between a dreamed African-Socialism that claimed authenticity while using the language of “Autre” (“Other”), which Africans rejected in the 1970s with the politics of *Authenticité*.<sup>184</sup> Moreover, during the CNS, Catholic bishops often emerged as transitional heads of states, including Ernest Kombo (1941-2008) in Congo-Brazzaville, Laurent Cardinal Monsengwo Pasinya (b. 1939) in Zaïre, or Philippe Kpodzro (b. 1930) in Togo. Was the leadership of these African bishops itself credible enough to embody this wave of democratic change?

Not so sure! according to Magesa. On the one hand, Magesa seems to have anticipated the paradigm shift toward political theology and democratization when,

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 258.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> J. D. Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington, IN.: Indiana University Press, 2003).

<sup>181</sup> Asonzeh Ukah, *A New Paradigm of Pentecostal Power: A Study of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2008), 163–64.

<sup>182</sup> John Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African Church History* (Nairobi: Paulines, 1998), 480–82.

<sup>183</sup> F. (Fabien) Eboussi Boulaga, *Les Conférences Nationales En Afrique Noire: Une Affaire à Suivre* (Paris: Karthala, 2009), 36.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 19.

already in the late 1970s, he decided to write his dissertation on “*Ujamaa Socialism in Tanzania. A Theological Assessment*.”<sup>185</sup> The work is to be understood in continuity with his theology of liberation.<sup>186</sup> This was also a time when the highest authorities in the church increasingly linked liberation theology to Marxism, and were actively pushing back against Africanization which they considered too particularizing to the detriment of Catholicity.<sup>187</sup>

Magesa was then at the crossroads of different ideologies that ran parallel to the conservative wing of the church which was becoming more assertive following the Second Vatican Council. He was, moreover, in support of a Socialist government, Nyerere’s, which, though Pan-Africanist, also had a strong nationalist flavor reminiscent of the African Authenticity Movement that worried high officials in the Vatican.<sup>188</sup> On the other hand, Magesa seemed to be on a collision course with the concerns of some African historians, Ogbu Kalu being the latest, who decried the risk of “villagization” that came along with the Africanization of the church and politics. By “villagization,” Kalu understood a legitimization of authority from a worldview rooted in primal religions and symbols, leading to the “transfer of patriarchal ethics from the village to the town and the modern state.”<sup>189</sup>

According to Magesa, the agenda of African liberation theology and that of early political leaders was intertwined. Nyerere was inspired by both African liberation theology and the Vatican-authored *Populorum Progressio* supported by other African Catholic leaders like Alioune Diop and Léopold-Sédar Senghor. His *Ujamaa* was a “combination of indigenous African, humanist, and Christian values for human emancipation, with a ‘preferential option’ for ‘the poor.’”<sup>190</sup> And unlike atheistic communism which worried the Vatican and African churchmen, Nyerere was a “true believer” for whom religion in the life of his people was irreplaceable, and who urged bishops to assign more priests to the poorest places of Tanzania.<sup>191</sup>

Magesa’s quest at the turn of the century, though Catholic-based, was also similar to that of African Independent Churches (AICs) in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s in their quest for a church where Africans could “feel at home,”<sup>192</sup> an endless quest for belonging in a genuine way.<sup>193</sup> These churches, Magesa believed, “instituted and

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<sup>185</sup> Laurenti Magesa, “*Ujamaa Socialism in Tanzania: A Theological Assessment*” (Ph.D. Theology, Ottawa, Saint Paul University, 1985).

<sup>186</sup> Laurenti Magesa, *The Church and Liberation in Africa* (Eldoret: Gaba Publications, 1976).

<sup>187</sup> I discussed this tension in: Jean Luc Enyegue, “Africanize Christianity or Christianize Africanity? The Cameroonian Reaction to Global Catholicism in the 1970s,” in *Global History and Roman Catholicism* (Global History and Roman Catholicism, Notre Dame, IN, 2019), 22.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> Ogbu Kalu, *African Christianity: An African Story* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2007), 4.

<sup>190</sup> Mugambi and Magoti Cornelli, *Endless Quest. The Vocation of an African Christian Theologian. Essays in Honour of Laurenti Magesa*, 13.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>192</sup> Frederick Burkewood Welbourn, *A Place to Feel at Home: A Study of Two Independent Churches in Western Kenya* (London, Nairobi: London, Nairobi Oxford U.P., 1966).

<sup>193</sup> M. L. Daneel, *Quest for Belonging: Introduction to a Study of African Independent Churches* (Gweru,

encouraged ways of worship with which they [Africans] felt at home.”<sup>194</sup> Creating such a church requires new rites, and especially a new theology and spirituality that respect African views and respond to African needs. For “in order to create an environment for worship from the heart, there is no option for Africa but to regain its identity.”<sup>195</sup>

Ultimately, the African synods of 1994 and 2009 might have addressed the specter of mass killings and massive corruption that are sickening Africa,<sup>196</sup> yet, the fact that Magesa decided to publish his *African Religion* in 1997 was a reminder that the first synod had failed to take African Traditional Religion (ATR) seriously. Magesa uses the singular in a clear attempt to treat African Religion as a world religion, and so depart from the marginalization it has suffered after a half-century of well-deserved debates and controversies. In this debate, African Religion never had a chance to speak for itself. It was always viewed from a Western perspective.<sup>197</sup> For Africans, he concludes, “religion is quite literally life, and life is religion.”<sup>198</sup> To recapture this African voice means shifting from a neocolonial mindset that makes young African scholars the cheerleaders of Western perspectives in their own schools and writings.

This point is extremely important for this essay because it opens a window to Magesa’s theology of history, which is necessary to understand his intellectual journey. Magesa has no article with this explicit title. However, in his “Endless Quest,” his autobiography discusses, extensively, his past influences, making his theology almost autobiographical. On the other hand, he opens his chapter on “Defining African Religion” (1997) with a quotation from a Filipino historian, Renato Constantino.<sup>199</sup>

A year before the publication of Magesa’s book, on September 24, 1996, Constantino gave a keynote address on “The University and the Intellectual Tradition” at the Institute for Policy Research, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. In his lecture, Constantino warned against the baggage of colonial thinking that intellectuals from the South carry: they uncritically accept “northern ideas and readily acquiescence to Northern prescriptions.”<sup>200</sup> At the core of this northern ideology is global Neoliberalism, which “through structural adjustment programs imposed by the World Bank and the IMF, and lately through GATT-WTO,” forces Southern economies to integrate into the global market dominated by Northern transnationals.<sup>201</sup> In this context, Constantino argues, “schools, like factories, churn out products that will fit

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Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1987).

<sup>194</sup> Laurenti Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation. Transforming the Church in Africa* (New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 234.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>196</sup> Laurenti Magesa, *The Post-Conciliar Church in Africa. No Turning Back the Clock* (Nairobi: CUEA Press, 2016), 85.

<sup>197</sup> Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion. The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (Nairobi: Paulines, 1997), 16.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>200</sup> Renato Constantino, “Globalization and the Intellectual Tradition,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 27, no. 2 (1997): 275.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 276.

like a cog in the neocolonial machine. Highly commercialized training culminates in the receipt of a diploma which qualifies the ambitious to pursue highly lucrative careers (...) Anything beyond what is conventional and safe will most likely not get any funding or support.”<sup>202</sup>

In a global and speedily interconnected world, Magesa’s return to traditional values is, therefore, neither a villagization nor a backward-looking understanding of history that resists progress at any cost. This understanding of the African worldview was the result of theologies of history that, in their opposition to the Western linear approach to time, wrongfully interpreted “time” in Africa as circular and averse to progress. The African conception of time, Magesa argues instead, is a middle ground of the two perspectives. Time in Africa is a return to the past with the ultimate aim of creating a more humane and life-giving human person and society. It is like a wheel that turns, and yet keeps moving forward. Therefore, the older an African becomes, the more he/she is oriented toward the past, not for the sake of mere scrutiny of the past, but as a direction toward the beginning, closer to the life-giving and caring God. Progress, in this context, is measured by the improvement of actual human life, the full realization of *Ubuntu*. “Genuine inculturation, then, cannot be anything but a pilgrimage of return home, back to familiar waters of God’s primordial presence in African culture.”<sup>203</sup>

## Conclusion

The journey I followed in this essay is to see theology itself as a biography, as the experience of Magesa’s life, from the time he was born in 1946. My concern was to uncover what has driven the life of this Mzee, his theological quest; and how I can understand this journey looking at the historical context that gave birth to him and nourished him as a man, a priest, and a theologian. If the first part of the essay situates Magesa’s quest as inherent to what I call the prehistory of African theology, 1946 and the years that followed were also times of great change in the history of the world and the church, with particular emphasis on the issue of human rights and, from the 1970s, that of Africanization as de-missionalization. Concerning the latter, it is worth noting that Magesa was born the same year the Maryknoll Fathers settled in Tanzania, in his own diocese of Musoma. His quest for a church genuinely African is therefore an articulation of a missiology that predated his birth, the global and national politics that dominated his childhood, and the realities of Africanization, its successes and shortcomings and how to address the latter effectively.

Ultimately, Magesa believes in change. And history, for him, is a record of that change. As a movement, one cannot and should not turn it back completely. Change as history has to be managed.<sup>204</sup> He believes that the challenges of Africa in this global world can successfully be addressed if Africans depart from a perspective that sees

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 278.

<sup>203</sup> Magesa, *What Is Not Sacred? African Spirituality*, 194.

<sup>204</sup> Laurenti Magesa, “Moral and Ethical Issues in African Christianity,” in *African Theology Come of Age* (Nairobi: Paulines, 2010), 50–51.

globalization from an asymmetrical position which forces onto them Western cultural values.<sup>205</sup> Instead, Africa can dare to lead, at least in the church. At a time when the church is shifting southward,<sup>206</sup> the African church cannot be a passive actor of global history. New global evangelization needs Africa's disposition to inclusivity, and her holistic-oriented and community-oriented approach to life: "To evangelize effectively calls for both the Church and all groups within it to become part of the world and create communities of love."<sup>207</sup> For "the joy and hope, the grief and anguish' of contemporary Africa are 'the joy and hope, the grief and anguish' of the Church as well."<sup>208</sup> As another African theologian might say, Magesa's theology is brewed in a Tanzanian pot,<sup>209</sup> a return, in his own way, to a kind of Christian animism,<sup>210</sup> since Christ has always been part of his African Traditional Religion.

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Laurenti Magesa, "Theological Reflections on the Future of Mission in Africa," in *Exploring the Future of Mission in Africa. In Celebration Of the Maryknoll's 100Years in Mission*, ed. Laurenti Magesa and Michael C. Kirwen (Nairobi: Mias Books, 2012), 131.

<sup>207</sup> Laurenti Magesa, *Rethinking Mission: Evangelization in Africa in a New Era* (Eldoret: AMECEA, 2006), 142.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>209</sup> A. E. Orobator, *Theology Brewed in an African Pot* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2008).

<sup>210</sup> Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator, *Religion and Faith in Africa: Confessions of an Animist* (New York: Orbis Books, 2018).



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## Special Section: Book Reviews

**Anderson, Allan Heaton.** *Spirit-Filled World: Religious Dis/Continuity in African Pentecostalism.* Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018. Pp. Xi + 274.

Review by Kgatle, Mookgo Solomon. "Spirit-Filled World: Religious Dis/Continuity in African Pentecostalism by Allan Heaton Anderson." *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 16, no. 1 (2021): 122-124.

In recounting the growth of Pentecostalism in sub-Saharan Africa, with particular reference to South Africa, Anderson's book demonstrates that this process has been shaped both by Pentecostalism's continuity with African cultural beliefs and its confrontation with and discontinuities from those beliefs. Most previous studies, conducted by scholars of anthropology, theology, and religious studies, stress the continuity of Pentecostalism with local traditional cultures. This book fills a research gap by highlighting discontinuities between Pentecostalism and the same traditional local cultures, without dismissing their interconnections.

Therefore, this book's main contribution is the exploration of tensions that exist within Pentecostalism due to its continuities and discontinuities with traditional local cultures, as the subtitle suggests. Pentecostalism, for example, stands in agreement with African Traditional Religions (ATR) in linking social problems like sickness, poverty, unemployment, inequality, and so forth to demon possession and to the spirit world. Thus, both ATR and Pentecostalism identify the causes of social problems in the same way; however, their approaches in dealing with such problems differ. While ATR uses African cultural practices and traditions to find solutions, Pentecostalism uses the power of the (Christian) Holy Spirit and the spiritual gifts conferred by the Spirit to confront these issues in the spirit world.

This book presents a long-term empirical study that involves a South African township, Soshanguve, where the residents are confronted with social problems like poverty, unemployment, and inequality. Soshanguve offers a perfect case study for understanding how Pentecostals in South Africa deal with daily challenges. The author has a vast amount of experience working with this community, and, over the years, he has collected evidence from the township as both a pastor and a researcher. Therefore, the author is both an insider and an outsider, as he attended charismatic and Pentecostal churches in Soshanguve and participated in research conducted among these congregations.

One of the disconnections that this book highlights is between ancestral worship and Pentecostalism. Almost all the Pentecostals surveyed by the author argued that "they were opposed to the practice of offerings to ancestors; they did not reverence the ancestors and did not consult healers/ diviners" (p.60). This suggests that Pentecostals are opposed to the veneration of ancestors, and demonstrates the discontinuity between Pentecostal and ATR practice. Pentecostals have separated themselves from ancestral

worship without, however, dis-integrating themselves from African society. Pentecostals do not dismiss the existence of ancestors, but they highlight their limitations as mediators between humankind and God, arguing that human beings can instead have a direct relationship with God through the Holy Spirit.

Pentecostals do not dismiss the existence of witchcraft and the spirits through which witchcraft is understood to operate; however, they also acknowledge a power above witchcraft and demons. Pentecostals in Africa understand witchcraft as something caused by evil spirits in order to let bad things happen in people's lives, in what is normally recognized as "misfortune." The misfortune is sometimes considered to be caused by a curse, which Pentecostals believe to run from generation to generation. Accordingly, Pentecostalism grants help to and relieves the fears and anxieties of anyone who is afraid of the power of witchcraft, without engaging in traditional antimagical practice.

In recognizing the presence of witchcraft, spirits, and misfortune in the African spirit world, Pentecostals see a need for deliverance by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, in interpreting problems like sickness, demon possession, curses, and so forth as caused by witchcraft, Pentecostalism stands in continuity with ATR. However, the difference is that instead of embracing the spirit as an ancestral one, Pentecostals seek to exorcize it in deliverance sessions. The methods of receiving deliverance vary from one Pentecostal church to the other, but "reading the Bible and praying, and by attending church" are among the common ones (p.136).

The power of the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts are important to the works of deliverance, healing, and other miracles in African Pentecostalism. It is this power of the Holy Spirit that has found a market in the religious world in Africa and allowed Pentecostalism to grow freely. This is because, in Africa, many people live in constant fear of the spirit world that they cannot see and know. This book emphasizes that the Holy Spirit has power above all the other powers and has the ability to bring healing, deliverance, and salvation in people's lives.

*Spirit-Filled World* is important for the study of African Pentecostalism—as recent scholars have begun to explore the subject of discernment in the context of the abuse of religion. This book can assist African Studies scholars in their research, as it warns them against dismissing certain cultural elements as "evil," and not including the "evil" elements among cultural phenomena to be analyzed. It is also an important contribution to the studies of global Pentecostalism, as it puts the concept of the spirit world in a global perspective. The book can help readers understand that the idea of the spirit world within the African context is part of a wider global culture. In the words of the author, "African culture is not a static phenomenon, and in today's world there are global forces changing the nature of Pentecostalism in all its variety of different forms in Africa" (p.207).

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**Asamoah-Gyadu, J. Kwabena.** *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit: Ghanaian Perspectives on Pentecostalism and Renewal in Africa.* Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock 2015, 212 p., ISBN 978-1-4982-3707-9, price US\$ 26 (paperback).

Review by Kahl, Werner. "Asamoah-Gyadu J. Kwabena, 'Sighs and Signs of the Spirit: Ghanaian Perspectives on Pentecostalism and Renewal in Africa'." *PentecoStudies* 17, no. 2 (2018): 230-232.

J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, Professor of Contemporary African Christianity and Pentecostal/Charismatic Theology at the Trinity Theological Seminary in Ghana, has extensively researched and written on the phenomenon of Pentecostalism in West Africa. The present book offers a critical reflection and assessment of this phenomenon with a focus on the situation in Ghana with occasional references to Pentecostal/Charismatic developments in other sub-Saharan regions, especially Nigeria.

Asamoah-Gyadu bases his presentations and analyses on personal fieldwork, theses written under his guidance, and the most relevant literature. He combines an academic outsider perspective with an experiential insider faith perspective, himself taking "a charismatic orientation to my Methodist faith" (p. 158). He addresses "all those who want to know about contemporary Pentecostalism in Africa, whether or not they are academics" (p. xi). His attitude towards the subject is one of critical appreciation. The ambiguity of the phenomenon is already reflected in the title of the book: *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*. He observes that "Pentecostalism always appears to be a movement in transition, with pains and glories in equal measure" (p. xi). Especially the "prosperity gospel," a teaching widespread in Pentecostalism, is a recurrent theme in the book. Asamoah-Gyadu evaluates Pentecostalism in twelve chapters from various perspectives: Christian renewal in Africa (revitalization of the church, emancipation from Western theological and financial influence); the force of Pentecostalism (gospel of power and mission); new symbols expressing a dominion theology (the eagle instead of the dove); prosperity hermeneutics with particular reference to Old Testament figures; use of mass and electronic media; spiritual power of the spoken word; the role of prophecy; transdenominational renewal movements; the Church of Pentecost as a model; spiritual warfare; a theological response to the prosperity gospel; and the future of Christianity in Africa.

Asamoah-Gyadu describes and reflects upon a dynamic religious phenomenon that has changed and shaped faith, church and theology in Ghana. In the past generation virtually the whole range of Christianity has become more or less charismatic. Trinity Theological Seminary, the prestigious theological institution in Ghana for the education of ministers in classical Protestant mission churches, has witnessed some developments that are paradigmatic for the changing ecclesial landscape in the sub-region: "Pentecostal and charismatic pastors now apply in their numbers to study at Trinity. Not only have they come to appreciate the need for rigorous and critical academic training, but Trinity itself has responded positively to changing paradigms in Christianity by creating space for the ministries of healing, exorcism and deliverance in the curriculum" (p. 158). As indicated by the quotation, also Pentecostalism has

undergone some transformations in the past decade as concerns, for example, the attitude towards theological education that has shifted from rejection to embracement. As such, Pentecostalism in the sub-region reflects some worldwide trends.

According to Asamoah-Gyadu, the rise of Pentecostalism in its various forms in Ghana is the expression of a grassroots movement. Indigenous Pentecostalism signals a spiritual emancipation from Western theology and mission church bodies abroad. It has been so meaningful to many in the sub-region since it shows some continuities with African Traditional Religion that, however, have been challenged and qualified Christologically. This brand of Christianity, at its best, combines spiritual experience with communal care, giving expression to a holistic ethic. Here, the Church of Pentecost serves as an example. “Pentecostal churches are thriving in Africa and among African communities in the West primarily because of their emphases on belief, experience, conviction and commitment to what the Spirit of God is doing in the world” (pp. 147–8). Healing, exorcism and deliverance are seen in Ghanaian Pentecostalism as vital parts of evangelism, and Asamoah-Gyadu makes transparent the plausibility of this approach in much of sub-Saharan Africa. He lists three factors:

- “The biblical worldview of mystical causality within which exorcism operates resonates very strongly with African worldviews on the causes of evil, including the belief in spirit possession” (p. 160);
- The ministry of healing and deliverance is seen to be biblical (“Pentecostals speak of a different kind of ‘apostolic succession’ that puts the emphasis not only on ecclesiastical authority and inheritance but also on the power of God that was evident then and now”; p. 160); and
- The importance of prayer.

Asamoah-Gyadu offers a balanced assessment of, and a critical reflection on the phenomenon. While he is in general positive about Pentecostal churches and charismatic developments in the sub-region, even to the point of passing a personal confession according to which they “have been inspired by the Spirit of God” (p. 176), he at times criticizes certain features of the phenomenon. This applies in particular to the widespread message of health and wealth: “There is a difference between being prosperous in Christ and being materialistic” (p. 175). The criterion to identify problematic tendencies in Pentecostalism is both biblical and Christological. Asamoah-Gyadu favors the application of a “‘Christological hermeneutics’ in which Jesus Christ becomes the standard and our focus is on the Cross” (p. 175). A “holistic gospel” needs to be preached which corresponds to general biblical concepts of prosperity that “encapsulates God’s physical and spiritual deliverance, and personal and communal well-being” (p. 175).

Asamoah-Gyadu’s useful and insightful book offers not only a reliable and balanced presentation of recent trends in Pentecostalism in Ghana and a critical analysis of the phenomenon; it also contributes to the development of a contextual Pentecostal theology and pneumatology in West Africa which are Christologically qualified.

**Wariboko, Nimi and Adeshina Afolayan, eds. *African Pentecostalism and World Christianity: Essays in Honor of J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2020. Pp. 322. \$37.**

*Review by* Mugambi, Kyama M. "African Pentecostalism and World Christianity: Essays in Honor of J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, edited by Nimi Wariboko and Adeshina Afolayan." *Mission Studies* 38, no. 3 (2021): 474-475. Used with permission.

Wariboko and Afolayan bring together a diverse group of scholars to consider "the critical junctures at which World Christianity invigorates and is invigorated by African Pentecostalism" (p.5). A celebration of Ghanaian theologian Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu's empathic, analytical posture, the book attempts to engage theology with context to illuminate the discussion.

The editors divide the book's task into four parts. A historical section examines the trajectory of Christianity in Africa over time. These essays lay the theological, historical foundation upon which the other sections build. The next section views Christianity from the prism of worldviews and formations that inform African understandings of spiritual realities. Here the contributors navigate the tension between the "hyper-spiritualized" and the "hyper-materialized cause and effect understanding of reality," that attends religion on the continent (p.10). The third section engages media and Pentecostal practices, reflecting on the role of media and the mediatization of Pentecostal expressions. And a final section addresses issues relating to Pentecostalism on the continent.

The book excels in the variety of its slate of contributors who effectively address their topics. Coming from West, South, and East Africa, and beyond, such heterogeneity is hard to find in a one-volume work. Of note are refreshing contributions by women scholars from the continent. This is very significant, given the dearth of African women scholars in African Theology. Likewise, the rich mix of senior and junior scholars offers much needed multi-generational perspectives on African religious studies. A further strength of this book lies in its careful balance between broad analysis and specific contextual examples.

However, the book's diversity is both a strength and a weakness. The scholars individually engage the task of the book from very different perspectives. Readers will thus not find here a sustained book-length analysis on a particular aspect of Asamoah-Gyadu's scholarship. Additionally, the extent to which this volume will be accessible to an audience in Africa that most needs it may constitute another of its setbacks. Fortunately, this is remediable through a re-examination of publishing dynamics, which necessarily include distribution and pricing.

Bringing to bear their extensive backgrounds in philosophy and religious studies, the editors propose a scholarly category of Pentecostalism studies for which Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu is the exemplar. This might be the volume's most important contribution to Pentecostal scholarship going forward. Their proposed "Legon discourse" (referring to Asamoah-Gyadu's base at Trinity Theological Seminary in Legon, a suburb of Accra, Ghana) appreciates in its analyses both contextual and theological dimensions of Pentecostalism without sacrificing theoretical dialogue. Its



balanced sympathetic view does not neglect the role of healthy critical engagement with the subject.

This book successfully achieves its task. A well-written offering, it affords readers a broad range of perspectives to enrich their thinking about World Christianity in general and African Pentecostalism in particular. Wariboko and Afolayan present here a worthy scholarly engagement with, and fitting tribute to, Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, one of the most prominent African scholarly voices on the subject today.

**Mugambi, Kyama M.** *A Spirit of Revitalization: Urban Pentecostalism in Kenya.* Waco: Baylor University Press, 2020. 348 pp. \$54.99 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-4813-1355-1.

Review by Grant, Paul G. “Mugambi, Kyama M., *A Spirit of Revitalization: Urban Pentecostalism in Kenya.*” H-Africa, H-Net Reviews. September, 2021. URL: <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=56179>

In the concluding pages of *A Spirit of Revitalization*, Kyama M. Mugambi takes his readers through central Nairobi on a Sunday morning in 2018. Within a tight radius of five hundred meters, a colorful diversity of living congregations collectively represents the history of Christianity in Kenya as European-initiated and African-initiated movements alike hold their services. “This small area in Nairobi,” Mugambi says, “acts as a microcosm of African Christianity,” not only in urban Kenya but in many other places around the continent (p. 287).

Mugambi presents twenty-first-century Kenyan Pentecostalism as heir to four distinct phases of East African Christian history: nineteenth-century European missions, early twentieth-century African-Initiated Churches, the East African Revivals of the late colonial years, and the postcolonial emergence of a newer form of Pentecostalism that reconfigured legacy, missionary-era Pentecostalism for the distinct experiences and spiritual needs of the educated, urban middle class. Drawing on all four of these threads, a movement of “Progressive Pentecostal Churches” (PPCs) began emerging in the 1990s, confident and unconcerned with European and American opinion. The cumulative impression is one of rooted cosmopolitans—both Kenyan and Christian—capable of strategically and critically engaging with the world on their own terms.

The core of Mugambi’s research is a lengthy list of oral interviews conducted over several years. These conversations make the book. Mugambi’s interlocutors sometimes confirm, sometimes complement, and sometimes contradict conventional wisdom. The author treats his sources fairly but not uncritically, and a cumulative image of a raucous but vivacious church culture begins to appear.

Holding it all together is the author’s steady and disciplined approach. *A Spirit of Revitalization* is meticulously plotted in a sequence of at times overlong chapters. After an introduction that frames the book as a globally significant local study, eight chapters follow in groups of two: chapters 1 through 4 as a historical narrative, and chapters 5 through 8, in turn, as sociological profiles.

Chapter 1 is concerned with the African-Initiated corrective to missionary Christianity, which the author calls Spirit-Roho churches. These autochthonous movements reconfigured a foreign religion to suit indigenous sensibilities and meet indigenous needs; while Mugambi does not trace a genealogical line from these churches to twenty-first-century PPCs, he stresses their rootedness in African orality as a shared feature.

The second chapter turns to the well-researched East African Revival. Mugambi is conversant with the scholarship while emphasizing a few original points, the foremost of which is that “the key to understanding the Revivalists lies in their creation of a cross-

cultural Christianity within a context where monocultural religious expressions were the norm” (p. 63).

Chapters 3 and 4 narrate two distinct postcolonial Pentecostal expressions. The variety that was first established in Nairobi had come from Canada in the early and mid-twentieth century, but in most cases had become fully nationalized during the 1970s and 80s. Mugambi distinguishes between these “Newer Pentecostal Charismatic Churches”—an imprecise category he glosses with an acronym (NPCCs) and discusses in chapter 3—and the PPCs, the subject of chapter 4. All told, the differences between the two are neither doctrinal nor ontological but social and organizational—an argument developed in the subsequent two chapters.

Chapter 5 focuses on modes of “discipleship” in urban Kenyan Pentecostalism—the process by which these churches, having rejected historic mission churches’ Europe-derived catechisms, have taught their youth and their converts the fundamentals of faith and praxis. Chapter 6 is about leadership: how new leaders have been identified, developed, and equipped, especially as Kenyan churches of all expressions, including the mission churches, have fully nationalized their leadership structures in the last four decades.

The final dyad of chapters applies the foregoing historical and sociological arguments to case studies of two large networks: Christ is the Answer Ministries (chapter 7) and the Nairobi Chapel (chapter 8). These twin chapters constitute the core of the book and are convincing and compelling; each of the two congregations appears here as globally minded and locally rooted (Mugambi uses the word “glocal” sparingly).

*A Spirit of Revitalization* is perhaps the most important book on contemporary African Christian history to be published in the last few years. The book’s descriptive agenda—the reformulation of a transnational religion into a rapidly evolving urban social situation in a booming country—is always difficult, demanding an author’s facility in the literatures and methodologies of multiple disciplines, principally history and theology. Few scholars pull it off perfectly: even the late Lamin Sanneh struggled to reconcile those fields in *Translating the Message* (1989; 2nd ed., 2008). Readers familiar with the questions and arguments of the Yale-Edinburgh Group on World Christianity and Princeton Theological Seminary’s World Christianity conferences will recognize much of the theoretical framework here, especially the intellectual fingerprints of Sanneh, Andrew Walls, and Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu.

In elegantly subordinating theological interventions to concrete historical facts, Mugambi offers a model for research in world Christianity that thinks globally and eternally while retaining the messy inconsistencies and contingencies of human lives. Written with all the strengths of an insider who can speak to transnational theoretical debates, *A Spirit of Revitalization* is rich in ground-level detail while remaining conversant in current interventions from Europe, the Americas, and elsewhere in Africa. Mugambi rewards careful readers: several of his keenest observations and conclusions are either buried in the middle of long paragraphs or in discursive footnotes. The latter function as repositories for unsupported (but never incredible) arguments, usually drawn from decades of personal experience.

In his 2010 African religious travelogue, V. S. Naipaul described a similar religious scene in Uganda in distinctly pessimistic terms. “Foreign religion,” Naipaul wrote, “to go by the competing ecclesiastical buildings on the hilltops, was like an applied and contagious illness, curing nothing, giving no final answers, keeping everyone in a state of nerves, fighting wrong battles, narrowing the mind.”[1] Naipaul’s caustic dismissal of millions of African Christians, as if they were hapless intellectual recipients of noxious alien ideologies, proceeded from an a priori contempt for religion of any sort: Naipaul could not conceive of African reconfiguration of an originally foreign religion as anything but false. Writing from Kenya, Mugambi sees things differently: where Naipaul saw wrong battles, Mugambi sees new solutions; where Naipaul saw no final answers and a narrowing of the mind, Mugambi saw “a fresh Christianity reimagined within particular cultural, historical, and social contexts” (p. 296).

*A Spirit of Revitalization* seems to occupy a different universe than Adriaan van Klinken’s *Kenyan, Christian, Queer* (2019). Almost mutually exclusive lists of names and congregations appear in the two books’ indexes, although the two authors are arguing in a similar direction: that twenty-first century Kenyan Christianity is a robust ecosystem, un beholden to European leadership or American money. Whereas Klinken’s approach is ethnographic, complicating the story of East African Christianity caricatured in Naipaul’s 2010 book or Roger Ross Williams’s film *God Loves Uganda* (2013), Mugambi’s goal seems to be to invite church leaders in Europe and North America to listen and learn from Kenyan innovation: he names several examples of large American churches and networks receiving Kenyan Christian training material, and others hiring Kenyans as pastors. *A Spirit of Revitalization* is imperative reading both for scholars of African religion and world Christianity.

**Note:**

[1]. V. S. Naipaul, *The Masque of Africa* (New York: Knopf, 2010), 6-7.

## Recent Print and Digital Resources Related to Christianity in Africa

Compiled by Beth Restrick, Head, BU African Studies Library

Asamoah-Gyadu, J. Kwabena. **Pentecostalism in Africa: experiences from Ghana's charismatic ministries (Regnum Mini Book Series)**. Oxford: Regnum Books International, an imprint of the Oxford Centre for Mission studies, 2020. \$7.20 (pbk) [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)  
ISBN-10: 1506483739, ISBN-13: 978-1506483733

**Description:** Pentecostalism is the fastest growing stream of Christianity in the world. The real evidence for the significance of Pentecostalism lies in the actual churches they have built and the numbers they attract. In Africa, Pentecostalism has virtually become the representative face of Christianity with even historic mission denominations 'pentecostalising' their otherwise formal liturgical structures to survive. This work brings to a wider audience the insights and analysis from the author's book, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context*. It interprets key theological and missiological themes in Ghanaian Pentecostalism by using material from the live experiences of the movement itself.  
([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com))

Elorm-Donkor, et. Al. **African Pentecostal Missions Maturing: Essays in Honor of Apostle Opoku Onyinah. (African Christian Studies Series, 14)**. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2018. \$49.14 (pbk) [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)  
ISBN-10: 1532618352, ISBN-13: 978-1532618352

**Description:** African Pentecostal Mission Maturing is a definitive and fresh account of how Pentecostalism has grown from the fringes of various societies to the center stage of world Christianity, becoming the representative face of the faith in most of Africa. In this volume, seasoned academics—missiologists, theological educators, and church historians—from Asia, North America, Europe, and Africa chart the trajectories of the Pentecostalizing drive in Christian missions that has impacted societies, institutions, and peoples. Pentecostalism is analyzed under specific themes, such as: mission and theology, pastoral ministry and social responsibility, Christian education, and ecumenism. It highlights the maturation of Pentecostalism in Africa and demonstrates that the features of its infancy have transformed. Although written by experienced scholars, the content is presented accessibly so that pastors and laity can benefit. ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com))

Kalu, Ogbu. **African Pentecostalism: An Introduction**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. \$27.67 (pbk) [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)  
ISBN-10: 0195339991, ISBN-13: 978-0195339994

**Description:** Across Africa, Christianity is thriving in all shapes and sizes. But one particular strain of Christianity prospers more than most—Pentecostalism. Pentecostals believe that everyone can personally receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit such as prophecy or the ability to speak in tongues. In Africa, this kind of faith, in which the supernatural is a daily presence, is sweeping the continent. Today, about 107 million Africans are Pentecostals -- and the numbers continue to rise. In this book, Ogbu Kalu provides the first ever overview of Pentecostalism in Africa. He shows the amazing diversity of the faith, which flourishes in many different forms in diverse local contexts. While most people believe that Pentecostalism was brought to Africa and imposed on its people by missionaries, Kalu argues emphatically that this is not the case. Throughout the book, he demonstrates that African Pentecostalism is distinctly African in character, not imported from the West. With an even-handed approach, Kalu presents the religion's many functions in African life. Rather than shying away from controversial issues like the role of money and prosperity in the movement, Kalu describes malpractice when he sees it. The only book to offer a comprehensive look at African Pentecostalism, this study touches upon the movement's identity, the role of missionaries, media and popular culture, women, ethics, Islam, and immigration. The resulting work will prove invaluable to anyone interested in Christianity outside the West. ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com))

Kgatle, Solomon. **The Fourth Pentecostal Wave in South Africa: A Critical Engagement (Routledge New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology and Biblical Studies)**. Routledge, 2019. \$48.95 (pbk) [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)  
ISBN-13: 978-0367361150, ISBN-10: 0367361159

**Description:** This book critically examines contemporary Pentecostalism in South Africa and its influence on some of the countries that surround it. Pentecostalism plays a significant role in the religious life of this region and so evaluating its impact is key to understanding how religion functions in Twenty-First Century Africa. Beginning with an overview of the roots of Pentecostalism in Southern Africa, the book moves on to identify a current "fourth" wave of this form of Christianity. It sets out the factors that have given rise to this movement and then offers the first academic evaluation of its theology and practice. Positive aspects as well as extreme or negative practices are all identified in order to give a balanced and nuanced assessment of this religious group and allow the reader to gain valuable insight into how it interacts with wider African society. This book is cutting-edge look at an emerging form of one of the fastest-growing religions in the world. It will, therefore, be of great use to scholars working in Pentecostalism, Theology, Religious Studies and African Religion as well as African Studies more generally. ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com))

## Open Access Resources

Anderson, Allan. **Moya: the Holy Spirit in an African Context**. Pretoria, UNISA Press, 1991.

ISBN: 0869816934

URI: <https://uir.unisa.ac.za/handle/10500/19534>

**Description:** Spirit power in African theology: a mere extension of African magic or spirit powers? Or a genuine understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit as an active personal force? The author takes issue with the theories of a number of prominent missiologists and anthropologists who have studied African pneumatology. The focus is mainly on the African Independent Churches of the prophetic type and on African Pentecostal churches - some with and others without links with Western Pentecostal churches. All these churches share an emphasis on the inspiration and revelation of the Holy Spirit and are therefore appropriately referred to as 'Spirit-type churches'. Special attention is given to the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to African power concepts and to the African spirit world, particularly the ancestors. A fair yet critical assessment of relevant literature leads Anderson to the conclusion that the source and inspiration behind the prophetic practices of the Spirit-type churches are not an impersonal, manipulable power, but an active personal force, the biblical Holy Spirit. The manifestations of Spirit power should therefore not be interpreted one-sidedly, but as the good news of God's Holy Spirit which provides the ultimate answer to the African quest for power. (Source: [University of Birmingham](https://uir.unisa.ac.za/handle/10500/19534))

Biri, Kudzai. **African Pentecostalism, the Bible, and Cultural Resilience: The Case of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (Bible in Africa Studies, BiAS; Exploring Religion in Africa, 3)**. University of Bamberg Press, 2020.

URL: <https://fis.uni-bamberg.de/handle/uniba/47003>

**Abstract:** The study investigates the resilience of Shona religion and culture among ZAOGA Pentecostal Christians. It endeavours to establish whether the Pentecostal Christians in Zimbabwe, through a case study of ZAOGA, have embraced aspects of Shona traditional religion and culture. Through an application of phenomenological-comparative approach as well as fieldwork, the study confirms continuity, change and adaptation of indigenous beliefs and practices in a contemporary Pentecostal movement. Whereas the Pentecostal ideology suggests that 'old things' have passed away, it appears that 'old things' continue to have significance for the 'new'. It demonstrates how belief in avenging spirits, witches and witchcraft, value of words spoken prior to death, the role, status and significance of women, belief in unnatural events, liturgy and salvation have remained relevant to the lives of ZAOGA Shona converts. The patterns of continuity, discontinuity, extension, collaboration, contradiction, re-interpretation and rejection between Shona traditional religion and culture and ZAOGA are explored, challenging the framing of African Pentecostalism as a poor imitation and parroting of theological constructions from North America. Although Ezekiel Guti (the founder and central figure in the study) does appropriate ideas and concepts from North American Pentecostalism, he displays remarkable sensitivity to Shona religion and culture. In order to meet the requirements and purpose of this study, themes have been selected on the basis of their degree of comparison. These themes are; words spoken prior to/on death bed, belief in avenging spirits, the role, status and significance of women, belief in unnatural events, belief in

witches and witchcraft, liturgy and salvation. The study narrowed down to an officially structured organized whole in order to give a deeper understanding of the orientation of ZAOGA. An African womanist framework is adapted to challenge ZAOGA to promote the well-being of women. The resilience of Shona religion and culture, serve to fill the gap of published material on the Shona and Pentecostalism, breaking new ground by exploring Shona religious and cultural aspects that have displayed remarkable resilience within the Pentecostal fraternity. My conclusion is that while ZAOGA self-consciously presents itself as a sophisticated, trans-national and progressive Pentecostal movement, members continue to wrestle with Shona indigenous beliefs and practices. ([Source, University of Bamberg, FIS](#))

Isabirye, Moses Stephen. **African Indigenous Pentecostal Christianity in Uganda with Reference to the Deliverance Church in Busoga (1974 – 2012)**. Ph.D. Thesis.

URI: <http://ir-library.ku.ac.ke/handle/123456789/21342>

**Abstract:** This study examines the phenomenon of African Indigenous Pentecostal Christianity (AIPC) in Uganda, using the Deliverance Church (DC) in Busoga as a case. The study aimed at investigating the history, factors and trends that birthed the DC in Uganda in general and Busoga in particular, as a breakaway of mainstream Christianity. It interrogated the theology and practice of the DC and evaluated the DC contributions to spiritual, social and economic developments of Busoga. The study used a cross – sectional survey nonexperimental design employing both quantitative and qualitative methods. The data collection methods were questionnaire survey, interview guide, focused group discussions (FGDs), participant observation (PO) and content analysis of sermons and other teachings.

The study findings indicate that the DC originated from the COU. The founders started with a quest for an African authentic Church of Christians, Christ- delivered to embody and carry his deliverance by the Spirit of God’s kingdom to the outside world. This marked the origin of the name ‘Deliverance Church’. The first DC leaders having experienced deliverance focused on every member being a Spirit-filled minister, doing mission and evangelism of witnessing for Jesus in the world. The study unveils why these African Pentecostal leaders left mainstream churches, and how the DC and COU developed a relationship of dialogic contextualization, where the DC continued building on the COU Christian foundations, while consolidating the mission character of their church. Evidence of this continuing dialogic contextualization reflects in DC beliefs, practices and projects directly bequeathed from those of the COU. This climax saw a leading founder Dr. Stephen Mungoma, accompanied by other members, cross from the DC back to equal positions of responsibility and accountability in COU.

The thesis argues that the DC’s Pentecostal success in mission theology and practice stems from its adoption of the old ‘selfs’ for Anglican mission, to build a church that is self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating. There is more evidence of the DC using COU ministry patterns such as doctrine, wedding liturgy, funeral rite, evangelicalism, leadership and faith and order - to boost the Pentecostal mission vision, pastoral care and counselling and ministry. Regarding ministerial



training, theological education originally viewed with suspicion by the DC leaders in the 1970s; calling it 'spiritual cemetery adding no spiritual value to the person concerned, was later embraced. By the time of this study, some were attending theological / Bible colleges. DC started pursuing socio-economic development goals; a decade after COU had launched it in Busoga. The study concludes that AIPC of the DC in Busoga, has live roots in mainstream Christianity, which issue into origin, growth and bearing fruit in Pentecostal mission and ministry. The originality of the study lies in a comprehensive inquiry into that origin, growth and bearing fruit of the DC in Busoga; it traces its roots to the theology, tradition and doctrine of the mainstream Christianity, re-interpreted for Pentecostal mission strategic needs. From this root grows the shoot of AIPC in Uganda, the DC in Busoga an important product of it. ([Source, Kenyatta University IR](#))

Mudimeli, Lufuluvhi Maria. **The Voices and Experiences of Vhavenda Women in the Pentecostal Churches in Thohoyandou.** *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*. vol.47 n.2 Pretoria, 2021.

URI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.25159/2412-4265/8169>

**Abstract:** This article sets out to unfold stories of Vhavenda women in the Pentecostal church. It discusses their good experiences and challenges encountered as they do ministry. Their rich experiences and voices can inform the way ministry is practiced today. Purposive sampling is used to explore the narratives of seven church women sourced from a previously written thesis. The thesis was conducted in Venda for doctoral studies at the University of South Africa, completed in 2011, where data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire with 97 participants. Some findings from the thesis are that women in rural areas are particularly affected by healthy and unhealthy religious and cultural discourses in their daily involvement in the ministry. Apart from looking at the religious and cultural discourses, the article will also investigate how these women find ways of coping with social and religious challenges as they continue in their various ministry spaces. This will add knowledge concerning women, gender and theology by highlighting the specific voices and experiences of Vhavenda women within their contexts and ministry. The article adopts a qualitative approach and is researched theoretically, employing the insights of vhusadzi theology to analyse the findings. Some of the findings in this article are that the lives of Vhavenda women in the Pentecostal church are filled with struggles and uncertainties, as related to church leadership. ([Source: Unisa Press Journals](#))

Nkomazana, Fidelis, **The growth of Pentecostalism and Christian umbrella organizations in Botswana.** *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, vol. 40, 2014, Supplement, pp. 153-173.

URI: <http://hdl.handle.net/10500/14105>

**Abstract:** The article discusses the growth of Pentecostalism in Botswana and its role in the formation of inter- and intra-ecumenical bodies. Its role in the promotion of unity, dialogue and cooperation in the development of society and in the Pentecostal churches, other churches and other religious faiths is also high-lighted. The article

shows that this development has taken place over time and continues to manifest itself at various stages and in various settings, and that it continues to respond to new challenges posed by globalisation and the technological advances of the 21st century. ([Source, UnisaIR](#))

Ononiwu, Maureen Ugochi. **Gospel and Culture: Nigerian Pentecostalism as a Case Study for African Contributions to Intercultural Theology.** MA Theology Thesis. Toronto School of Theology. 2020.

URI: <https://hdl.handle.net/1807/102070>

**Abstract:** This study proposes Nigerian Pentecostalism as a case study on proper gospel-culture engagement. The aim is to show that insights from the faith practices of Nigerian Pentecostalism can lead to further understanding of the relationship between gospel and culture. The research implication concerns intercultural theology. Building upon past scholarship, this thesis contributes to the conversation on the subject, which aims to examine how intercultural dialogue between Western and non-Western forms of Christianity can shed insights on the relationship between gospel and culture. The study suggests that as Christianity becomes increasingly centered in the global South (and Eastern hemisphere), the global South (or non-Western) Church presents fresh insights to the Western Church as it struggles to define its identity in a secular and post-Christian context. The research illustrates ways in which Christian voices from the South; Nigerian Pentecostalism in this case, can enrich the theology and mission of post-Christian Western context. ([Source, UToronto, TSpace](#))